

Network Rail to close 500 of the most dangerous level crossings

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Network Rail should close 500 of the most dangerous level crossings over the next five years under a £109 million closure programme announced by the rail regulator yesterday.

The initiative comes as the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) and Network Rail prepare to testify next week before a parliamentary inquiry into the safety of Britain's 6,500 level crossings. The inquiry has heard evidence from the families of children who have been killed and injured, detailing repeated failures to improve the crossings.

Richard Price, chief executive of the ORR, said there was a "compelling" case to build underpasses and footbridges.

The regulator also said that 90 per cent of trains should run on time on commuter lines in London and the South East, on regional railways and in Scotland.

The ORR said that the "tough" targets would force Network Rail to improve performance on the worst-performing lines. However, the 90-per cent target is below the current threshold of 92.5 per cent.

Mr Price said services run by First Capital Connect, Southern and London Midland were among those most in need of improvement.

"These real high volume commuter operators are not getting the service we have funded Network Rail to deliver and that is where we have got to see some real improvement," Mr Price said.

The ORR added that Network Rail must reduce operating costs by 20 per cent by 2019.

However, the regulator predicted that Network Rail would miss a target of cutting costs by 21 per cent in the five years to 2014.

Mr Price said that he was satisfied with Network Rail's performance in the wake of strong winds earlier this week despite days of disruption on some routes.

Passengers endured delays of up to an hour yesterday because of a broken down freight train and signalling problems.

A train broke down at Acton bridge, Cheshire, leaving London Midland services unable to run between Crewe and Liverpool Lime Street and hour-long delays on Virgin Trains.

Network Rail said it would study the ORR proposals and respond by February 7. Sir David Higgins, chief executive, said: "The next five years for the railway will prove to be a critical challenge."

Campaigners asked why fares should continue to rise above inflation if the cost of running the railway was being reduced.

Martin Abrams of Campaign for Better Transport said: "Commuters will continue to ask why their fares are continuing to rise at such steep rates whilst the overall cost of running our railways is falling. As real wages continue to fall we would like to see some of these savings passed onto hard-working commuters."

6 comments

 Michael Daventry

1 person listening

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James Primavesi

7 days ago

We are always hearing about how much green policies, or immigrants, or the EU supposedly cost the economy.

But can someone try and calculate, how much idiots cost the economy each year as well? Think it might be a sizable amount but sadly, not a lot we can do...

2 Recommend Reply

Found it

7 days ago

The point that some fool might cause a derailment made me change my views. This investment isn't for the idiots who run, drive or cycle out in front of trains, but for the train passengers.

1 Recommend Reply

Foreversideways

7 days ago

How about we just use a bit of common sense when we isa level crossings. Anyone who gets killed jumping a crossing deserves all they get.

2 Recommend Reply

Barry Gee

7 days ago

I agree with Alan Dow (below). Of course one has enormous sympathy with families who have lost loved-ones in crossing accidents. But people are having to cross busy roads everywhere, every day. We assume all responsible parents instill road-safety drill in their children, and leave it at that, so surely they should do the same when it comes to crossing railway lines - which do, at least, invariably have gates, lights and/or prominent signs to remind us of the potential danger.

Closing 500 crossings completely is going to cause quite a bit of inconvenience, in total, to people using the roads or footpaths to be blocked off, isn't it?

7 Recommend Reply

Jenesaisquoi

7 days ago

@Barry Gee I agree- and that video of the cyclist says it all- what was she thinking of? Trouble is that everyone has to pay the cost for people who do not think or behave responsibly. No doubt even with all the announced improvements someone will get killed or injured in the future on our railways, despite best efforts.

Recommend Reply

Alan Dow

7 days ago

Can we spend the same amount per head saved on our roads to close crossing points? We seem to expect that railways should be totally safe but accept road deaths

9 Recommend Reply

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