

A New Approach to Rail Passenger Services in London and the South East

Response of [REDACTED]

Context

1. [REDACTED]. Stretching from Oxfordshire to Cambridgeshire, [REDACTED] represents an economy valued at £92.5bn, and is home to 175,000 businesses that employ 1,640,000 people out of a total population of 3.45m.
2. The [REDACTED] share a common aim: to look beyond current success and through collaborative work are committed to the aim of:
 - Raising productivity to match, and where possible exceed, that of our global competitors
 - Addressing identified barriers to the delivery of economic growth
3. [REDACTED] is in response to the recognition by the partners that:
 - In terms of strategic infrastructure the issues (and solutions) extend beyond any one single upper-tier authority
 - Issues that are common to one or more upper-tier administrative area may benefit from a co-ordinated response
 - There is a need for stronger integration of investment by Government, its agencies, local authorities, as well as infrastructure and service providers
4. [REDACTED] have established the [REDACTED] with the aim of:
 - [REDACTED]
 - Enabling a more efficient and meaningful engagement with the Department for Transport, infrastructure agencies (such as Highways England and Network Rail) and service providers (such as bus and train operating companies)
 - Providing the focus for a single conversation on strategic transport infrastructure.
5. [REDACTED]
 - Enable rationalisation of standards, practices and policies in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of day-to-day operation of the transport system and response to disruption (accidents, emergencies and extreme weather events)
 - Build upon locally identified needs to develop and maintain a single overview of strategic transport priorities in liaison with the Local Transport Authorities/Boards and other stakeholders as appropriate
 - Manage the resources available to establish project teams as a means of providing leadership required to develop strategic proposals, including engagement with business and the wider community
 - Establish joint bidding teams to undertake and commission technical work (including the development of business cases) to secure investment funding to enable the delivery of strategic proposals

- Work with Government and its agencies to co-design nationally delivered transport investment programmes.

6. [REDACTED] have set out their commitment to seek to establish a statutory Sub-national Transport Body at the earliest opportunity: work has begun on developing an Expression of Interest with a view to submitting it to Government in December 2016.
7. At the same time [REDACTED] have identified the need for a strategic approach to the identification and prioritisation of wider infrastructure requirements that support economic activity and growth: an approach that embraces strategic transport infrastructure requirements alongside digital infrastructure, energy, water, fluvial and waste.

Responses to the Consultation Questions

Q1: Do you agree with the principle of a partnership to better integrate the specification of rail passenger services across London and the South East?

8. [REDACTED] agrees that there is added value to be derived from having a 'joined up' approach to the specification and management of the rail network. However, it is vital that such an approach is underpinned by the recognition that the strategic interests of partners outside of London must be properly reflected in any proposed partnership arrangement.
9. The rail network is undoubtedly a 'shared resource', as identified by the consultation document. However, this does not and should not be seen as an argument for the DfT to devolve responsibilities and accountabilities only to TfL. At a time when the arrangements for sub-national transport infrastructure planning are being put on to a statutory footing, and there is Political commitment to put forward a proposal to Government by the end of 2016 to establish a statutory body for the Heartland area, the proposed governance associated with the new partnership needs to be amended to take this into account.
10. There needs to be explicit recognition of the simple fact that rail services support the economies of both London and the surrounding areas: the relationship is two-way. Indeed, the fact that economic activity in the Heartland area is supported by passenger outflows from London serves to emphasise the need for the partnership arrangements to give equal weight to representation from London and from the [REDACTED].
11. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] have established the Strategic Transport Forum explicitly to provide the focus for a single strategic conversation with Government, its agencies and adjoining areas. The Political leaders have also set out their commitment to use the collaborative partnership as part of its foundation for establishing a statutory Sub-national Transport body.
12. [REDACTED] is already engaged in engaged in commenting on the specification of the letting of new franchises. With delivery of the western section of the East-West Rail project underway, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] will also be looking to work with the DfT to develop the framework for letting the franchise for that service.
13. The latter project will create a new orbital rail corridor of strategic significance. It will encourage modal switch, as well as offering alternatives for existing rail users that avoids the need to transit via London. This will, in turn, create opportunities to consider how the capacity on the radial corridors might best be allocated, recognising as noted previously that the movement is two-way between the Heartland area and London.
14. From the above it is clear that the proposed partnership cannot be limited to just DfT and TfL, but also needs to include emergent sub-national transport bodies as equal partners.

[REDACTED]

Q2: *Do you agree with the principles that the partnership will work to? Are there any specific issues that have not been captured?*

15. As set out in our response to Question 1, the principles on which the proposed partnership is established needs to treat emergent sub-national transport bodies – such as that being developed by [REDACTED] – as equal partners.

16. In introducing the legislation that enables a statutory Sub-national Transport Body to be established the Government used the examples of securing a strategic view on the development of the rail sector and the introduction of smarter ticketing initiatives to support the proposal. [REDACTED] supports the Government's view on the added value that brought through the establishment of a Sub-national Transport Body.

17. Given the Government's position on the added value of Sub-national Transport Bodies, it would be inconsistent not to reflect their existence within the governance arrangements proposed under this consultation.

18. Such an arrangement would have the additional value of enabling a statutory linkage between the strategic transport planning undertaken by [REDACTED] (which will feed into the work of the National Infrastructure Commission) and the operational and management work overseen by the proposed new partnership arrangement proposed by this consultation.

Q3: *Do you agree with the proposed governance arrangements?*

19. Whilst the consultation document includes reference to take into account the views of local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships and other local organisations, it is clear that accountability for coming to a recommendation to the Secretary of State and Mayor of London rests with the DfT and TfL. **Such an arrangement is not acceptable** [REDACTED].

20. As set out in this response, the [REDACTED] has been established by the [REDACTED] to enable a single strategic conversation with Government, its agencies and other relevant bodies. It is seen by the partners as a stepping stone on the path towards establishing a statutory Sub-national Transport Body at the earliest opportunity.

21. It is likely that [REDACTED] will seek a similar level of accountability regarding to rail services operating in its area to that sought by the Mayor of London. This ambition – which is consistent with Government thinking underpinning the legislative framework for Sub-national Transport Bodies – needs to be reflected in the governance arrangements arising out of this consultation.

22. Failure to recognise the emergence of statutory Sub-national Transport Bodies will lead to a deficit in democratic accountability, to the detriment of the interests of [REDACTED].

Q4: *What form do you propose the input from Local Authorities and LEPs could take?*

23. Input from the Local Transport Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships on matters of strategic significance will be through the Strategic Transport Forum, and in due course the statutory Sub-national Transport Body.

24. [REDACTED] contribution to the proposed partnership will be underpinned by an overarching transport strategy. This will provide the basis for [REDACTED] input into the work of the National Infrastructure Commission, the preparation of future rail infrastructure plans (through the 5-year review period) and future franchise specifications. Preparation of the transport strategy will be underpinned by the extensive work that already exists and which underpins the Strategic Economic Plans.

[REDACTED]

Q5: *Do you agree with the safeguards for transfer of inner suburban services to TfL as set out here?*

25. [REDACTED] supports the proposed safeguards. However, the fact that these include explicit reference to the need to ensure 'no adverse impacts on the frequency, journey times or stopping patterns of longer distance services to/from London' reinforces the need for the governance arrangements to be amended to give equal weight to representations from emergent statutory Sub-national Transport Bodies.
26. As noted earlier, the creation of orbital routes outside of London – such as East-West Rail – offers the opportunity to consider how the capacity on radial routes might be best allocated. In that regard the involvement of bodies such as [REDACTED] would enable discussions between the relevant strategic bodies that would be of benefit to all parties.

Q6: *Are there other outcomes you might expect to see achieved?*

27. Investment in the rail network and services needs to form part of an integrated transport investment that supports economic activity and growth. In that regard it needs to be noted that the measures of success set out in the consultation document, whilst worthy of being secured, are in fact outputs and not outcomes.
28. A decision to invest in such outputs can only be arrived at having considered how the rail network/services forms part of a plan to deliver an integrated transport system, one that is customer focused and which supports plans for economic and housing growth. This serves to reinforce further the reason for the governance arrangements including emergent Sub-national Transport Bodies as equal partners.
29. [REDACTED] welcomes this consultation as further indication of the Government's commitment to genuine devolution of accountabilities from Whitehall to strategic partnerships. In that regard it is consistent with the framework that the Government has promoted through the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016, and in particular the establishment of statutory Sub-national Transport Bodies.
30. Whilst [REDACTED] supports the intention of the principles underpinning the proposals in the consultation document, it is clear that they do not take into account the change in legislative framework or the emergence of strategic sub-national partnerships. This response sets out how proposals in the consultation document can be amended to address this point and the [REDACTED] looks forward to working with both the DfT and TfL on taking the amended proposals forward on a collaborative basis

March 2016

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