

# Rail Minister celebrates start of ECDP digitally signalled passenger services

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Rail Minister Huw Merriman has celebrated the recent start of digitally signalled passenger services on a busy London commuter line. Digital signalling on Great Northern's Northern City Line (NCL), from Finsbury Park to Moorgate in the City of London, is the first stage in the pioneering £1.4 billion East Coast Digital Programme (ECDP).

The Rail Minister saw the ETCS (European Train Control System) technology first hand as he travelled in the cab of the 1007 Finsbury Park to Moorgate service, before visiting Great Northern's Hornsey depot in north London. He saw the simulator facilities where drivers are being trained on ETCS, and he thanked the combined Network Rail, Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) and Siemens project team that have delivered the ground breaking transition.

The start of migration to ETCS on the NCL follows various phases of testing and a series of regulatory approvals. It has been the highlight of a year of progress on ECDP, including:

- Progressing the installation of new equipment and technology between Welwyn and Hitchin, ready for the introduction of the first ETCS services on the East Coast Main Line in Phase Two of the ECDP
- Retrofitting ETCS to the first freight train in a national programme, and the first commuter train from the large 'Electrostar' fleet
- Awarding a contract for the upgrade of Britain's largest train fleet, the Siemens Class 700, to the latest version of ETCS. This is a key enabler to rolling out digital signalling on other key routes like the Brighton Main Line and Midland Main Line
- Delivering an extensive range of 'full cab' and desk top based driver simulators with digital signalling capability, to enable nearly 3,000 train drivers to be trained to drive with digital signalling

Rail Minister Huw Merriman said: "This achievement marks a significant milestone in this Government's ambitious £1.4 billion East Coast Digital Programme, which is paving the way for a safer and more reliable network for millions of passengers.

"We are committed to investing in infrastructure and modernising all aspects of our railways. This is a huge step towards doing that, building the skills of thousands of drivers and replacing Victorian infrastructure across the country with new cutting-edge technology to futureproof the network."

Toufic Machnouk, Network Rail's Director, Industry Partnership for Digital Railway, said: "Digital signalling will enable a more reliable, and more capable and resilient railway. The Northern City Line is a vital 'pathfinder' project, not just for the ECDP, but for the wider deployment of the digital signalling masterplan across the network. It is showing the value of our collaborative cross industry delivery model, and we are 'learning by doing' as it progresses."

Keith Jipps, Infrastructure Director at GTR, said: "Switching on ETCS digital signalling on our Great Northern Moorgate services was a fantastic moment for our customers, who can look forward to improved reliability, as well as the industry project team because this paves the way for its wider roll-out on the vital artery of the East Coast Main Line. We can now press ahead with training our drivers in the cutting-edge technology."

Ben Lane, Siemens Mobility's Project Director for ECDP, said: "Having the Rail Minister join us is testament to the importance of the project to the industry and the magnitude of running trains in ETCS on the Northern City Line. Collaborating with GTR and Network Rail has allowed us to effectively implement Siemens Mobility's skills and technology to achieve this fantastic milestone"

For further information about the ECDP visit [www.eastcoastdigitalprogramme.co.uk](http://www.eastcoastdigitalprogramme.co.uk)

*Photo credit: Network Rail*