

## **Response on A new approach to rail passenger services in London and the South East**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The response below is an officers' response to the DfT, TfL and Mayor of London's [Rail Prospectus](#).

### **2. Question 1: Do you agree with the principle of a partnership to better integrate the specification of rail passenger services across London and the South East?**

- 2.1. [REDACTED] supports the principle of rail devolution.
- 2.2. As stated on p5 of the prospectus:  
*"This proposal includes the transfer of responsibility from the DfT to TfL for inner suburban rail services that operate mostly or wholly within Greater London, as current franchises fall due for renewal. The DfT will continue to be responsible for outer suburban services. The partnership will ensure that all the region's passengers benefit from a joined-up approach."*
- 2.3. The prospectus (p12) also states that the partnership *"focuses on the procurement, specification and management of the railway operators providing the day-to-day service to customers"*. In effect TfL will become the **franchiser** of inner suburban rail services. This is taken to mean local (not long distance) rail services in London and just outside its borders. It is appropriate that TfL acts in partnership with the DfT, which otherwise acts in the capacity of franchiser for the other rail services in the SE.

### **3. Question 2 Do you agree with the principles that the partnership will work to? Are there any specific issues that have not been captured?**

#### **Question 6 Are there other outcomes you might expect to see achieved?**

- 3.1. [REDACTED] supports the three principles set out in the prospectus but makes the following observations.
- 3.2. *More frequent services, better interchanges and increased capacity.* As shown on the map on p17, rail services in north London already operate at metro-style frequencies, so a more ambitious target should be set. The need for higher levels of staffing and new rolling stock with wider doors are recognised in the prospectus as ways of achieving more frequent services; these specifications will need to be set as requirements as new franchises are let. It is acknowledged that the funding and structure of Network Rail is currently being reviewed (p12) and that major investment in infrastructure is being reviewed by the National Infrastructure Commission. Although the prospectus does not commit to specific infrastructure proposals, the letting of franchises will need to take these into account and the specifications will have to change appropriately. London's population and employment growth is increasing very quickly, so the franchises will need to take account of this dynamism. Crossrail, Thameslink, the STAR project (p24), the extension and electrification of the Gospel Oak Barking Line, the extension of the Overground to Old Oak Common and HS2 are examples of schemes that will have consequences on the demand for linking rail services and illustrate the need for the letting of franchises to take account of this dynamism.

In order to realise metro-style frequencies and to set targets at all will require investment in infrastructure. Consideration will therefore be needed about the process (such as a contract change request mechanism) so that the franchisee can be given new specifications during the period of the franchise. This has implications for governance, engagement with stakeholders and consultation.

- 3.3. *Greater reliability for all passengers.* TfL operates a strict performance regime for its Overground services and by setting a high quality specification that LOROL must adhere to, TfL has demonstrated that it is capable of managing rail devolution.
- 3.4. *Higher standards of customer service.* [REDACTED] welcomes enhancing rail services at the weekend and at night (p28). The scope to increase night frequencies should also be considered. This may not require infrastructure investment (track, S&T, etc., as opposed to investment in rolling stock), but a franchise specification change mechanism will be required to realise these as mentioned above.

[REDACTED] welcomes the development of new interchanges such as West Hampstead (p25) as well as other key locations such as Old Oak Common. To be effective as transport hubs stopping patterns will need to be adapted so that more services stop there, thereby providing better connections to a variety of locations. Step free accessibility improvements (p28) should be focussed at hub locations as these have the potential to have wider system benefits for the passengers concerned. Passenger use at specific stations is also an important factor in developing strategic improvements to accessibility.

The aim of having no detrimental effect on fares is noted (p22), but another aim should be to simplify fares, ideally through a zonal system, with the emphasis on making fares affordable. Lower average fares could be achieved by developing ticketing that encourages peak demand to spread through discounted early morning fares and “off peak” fares. This would improve loadings over a wider time period (thus improving overall transport efficiency and providing capacity benefits) without necessarily investing in infrastructure improvements.

The aim of improving the travel environment is noted, though safety and security in and around station is a matter of consideration in its own right. As TfL took over progressively more Overground services staffing levels at stations was improved, especially in the evenings. This in turn boosted ridership, partly by reducing crime and the fear of crime. Technology also has a role to play in security issues (e.g. CCTV, gating).

#### **4. Question 3 Do you agree with the proposed governance arrangements?**

**Question 4 What form do you propose the input from local authorities and LEPs could take?**

**Question 5 Do you agree with the safeguards for transfer of inner suburban services to TfL, as set out here?**

- 4.1. The prospectus (p12) states that “*The partnership will be between DfT and TfL, working closely with train operators, Network Rail and the supply chain. Crucially it will provide a forum for all LEPs, local authorities and other local and regional bodies to have a say in the specification and management of rail services.*”
- 4.2. Consideration should be given to how this forum will operate, as this is unclear. While it is acknowledged that TfL in partnership with the DfT will need to make decisions about franchise arrangements, inputs from local government organisations will be vital. Rather than the partnership simply engaging with and consulting local

authorities a more active mechanism should be sought and formalised, such as an advisory body with representatives from boroughs and London Councils.

- 4.3. The prospectus refers to the role of the private sector and LEPs in inputting to the specifications of contractors (p31). (The Local Enterprise Partnership for London is the London Enterprise Panel, with members drawn from business and local government.) This will need to be considered in relation to the comments made in the paragraph above. However, it is important to note that local authorities set the framework for sustainable development: [REDACTED] land use and transport planning approach is fully integrated and [REDACTED] policies encourage development at locations with good public transport connections, such as rail stations.
- 4.4. Regarding safeguards for transferring services to TfL, comments have been made about fares in paragraph 3.4. Issues relating to frequency, journey times and stopping patterns are complex. In developing hubs, changes will be needed and are warranted: the growing importance of orbital services in the form of the existing Overground services illustrate that the higher frequencies and new connections offered enable certain trips to be made efficiently without the need to make a radial journey in and another out between certain OD pairs. Consequently [REDACTED] cannot simply agree with the proposition that “Extra capacity on peak local London services would only be added if there is no negative impact on longer distance services” (p22); it is a question of getting the balance right in relation to specific examples. (See also the further qualification in paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3.) The growth of population and employment in and around London is so great that some sustainable development may be stymied if the above proposition were strictly applied.

## 5. Other issues

- 5.1. Rail devolution has implications for the Freedom Pass and related products, in that the GLA Act prescribes how concession schemes operated on ‘TfL’s services’ will result in boroughs funding travel outside London. A change in primary legislation may be required to overcome this anomaly.
- 5.2. Question 5: One of the ‘safeguards’ that it is proposed that the partnership will work to in transferring services is that:
- “No adverse impacts on the frequency, journey times or stopping patterns of longer distance services to and from London. Extra capacity on peak local London services would only be added if there is no negative impact on longer distance services.”
- This depends on the definition of what is meant by a *longer distance* as opposed to an *inner suburban* service. There are three termini in Camden – Euston, Kings Cross and St Pancras – each of which has a mix of services. [REDACTED] would agree with this safeguard for very long distance services such as Edinburgh to Euston. There are many ‘medium distance’ services that are hard to classify. Is Milton Keynes to Euston or the Bedford to Brighton ‘Thameslink’ service ‘longer distance’ or ‘inner suburban’? The former is a material concern [REDACTED] with respect to the way HS2 impacts on classic services, particularly during the construction of Phase 2 and how the comprehensive development of the NR side of the station might unfold.
- 5.3. A distinction should be made between longer distance, medium distance and inner suburban services, with clear definitions and examples of each. One way of getting the balance right between ‘medium distance’ and ‘inner suburban’ services is to use a suitable metric. One approach might be to estimate the impact on Nominally

Accumulated Passengers Hours, a metric that TfL uses as a management tool with regard to Underground services as a basis for making informed decisions about service management and investments. In practice a programme of strategic and staged investment will be needed to resolve these issues and the specification of services will need to be set within the dynamic situation of London's growth.

- 5.4. There may be scope to increase the capacity of inner suburban services through longer trains, but there will come a point when increments in infrastructure investment will be needed in the context of Network Rail's long term planning process and investment through the usual NR control period cycles.