

# How the West Coast was won

One of Europe's biggest railway projects has been successfully completed, thanks to the help of Unipart Rail.

## Improved journeys

Rail passengers will see journey times slashed by 30% and over 1,000 extra trains will run each week as a result of the £9billion West Coast Main Line Modernisation Project. Significant changes to 13 major junctions on the high-speed route between London and Glasgow have enabled trains to travel at up to 125mph.

Iain Coucher, Chief Executive, Network Rail, said: 'This has been an extraordinarily complex project to rebuild Europe's busiest mixed-use railway. Now it is complete, passengers and freight operators will reap the benefits.'

## Materials supply

Unipart Rail's input to this massively complex logistics exercise has been to provide materials for the contractors to complete the works, as part of its Third Party Logistics (TPL) contract with Network Rail. It started out in 2002 with prospective sales of around £2million and a portfolio of around 1,000 items, but due to the partnership approach and the building of trust, final revenues figures add up to over £100million and a basket of 4,000 items.

The key to this success and expansion has been the close co-operation and long-term relationship with Network Rail on the TPL contract. Six Unipart Rail material planners were co-located into the project offices across the route to help plan material demands on the ground level. This co-operation helped build a special relationship between the two companies and the key project figures charged with making sure each individual job was engineered on time.

This was emphasised by Stephen Blakey, WCRM Commercial Director, Network Rail: 'The WCRM TPL strategy was developed to meet



some strategic and operational challenges and through teamwork, flexibility and sheer determination, the challenges were overcome and the TPL is a success. I would like to recognise the support and service provided by Unipart Rail and thank them for a job well done.'

## Customer service

Throughout the course of the contract, Unipart Rail has delivered exceptional customer service in often extremely demanding circumstances and also saved Network Rail in excess of £15million in material costs by using the 'Unipart Way' to create a lean transactional model to manage its suppliers, ensuring that they always achieved the best possible price for the customer.

Unipart Rail constantly identified ways to help the customer and used creative problem solving to assist Network Rail in areas of difficulty. As the contract has now come to a close, Unipart Rail has also managed and

stored surplus materials in addition to providing a logistical solution.

In many situations, Unipart Rail helped reduce the risk of the contract, by setting up a buffer stock of over 500 items for Network Rail, ensuring key items were always available for the projects, even when required at short notice. Unipart Rail also helped expand the range of Overhead Line Equipment and the number of suppliers of these products, controlling a continuous flow of orders and ensuring that all customers got these capacity constrained items when they needed them.

## Future legacy

The legacy of this contract will live on for some time. Over three million yards of rail, ballast and sleepers have been laid, along with 174 new or altered bridges and 53 new or extended platforms created and Unipart Rail Logistics was a significant contributor to this achievement.



During a presentation at the Railtex 2009 exhibition, Unipart Rail and Atkins formally signed an agreement, which will see them offer a 'buy and install' service for signalling equipment. Through the alliance, signalling equipment can be purchased, installed and commissioned under a single contract. Pictured above are (left to right): Andy Little, Atkins; Graham Jackson, Unipart Rail; Fraser Greenwood, Atkins; David Kierton and Phil Hickey, Unipart Rail.



A distribution agreement was signed between MGB Electrical and Unipart Rail during the Railtex 2009 exhibition. Unipart Rail is now the distributor of new GRP disconnection boxes. Pictured above following the signing of the agreement are (left to right): Adrian Healey, Unipart Rail; Grace Tipson and Peter Dickson, MGB Electrical; Chris Davies, Unipart Rail. Photographs: Alex Hall.