

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

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your prospectus about rail services in the South East.

\_\_\_\_\_ certainly agrees that we need to improve the capacity and the effectiveness of our rail network in order to cater for existing and future levels of growth. We are very happy to play a full part in developing your emerging proposals.

We believe that your proposals would be enhanced if the wider South East was seen as an important economic region in its own right, as well as being a part of London's success as a world-class city. The South East (excluding London) provides 14.9% of the UK's GVA. This makes the region the second highest contributor to GVA and higher than Wales and Scotland combined.

It is important to appreciate the how the rail network in the South East works. Our transport network not only serves the traditional commuter journeys from the South East into London. It also provides for the large number of journeys made from London to employment in the surrounding counties, as well as journeys between towns and airports in the South East which do not involve London.

National rail is particularly important for the wider South East, as it accounts for 9% of journeys to work, compared with London's 14% and the Great Britain average of 6%.

The Coast to Capital area includes a wide variety of rail journeys which could be impacted by these proposals, but which do not come within TfL's responsibility. These include journeys to major destinations such as Gatwick Airport and the city of Brighton, as well as commuter journeys to other important employment centres such as Chichester, Leatherhead, Epsom, Crawley and Croydon as well as east-west journeys along the North Downs Line. All of these could be affected by decisions made about capacity, infrastructure and services within the London boundary.

Because of this, we believe that your proposed partnership would be enhanced if it included the wider South East region as full partners alongside Transport for London and the Department for Transport. Whilst TfL is well placed to take decisions about rail services within the London boundary, there is a finite capacity for rail services inside London and especially in the mainline terminuses. This requires a reasoned and balanced discussion to weigh up how the available capacity can be shared between competing services.

For example, whilst we can see that the aspiration of a metro-style railway might appeal for the typically short journeys made wholly within the London boundary, it can create a tension with the generally longer and higher speed rail journeys made in the wider region. An automatic presumption for metro-style services would also be likely to have a negative impact on services beyond London.

As we are sure you are aware, there are a number of discussions taking place with authorities and LEPs in the South East about devolution, including the possible creation of one or more sub national transport bodies. We believe that these discussions should be merged with your proposal for a new South East rail partnership.

When this was discussed at a presentation at Great Minster House on 11 March, it was argued that LEPs and local authorities could not be easily represented on the partnership board as there were 72 organisations with an interest in the South East. It was suggested that it would be difficult to allow all 72 bodies a seat at the table.

We believe that this could be addressed by the South East LEPs and local authorities being represented by one or more umbrella organisations, in the same way that the 33 London Boroughs are represented by London Councils. For example, seven of the LEPs come together as the "Greater Thames Valley" partnership. Local authorities could be represented by bodies such as the South East branch of ADEPT or the South East County Leaders.

We would be very happy to discuss how LEPs and local authorities could work in partnership with the Department for Transport and TfL and to help the Department develop an appropriate system for doing this.

Specific answers to your consultation questions are attached.

**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?**

We certainly agree with the principle of a partnership that is representative of the local authorities and LEPs across London and the South East.

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

We agree the broad principles of:

- More frequent services, better interchanges and increased capacity
- Greater reliability
- High standards of customer service

The proposal for more metro style is interesting. It needs to be balanced against the need for longer distance services.

**Question 3: Do you agree with the proposed governance arrangements?**

We would ask that the concept of a partnership be developed to be consistent with the dialogue that is taking place between the Government, local authorities and LEPs around the proposals for devolution and sub national transport bodies.

This may mean that the South East is eventually represented by one or more sub national transport bodies. In the short term and before a sub national transport body is established, the South East could be represented by existing organisations such as the Greater Thames Valley partnership of LEPs, the South East branch of ADEPT and South East County Leaders.

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

See the answer to question 3. LEPs and local authorities should be included in the partnership as full members through a suitable representative body or bodies.

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

One of the safeguards in the prospectus is that there should be "No adverse impacts on the frequency, journey times or stopping patterns of longer distance services to and from London". It is not clear whether this refers to **existing** longer distance services or **new** services.

If it refers to **existing** services, then it offers only a limited safeguard. In the next few years, we would expect to see an increase in the capacity of both urban and longer distance services due to the planned additional capacity in schemes such as Crossrail 2 and proposed improvements to lines such as the Brighton Main Line.

Because of this there needs to be a reasoned debate about the allocation of the additional capacity to both urban and sub-urban services. Whilst the additional capacity is welcomed, it is finite. This will inevitably mean that there will need to be tradeoffs between different service types and destinations.

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

The prospectus would be improved if it included more about the wider South East region instead of its current focus on London. Other non-rail modes should be included, such as the role of bus and cycling. We can appreciate that the Government has yet to take decisions about airport capacity, but regardless of the decision on additional runways the two main airports of Heathrow and Gatwick will continue to be important destinations and origins.