

GTR shares expertise in digital signalling with freight operator DB Cargo UK

February 23, 2023



Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) has collaborated with freight operator DB Cargo UK to share its expertise of digital signalling as work continues on the East Coast Digital Programme (ECDP) to transform the East Coast Main Line.

The ECDP will see traditional lineside signals replaced by state-of-the-art digital signalling (European Train Control System, or ETCS), meaning there will be more reliable services for passengers and freight that will also save 55 thousand tonnes of CO2. The next generation of train travel will provide continuous, real-time information to the driver's cab, with the first stage of the signalling set to be introduced on the Northern City Line, between Finsbury Park and Moorgate later this year.

DB Cargo UK recently took its Class 66 locomotive to GTR's Hornsey depot, where the freight train proudly stood alongside GTR's Class 717 Great Northern train, already fitted with digital signalling technology. The aim of the visit was to learn about GTR's approach to rolling out ETCS, as well as the lessons learned so far from the project. Prior to the visit, the two companies have worked together for months by sharing their knowledge to maximise the benefits of this new technology.

The train operator is continuing to share its expertise with DB Cargo UK, since GTR already uses ETCS on the Thameslink Core – from St Pancras to London Bridge.

Oliver Turner, Head of European Rail Traffic Management at GTR, said: “At GTR we’re learning a phenomenal amount about the implementation of ETCS. We want the community of operators in the programme to benefit from this, to save them time, cost and effort.

“That’s why we want to share our learnings with DB Cargo UK – and others across the industry – to make the introduction of ETCS the best it can be.”

Casper Carr, Assistant Business Change Manager at DB Cargo UK, said: “GTR have given DB Cargo an insight into the direction we should be going in and areas to avoid. If we work in silos, no lessons are learned and no one benefits.

“Whether it’s a freight operating company, a train operating company, on track machinery, heritage or charter, we are all in this together.”

Photo credit: DB Cargo/ Ryan Mulhern