

Rt Hon Louise Haigh MP

Secretary of State for Transport
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Andy Burnham
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Sent by email:

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19 July, 2024

Dear Secretary of State,

Avanti West Coast: Statutory Advice

As the Department for Transport's statutory partner, Transport for the North looks forward to working with you in ensuring that investment in the North's infrastructure and services helps unlock the North's economic potential.

We do though want to take this opportunity to offer advice on the current performance of the West Coast Main Line, both in terms of Avanti West Coast's performance, and the state of the supporting infrastructure.

We were really pleased to see that improving the performance of our railways and driving forward rail reform are amongst your strategic priorities. As you know, performance across the North of England has been consistently poor over recent years and requires intervention to improve the passenger experience.

Whilst performance is unacceptable across a number of operators, you will be aware of the specific issues with Avanti West Coast which led to Transport for the North providing advice to the Secretary of State following our Board meeting in March. Due to the calling of the election, the previous Secretary of State was unable to respond in full to that advice.

Our Rail North Committee met with representatives of Avanti West Coast on Monday this week to review progress. Unfortunately, overall performance as measured using industry standards has not materially improved since we reviewed it in March.

For this reason, the Committee concluded that the advice previously submitted remains appropriate; specifically, that:

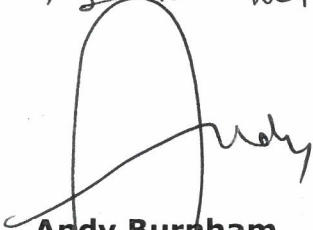
Transport for the North advises that Avanti West Coast's contract should be terminated at the earliest possible opportunity (with the Operator of Last Resort taking on responsibly in the short term for the delivery of long-distance services on the West Coast Main Line).

In reviewing the latest performance figures, it is apparent that the unreliability of the West Coast Main Line infrastructure is also of increasing concern. The Committee noted that the proportion of failures attributed to Network Rail's infrastructure has increased to 64% of the delays. It is clear that the capacity and resilience of the infrastructure are matters that also require urgent consideration, issues given further weight by the recent publication of a series of notices warning of the route being designated 'congested infrastructure'. We know that capacity and power supply constraints are part of the problem.

We would be pleased to work with you and your officials to develop and bring forward solutions to restore resilience to the West Coast Main Line. The Committee believe that being able to take a holistic view is key to enabling effective and efficient travel along this corridor, as well as central to enabling expansion of services that is vital to unlock the economic growth opportunities in the North of England.

We trust that this advice is useful, and we look forward to working with you to make progress.

Ben Mitchell,



Andy Burnham
Chair, Rail North Committee
Transport for the North