

Government outlines £1 billion commitment to digital signalling

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Rail leaders have praised the [UK Government's](#) commitment to spend £1 billion replacing ageing signalling systems with new digital upgrades on the East Coast Main Line.

And with £427 million due in the next Control Period, and £350 million invested on the route already, the Department for Transport says this looks set to take total investment in the digitalisation project to just short of £2 billion.

The European Train Control System (ETCS) technology, which as reported will be rolled out from London's King's Cross to Stoke Tunnels, will mean faster, safer and more regular trains for millions of people. It brings signalling into train drivers' cabs and provides them with real-time, continuous information throughout their journey.

Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps said: "This £1 billion investment will allow us to replace unreliable Victorian infrastructure with cutting edge technology which will mean fewer delays and more regular services for millions of passengers."

The new in-cab technology will create a more responsive, more resilient railway and, crucially for passengers, one that can recover quicker when journeys don't go to plan. Most importantly, as the system will constantly monitor the train's speed, it will also create a safer railway.

Toufic Machnouk, Director, Industry Partnership for Digital Railway, Network Rail, said: "We are delighted to have been given the go ahead for this ground-breaking programme that will transform the capability and resilience of the East Coast Main Line and be a key enabler for the wider network.

"The ECDP is uniquely bringing together all elements of track and train through a pioneering industry partnership that is working beyond boundaries in a deep collaboration. We will upskill our people and use new technology to improve the way we work for the benefit of passengers and freight customers".

As well as the many passenger benefits, the East Coast Digital Programme will deliver a much-needed financial boost to the industry and, over its lifetime, is 42 per cent cheaper than the current system. It will also help the Government towards its Net Zero goal by decreasing carbon emissions by 55,000 tonnes – the equivalent of more than 65,000 one-way flights from London to New York.

David Horne, Managing Director at LNER, said: "Digital signalling will allow the full potential of our Azuma fleet technology to be realised, and means our customers will benefit from even more reliable and sustainable journeys in the future."

Tom Moran, Thameslink and Great Northern Managing Director, said: "We're delighted with this announcement, which will mean better services in the future for our passengers on the East Coast

Mainline. This massive investment builds on our work to implement digital signalling on the Northern City Line into Moorgate in the City of London, and it means we can continue to roll out the technology on some of our key routes.”

Maggie Simpson OBE, Director General, Rail Freight Group, said: “Freight customers throughout supply chains are dependent on reliable rail services to deliver goods to people. We welcome this investment in digital signalling that will provide a more flexible and resilient railway, unlocking future growth potential in rail freight traffic supporting both decarbonisation and economic growth.”

David Clarke, Technical Director at the Railway Industry Association (RIA), said: “This is a welcome further investment in digital signalling, which will help transform how passengers and freight travel on the East Coast Main Line. The East Coast Digital Programme will increase train capacity, provide more reliable services and better information for passengers and bring safety and environmental benefits. It will future proof one of the vital transport arteries of the UK.

“It is credit to the team at Network Rail, led by Toufic Machnouk, and members of the supply chain, who are working so collaboratively on the ECDP. Earlier this year, RIA published a report on the programme which found that its innovative structure and the close work between suppliers and clients are currently helping the team reach key milestones on time and will pave the way for future railway projects.” So today’s announcement builds on steady progress in this area, following the launch of digital signalling and trains on the Elizabeth line and Thameslink, the 4LM project by Transport for London, and further investment promised in the Integrated Rail Plan. Rolling out digital signalling more widely will be an important part of building a rail network which is fit for the future. RIA will continue to work with our members and partners to support the delivery of the ECDP and other digital projects, to ensure customers right around the country feel the benefits of digital technology on our railway.”