

Helping the Norwegians

The Railway Consultancy was delighted to win, after international tender, a significant contract with Norwegian State Railways (NSB) to be delivered over the next year. This covers two main areas: (a) improving train service punctuality, particularly at station stops; and (b) the wider international benchmarking of performance. Work associated with this project began in March and has already led to considerable Railway Consultancy effort and NSB beginning to make changes to systems and procedures.



Type 72s arrive at Lysaker

A programme of 26 surveys in the Greater Oslo area followed our earlier work on station stops for various clients, and recorded a range of passenger flow and technical process information. Perhaps the most immediate overall observation was that of the variability of processes.

Whilst we are now analysing the data, NSB was keen to progress matters as soon as possible, and is already making changes to reflect the duties of

train conductors (notably their location in the train at the key stations of Oslo S and Nationaltheatret). The positioning of trains at the platforms of those two stations (both of which have long platforms) requires some discussion with drivers, but also with Jernbaneverket (the Norwegian railway infrastructure authority), as the exact siting of stop boards may need to be changed, for trains of different lengths. These and other measures should reduce the pressure on capacity of the main cross-Oslo tunnel.

Simultaneously, NSB Riks (the NSB regional sector) has been seeking to improve the commercial performance of its branch lines, by attracting tourists in greater numbers; the volume of leisure traffic on the Flåm branch is not replicated on other routes such as Raumabanen (Dombås-Åndalsnes), despite their scenic nature. We are working with NSB to benchmark its performance against other similar railways.



Type 93 at Åndalsnes

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Editorial: In the Thick of It

We have always prided ourselves that we are a part of the railway family. Not only do we help clients with real day-to-day problems, but we travel extensively across the railway networks of Britain and the rest of the world, so as to keep in touch with what is really going on. However, at present, we are more 'in the thick of it' than usual. Works on making Crystal Palace station accessible for the mobility-impaired, plus restoration of ticket office facilities in the original building (not the 1982 addition) are currently in full swing, although will halt temporarily during the Olympics. Building alterations have involved installing lifts, and even knocking a hole in the supporting wall over which one of my colleagues was sitting directly!

If any readers have tried unsuccessfully to contact us in recent months, I can only apologise. There have been periods when we have had to vacate our offices during particularly-noisy construction activities and, whilst we have tried to divert the phone to other numbers so that we can answer it, this system has not always been fool-proof. Within a couple of months, however, things should be much improved here, and you are welcome to come and look once more at this magnificent building – now suitable for 21st-century needs.

Continuing (or is that renewed?) recession in Britain, and an EU market affected by troubles in Greece (and elsewhere) have meant that we have increasingly had to look for work beyond. After a major project in Saudi Arabia in the earlier part of last year, we were then pleased to contribute to planning of high-speed services in Turkey (see page 4). Conditions in both of those countries are certainly generally different from those in Norway. However, in all those countries and here back at home, governments are increasingly realising that railways have a lot to offer in terms of providing significant environmentally-sustainable transport capacity.

Despite all the mention of abroad, we have also been active in Britain – although a lot of this has been involved with franchise bidding work, which is necessarily commercial-in-confidence. Suffice it to say that we're working with in one way or another on all the current bids, and hope that at least in one case we'll be on the winning team. And if we can help you with your railway, please get in touch.

Nigel S Harris

Project News

Mystery Shopping on the Underground

During 2011, London Underground reduced ticket office opening hours at a number of its quieter stations, as part of its cost reduction strategy. Other arrangements (e.g. staff at ticket barriers) were put in place to minimise the impact on customers. However, passenger watchdog London TravelWatch (LTW) subsequently began to receive complaints from passengers about difficulties with tickets and other customer service issues at the affected stations. LTW therefore asked the Railway Consultancy to undertake an independent 'Mystery Shopper' type survey of the stations affected, to see if the complaints were justified.

These surveys were undertaken in November 2011, and did highlight a number of issues, including the difficulty of finding staff, and real-time train running information, although high standards of cleanliness and ticket machine availability were apparent. However, methodological differences meant that our results did



not match those of London Underground, with whom discussions were held in early 2012. Our full report is available at http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/news/2012/01/ticket_office_mystery_shop_survey.

Station Travel Plan Evaluation

With continued growth in demand for rail travel, the question of access to stations becomes ever more pertinent. Whilst a large proportion of passengers walk to stations, the entire range of access modes is important. Provision of car parking can only ever be a small part of station access. Therefore, the rail industry has applied travel planning principles used in local authorities, schools and large employers to identify how to improve sustainable access modes to stations and encourage mode shift.



Sponsored by the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) and the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) a pilot programme of 24 Station Travel Plans covering 31 stations commenced in 2008.

Measures implemented include:

- enhanced pedestrian and cycle routes
- better bus interchange
- more and better cycle facilities at stations
- improved information e.g. real time bus screens at stations
- marketing and communications campaigns to raise awareness
- taxi and car sharing

Working with Transport Research Laboratory (TRL), The Railway Consultancy carried out an evaluation study to determine the effectiveness of the STP Pilot programme and develop recommendations for the rail industry. The study concluded that the STP pilot programme has achieved many of its objectives, including the building of strong and successful partnerships between the industry and key stakeholders, the leveraging of match funding for station improvements, and an increase in the number of passengers using buses and cycles to access stations. A range of useful lessons were also learnt from the pilots, to guide the rail industry in its future approach to Station Travel Plans and integrated transport initiatives.



Lincoln – London Direct Service Appraisal

Planning for key routes such as the East Coast Main Line is undertaken by the Department for Transport and Network Rail, who balance the needs of competing aspirations. In anticipation of the forthcoming new East Coast Main Line franchise, Lincolnshire County Council asked its partner consultancy Mouchel for assistance in developing a business case for more direct London – Lincoln services. The Railway Consultancy worked with

Mouchel to provide operational planning and railway project appraisal services.

As the ECML is nearing capacity, we undertook a preliminary pathing exercise to see if it would be possible to add new direct services from London to Lincoln, or to amend existing services which terminate at Newark. We also undertook a high-level assessment of different service options, in line with the Department for Transport's webtag parameters and appraisal guidance, looking at both the financial and economic impact. Our work, together with the wider business case developed by Mouchel, has now been sent by Lincolnshire CC to the Department for Transport for consideration.

High Speed in Turkey

A national programme of high-speed rail development is underway in Turkey, with several lines under construction and some services now running. This major investment seeks to make high speed rail a key mode of choice for mid to long distance travel between Ankara and the major Turkish cities of Istanbul, Konya, Bursa, Sivas and Izmir.



Turkish high-speed train at Ankara



New line works at Polatli

The Railway Consultancy carried out a study in Autumn 2011 for Turkish Railways (TCDD) to assist it in understanding the operational planning requirements of the lines they are building. This included analysis of the planned capacity and identification of constraints, assessment of the travel market and demand forecasting for each route. Working closely with TCDD, we constructed outline timetable frequencies for the route, and developed a high level High Speed Train fleet procurement and deployment plan.

WRI Book

The Wheel:Rail Interface Handbook, sponsored by Network Rail and published last Autumn, contained results of several years' research by the University of Birmingham and others. It has proved so popular that stocks are running low and both a reprint and a new edition are under consideration. Get your copy whilst stocks last at www.anharris.co.uk!

The Last Word

Perhaps we should leave this to Kemal Ataturk (the founder of the modern Turkish republic), as displayed in the main boardroom of TCDD's head offices in Ankara. The motto reads "Railways bring you freedom and prosperity". Best wishes to all our readers too.



The Railway Consultancy provides services across areas such as demand forecasting, operational planning, strategy and business development; for more details see our website www.railwayconsultancy.com

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