

# **A NEW APPROACH TO RAIL PASSENGER SERVICES IN LONDON AND THE SOUTH EAST**

## **Working in partnership to improve services and support growth**

*A response by [REDACTED] to the January 2016 consultation paper produced by the Mayor of London, the Department for Transport, and Transport for London*

### **1 Introduction**

1.1 [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

1.2 [REDACTED] is supportive of the principles and objectives of the proposals in this report, which are clearly designed to improve passenger transport in South East England. It does though have a number of comments and concerns. In the [REDACTED] view, the principal problems are two fold:

- Rail services which extend beyond the Greater London Authority (GLA) boundary (and that includes most of what are normally defined as inner-suburban services) will be under the control of what, as far as the shire counties and unitaries are concerned, is an unelected body. There will thus always be a concern that if there is there is a conflict of requirements, the result is always likely to be in favour of the dominant partner and reflect the needs of passengers whose journeys are made wholly within the GLA area.
- Rail services do not exist in isolation, but as part of a network. It is that network as a whole which has to work as well as it can be made to. Any organisational set up that can be devised must ensure that the needs of long distance, outer suburban and inner suburban passengers are given equal priority, and that the requirements of freight providers will also be taken into account. Network benefits must be maintained.

### **2 Responses**

2.1 [REDACTED] responses to the six questions asked are as follows;

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

[REDACTED] is yes, but with the proviso that the reduction or elimination of one organisational boundary is not merely replaced with another elsewhere. Thus the physical boundary for the acceptance of Oyster cards and where they are/are not

available causes much ill feeling, but the present proposals seem unlikely to do more than transfer those boundaries to another location.

Thus Epsom is currently outside the Oyster area, but were it to be included, that would then cause those in Ashted and Leatherhead to complain. Given that most services continue to Dorking or to Guildford, should they too not be able to benefit? And if Guildford via Epsom is included, why not Guildford via Cobham and Guildford via Woking? These are distances the best part of 20 miles beyond the GLA boundary.

It will be interesting to know what TfL intend for fares on Crossrail 1 services to Reading, which is a similar distance beyond the GLA.

In general, a critical issue is to make sure that no group of passengers benefits unduly at the expense of others. Thus increasing service frequencies on inner London routes must not be allowed to constrain capacities on services which extend beyond Greater London, be they inner, outer, or long distance passenger services, or freight.

██████████ also notes that where the service is provided by TfL, GLA Freedom Passes are accepted without charge to their holders on all trains, without a morning peak restriction. Concessions are also extended to many children.

This is in contrast to what happens in the surrounding counties, where children are charged and Railcards are not accepted in the defined peaks. Such policies may have the effect of stimulating service usage at the peak, the very times that numbers need to be kept down if at all possible.

**Q2 Do you agree with the principles that the partnership will work to? Are there any specifics that have been left out?**

**More frequent services, better interchanges and increased capacity**

**Greater reliability for all passengers**

**High standards of customer service.**

These are desirable attributes of any service from a passenger viewpoint, but it is unclear why a separation of the present services into two franchises, maybe run by two different operators, should have these effects. Having two operators where there was previously one creates yet another operational interface with which to contend.

██████████ would comment that the approaches outlined are likely to lead to higher expenditure on the basis that they will require more trains, more staff and so on. In many cases, the objective of more frequent services will be very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve for track capacity reasons.

Further investment in making trains longer (and all that this entails in platform lengths, resignalling to ETCS Level 2, depot accommodation and the procuring of the trains themselves, as well as the staffing implications) cannot be achieved quickly. This will lead to considerably higher expenditure.

Is there a business case? Where will the funding come from? To what extent might the source be above inflation fares increases? Clarity on these is essential.

The objectives are laudable but making the services less affordable would be at the expense of the standard of living of the workforce in outer London and the wider South East.

### **Q3 Do you agree with the proposed governance arrangement?**

In principle yes, but it would be essential to place some limit on those with a right to be consulted, particularly outside Greater London.

Thus County Councils (or Unitaries) are the appropriate level in local government, together with the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and the *statutory* user groups of London TravelWatch or Transport Focus, as appropriate. To extend direct involvement to multifarious other bodies is likely to make the whole process unwieldy and extend time scales unnecessarily. The above mentioned named bodies should be tasked to ensure other interested parties are made aware of developments and proposals and are consulted, as deemed appropriate.

The object is to run a workable railway for the benefit, as best it can be secured, for both users and potential users. The application of a “cascade system” of consultation and information should ensure well- intentioned organisations, who may not otherwise comprehend the reality of what could, or could not, be achieved within the various constraints, can be included effectively.

### **Q4 What form do you propose that the input from local authorities and LEPs could take?**

A mechanism will need to be devised where representatives of the bodies outlined above have the opportunity to provide input to future provision, with the proviso that this has to be achieved within agreed and rigid timescales related to franchise changes, timetable updates, funding and budgeting decisions, and the timing of works associated with major investment schemes.

The intention might be that such groups will be in a position to influence the franchising and the standards to be achieved, but do not constrain the setting up and operation of franchises. The ability of Local Authorities to fund improvements to services outside London will need to be understood and acknowledged.

Input from railway operators and Network Rail will be essential as a check on achievability and to ensure that current and future needs are not compromised.

It is a matter for the securing body to monitor how the franchisee or concession holder is operating its services, and to take action if and as necessary.

Pre agreed dialogues with outside bodies to review progress and to discuss future requirements might be helpful, but with an understanding of the contract terms as to what is actually feasible.

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

As set out, these seem to consist of no detrimental effect on fares, and no adverse effects on the frequency, journey times or stopping patterns of longer distance services.

In other words, business at transfer will continue as usual, or at least with no worsening of any of those aspects. However, [REDACTED] notes that this carries no guarantee of the situation which might apply one, two or five years hence.

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

Although there are no obvious gaps in the proposals, it is essential that account is taken of the following:

- The adequacy of the service coverage of the whole network
- Service frequency which meets passenger demand as far as possible
- Provision of a service quality commensurate with modern expectations
- Infrastructure maintained to a quality to enable such services to be run
- Catering for the needs of passengers within and outside London on an equitable basis
- Ensuring that fares are affordable for as many users as possible
- Making provision for sufficient train paths for rail freight, both now and in the future
- Ensuring that standards continue to improve over time and that the funding is available to enable this to happen.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]