Policy paper - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/railways-bill/railways-bill-rail-freight

Railways Bill factsheet: rail freight

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Rail freight is a key method of transporting goods around the country. The government is committed to growing rail freight to realise its significant economic and environmental potential to the UK alongside its critical role in preserving the resilience of our logistics sector.

There are significant economic and environmental benefits of rail freight. It is an attractive sector for investors, bringing international investment that creates jobs and careers, supports the wider UK supply chain, and can have positive impacts on overall living standards.

It is also critical to supporting key government priorities, for example, a single freight train can transport enough materials to build 30 houses or 9 houses and all their supporting infrastructure such as roads, pavements and utilities. This will help the government reach its target of building 1.5 million homes over the next 5 years. We also need rail freight to meet our environmental targets: a diesel-hauled rail freight service reduces carbon emissions by 76% per tonne compared to road haulage, so that is an essential factor in the government's commitment to support the growth of rail freight across the UK.

What will the Railways Bill do?

The Railways Bill will:

- **Require the SoS to set out a Long-Term Rail Strategy**: the strategy will set out the government's long term ambitions for the rail sector, including freight. See more information in the Long Term Rail Strategy factsheet.
- **Place a duty on Great British Railways (GBR), ministers and the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to promote the use of rail freight**: the delivery of rail freight services will remain mainly in the private sector, but freight operators will need to run their services on GBR's tracks and infrastructure. GBR will decide who can run train services on the tracks and how much they should pay for it. Therefore, this duty will ensure that the promoting the freight sector is a central goal of GBR's decision making – and that it is considered by other key players in the industry as well.
- **Require the Secretary of State to set a rail freight growth target (or targets) for GBR**: the bill will require the SoS to set a rail growth target. The government has confirmed that there will be an overall target of 75% increase in rail freight moved by 2050 alongside other targets which will be announced

prior to the stand up of Great British Railways. GBR will be expected to consider how it will support growth and work to achieve the target when designing and developing its business plans.

What are the benefits for freight operators?

Within GBR, there will be a central freight team to provide rail freight users with a clear single point of contact, responsible for championing the sector and with the flexibility to offer targeted discounts to stimulate growth.

GBR, acting as the directing mind, will be able to provide greater long-term direction in terms of infrastructure strategy and its Access and Use Policy for the freight industry. This will in turn increase certainty for industry, providing the confidence for investment in the sector (in particular in the adoption of innovative technologies to create greater efficiency and decarbonisation of the logistics sector).

How will you ensure that access decisions are taken fairly?

The Railways Bill will ensure fairness across the network for all users, including when GBR is making access decisions. GBR's decisions will be made in accordance with the duties and priorities set out above and will be supported by a robust appeals process run by the Office of Rail and Road – to whom freight and other operators can appeal if GBR has acted unfairly. See more information in the making best use of the rail network factsheet.