

[REDACTED]

By email to:
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[REDACTED]

Your Ref :
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A new approach to rail passenger services in London and the South East

This response is made on behalf of the [REDACTED]. As outlined in previous responses to consultations on the devolution of rail services, [REDACTED] supports responsibility for London suburban rail services sitting with London government.

This support is based on the devolution of services leading to improved service frequencies and reliability, better quality trains and stations, as well as significant improvements in the overall customer experience.

Rail's role in London and the South East's success

As the recently published prospectus makes clear the rail network will continue to be instrumental in supporting London's growth. [REDACTED] is looking to play its part but can only achieve housing and employment growth aspirations if there is investment in the rail network.

A prime example is a gap in service provision at Angel Road station which is located next to the £2.5bn development site of Meridian Water. Currently the station only receives one train per hour in peak; however when this station is served by four trains per hour, the standard set by TfL for suburban rail services in London, it will unlock up to 8,000 new homes and 3,000 new jobs.

In addition there are relatively poor station environments, including an absence of staff, served by life expired and low capacity rolling stock. All of this significantly impacts on customers as shown in the National Passenger Satisfaction surveys which highlight issues with reliability, rolling stock, stations and, unsurprisingly, value for money across the board.

[REDACTED]

Against this backdrop ██████████ has supported the devolution of services to the Mayor of London, in particular on the Great Northern and West Anglia routes. This is because the devolution of other services to form the London Overground network, operated by Transport for London, has seen much needed investment in stations, trains and staff with corresponding improvements in customer experience, frequency and reliability.

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?

As the prospectus notes London and the South East drive the UK economy, with a major part of this success being the extensive rail network which allows people to access job and leisure opportunities. Therefore it makes sense to have a partnership which is made up of key stakeholders to ensure the specification of rail passenger services across London and the South East is better integrated.

However this partnership must also have local accountability so we look forward to seeing firm proposals outlining how the London boroughs will be engaged.

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

The principles outlined broadly cover the areas of interest for ██████████

Question 3 - Do you agree with the proposed governance arrangements?

██████████ has been clear that the directly elected Mayor of London should be ultimately accountable for the provision and quality of services within London's boundary. In addition, by devolving both funding and responsibility, investment decisions can be made at a regional level which means London specific priorities, for example housing growth, can be taken into account.

By devolving services to TfL they can also be procured using a contract model which removes revenue risk from the operator, so that they can focus on delivering clearly specified levels of service, rather than simply generating profit or managing a loss.

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

It is also welcome that the benefits of direct and ongoing input into the specifying and operation of services by London Boroughs, with their locally accountable Councillors, has been recognised. The form that this engagement takes will depend on the other structures being put in place but, given recent experience, [REDACTED] would want it to be early in any decision making process and involve full and open discussions.

In terms of proposed timings, it is disappointing that passengers using Great Northern services will have to wait until 2021 or later to see the benefits of being part of the London Overground network. We would welcome further thought being given as to whether these services, which are peripheral to the delivery of the Thameslink programme, can be devolved earlier.

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

In relation to the proposed safeguards, it is essential that users in London should not have to pay more than the appropriate zonal fare if services become part of the London Overground network. In addition the DfT should commit to the revenue from fares being retained by TfL so that they can be invested in London's rail network.

On the proposal to specifically protect longer distance services, it only seems reasonable that this should work both ways, with inner suburban services similarly protected. It should be noted that on the West Anglia route there have been changes made in the past, which reduced journey times on longer distance services at the expense of frequency at stations in London. Interestingly, in this example, the changes were discussed and agreed by a range of local authorities.

With this in mind it should be noted that, given the constrained nature of the rail network in north London, by taking a protectionist approach there is unlikely to much scope for making real service improvements in the short term. Therefore consideration should be given to devolving the specification of services to groups of directly affected local authorities, with the Mayor of London and Secretary of State acting as final arbiters in case of dispute.

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

It is welcome that the DfT and TfL are looking at how best to utilise London's suburban rail network and the top-level outcomes outlined in the prospectus capture most of the key elements.

However, [REDACTED] would also look for the inclusion of the following outcomes (more detail below):

- Value for money including affordability of fares and cost of concessionary travel.
- Safety and security.

It is important that fares are competitive to avoid significant numbers of passengers shifting to other modes, which is likely to result in congestion. By aiming to achieve value for money for passengers generally the partnership can also help to achieve value for money for London's local authorities that meet the costs of the Freedom Pass.

The London and South East Rail Partnership should consider options that it believes can help to ensure that rail travel in London is affordable to those that live and work in the capital.

In terms of safety and security, whilst this could be said to fall within the ambition for a better travel environment, this belies its importance to passengers and the impact it has on travel choices. Station operators should work with London's local authorities to ensure that the safety and security of stations are considered alongside the surrounding environment.

In terms of specific service outcomes, the [REDACTED] welcomes the possible 8 trains per hour service frequency on Great Northern services as outlined in the prospectus.

However we would also like to see consideration being given to devolving additional services on the West Anglia rail route, or making arrangements for separate service groups to be just that. Currently the interworking between Abellio Greater Anglia services and London Overground is to the detriment of all users with abysmal service reliability being the result.

The obvious solution is on the West Anglia route for the DfT and TfL to work together to deliver a sustained programme of investment, up to and including

Crossrail 2, which will allow both inner suburban and longer distance users to benefit:

<i>Delivered by</i>	<i>Service frequency</i>	<i>Infrastructure delivered</i>
2024	8 trains per hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Solutions to level crossings• New platform capacity at London terminus• Four tracking along the Lea Valley mainline
2030	14 to 16 trains per hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crossrail 2 Lee Valley branch

Conclusion: A world-class railway for the future

With all of this in mind there are a number of reasons why [REDACTED] continues to support further devolution of London suburban rail services, in particular on the Great Northern and West Anglia routes:

- The directly elected Mayor of London is ultimately accountable for the provision and quality of services.
- Investment decisions can be made at a regional level which means London specific priorities, for example housing growth, can be taken into account.
- The contract model adopted by TfL removes revenue risk from the operator so that they can focus on delivering clearly specified levels of service, rather than simply generating profit or managing a loss.
- Evidence from the roll out of earlier phases of the London Overground network shows that investment in improving the fundamentals of the service leads to increased usage and promotes modal shift.
- Having one organisation specifying and managing the operation of services means there is greater consistency which is better for customers.
- One tangible benefit is the inclusion of services in the zonal fares system which makes life simpler and often cheaper for passengers.
- There are also less tangible benefits such as the inclusion of services on the world recognised Underground map.

However [REDACTED] support for further devolution is contingent on:

- The London Boroughs, with their locally accountable Councillors, having a direct and ongoing input into the specifying and operation of services.
- High standards of service being maintained and where they are not currently being achieved, for example off peak services to [REDACTED] only

operating at two trains per hour, the Mayor of London specifying how and when this will be addressed.

- Investment in services also supporting housing growth and regeneration, as well as improved access to employment, particularly in the Upper Lee Valley which is London's largest Opportunity Area.
- Fare increases being minimised and revenue protection being increased.
- Consistency in the terms of use of Freedom Passes across services.

In terms of the next stages of devolution, [REDACTED] strongly supports the Great Northern inner suburban services being transferred to the Mayor of London, subject to the contingencies highlighted above.

In summary, [REDACTED] supports the principle of rail devolution where it will:

- Bring more of the railway in London under closer democratic control by London's regional and local government.
- Offer best value for passengers and funders.
- Focus investment on the currently neglected inner-suburban services.
- Provide a better customer experience.
- Ensure that the rail services are developed to support economic growth in line with Mayoral and borough priorities.

I hope this clarifies the [REDACTED] views, but please get in touch if you require any further information.

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]