

[REDACTED]

14th March 2016

Rail Partnership Engagement
Transport for London
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197 Blackfriars Road
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Response of the London Assembly's Transport Committee investigation into the proposed devolution of National Rail services in London

[REDACTED] supports the principle of more local determination of train services. We believe that the impacts of the devolution of rail powers fall into two categories: specific impacts around the edges of the area devolved to Transport for London and more strategic impacts because of the change in governance. The key to success of the proposed approach will be balancing the needs and aspirations of these two aspects to ensure that all services benefit from the devolution of services to Transport for London.

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[REDACTED] has no direct responsibilities for managing train services and indeed doesn't have the structure in place to take on such a role, we nevertheless recognise the importance of the rail network in providing good connectivity between Greater London and key urban centres in our area such as Basingstoke, Farnborough, Guildford and Woking as well as key transport hubs such as Gatwick and Heathrow Airports, enabling access to employment opportunities in and around the area efficiently and reliably.

[REDACTED] recognises the benefits of investing in a growing rail network, and sees the need for this to be sustained to ensure that the network can cope with the forecast growth in demand for both passenger and freight movement, requiring the provision of additional capacity.

In principle greater local involvement in the management of local rail services will enable them to be more closely aligned to the needs of employers and businesses. Throughout the [REDACTED] area significant levels of housing and employment growth are planned, much of it at locations which are in close proximity to the rail network. [REDACTED] can help to prioritise major scheme investment in the

rail network – such as re-opening of stations, new and reopened rail lines and considering how to target any improvements to train services more effectively. Engagement and involvement of [REDACTED] would help to target investment in better bus/rail interchanges where this would have significant economic and regeneration benefits.

Services that extend just beyond London into [REDACTED] area are an important part of our rail network. These include intercity routes serving many destinations throughout the region as well as the London hinterland which provides a significant percentage of London's workforce. If not managed carefully there is a danger that greater powers for London could lead to the marginalisation of services into and beyond our area, if their needs are not represented alongside those of London. This could affect service frequencies, journey times, rolling stock availability and train pathing.

There is a concern that the devolution of rail powers in London to Transport for London could lead to an approach to the development of the rail network that fails to realise the opportunities presented outside of London and a focus on London-radial-routes, preventing us from capitalising on alternative geographies of rail development.

So whilst it is pleasing to note that this issue is broadly acknowledged in the consultation document together with an acceptance that the rail system has to accommodate all needs, there is nevertheless a concern as to how decisions will be made when these priorities come into direct conflict due to scarce capacity. Page 22 of the consultation document states that there would be no adverse impact on frequency, journey times and stopping patterns of longer distance services to and from London. It then goes on to say that extra capacity would only be added to services if there were to be no impact on longer distance services. This statement implies that London services would have first call on any additional capacity that is provided, when it could easily be that the greatest economic benefit could be gained from this capacity being given to longer-distance services instead.

Another example appears on page 25, where it is stated that as a result of better signalling and other improvements south London inner suburban could potentially increase for 14 to 24 services an hour. Again there is no evidence presented why it is inner suburban services that should benefit. If partnership is truly going to be successful in fully maximising the benefits of additional capacity then this mind-set will need to be overcome and an open and transparent process introduced of how conflicts in differing demands and priorities are addressed. It is anticipated that there is very unlikely to be sufficient infrastructure provided for everyone's aspirations to be met in full and hard choices about priorities are going to have to be made.

Both specific and strategic impacts point to the fact that, for evolution of rail powers in London to Transport for London to be successful, effective provision should be made for surrounding areas to meet their needs too. Although not part of the consultation document [REDACTED] understands from attending the recent stakeholder event, that there are proposals to develop a Strategic Board between DfT and TfL to manage this process. It is essential that this includes mechanisms for effective cooperation with surrounding authorities and LEPs to ensure benefits outside of the devolved London area are properly represented. It would therefore be

considered appropriate that a representative from the seven Local Enterprise Partnerships that cover the Greater Thames Valley be invited to sit on the Strategic Board, to ensure that business views in our area are fully represented.

In summary, the principle of more local determination of train service patterns is supported and we, therefore, welcome devolution of the proposed approach as a means of improving rail services and enhancing local accountability. However, it is imperative that mechanisms are put in place to properly represent the whole area in which services operate. Otherwise there is a concern that London, especially Central London, could always be given priority over other areas and services. This would be of detriment to areas surrounding the capital, which are a major location for economic growth as well as being essential for a vibrant economy in London itself.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to this consultation. We hope that you are able to take the views expressed above into account when deciding on how best to take forward the proposals for rail devolution.

Yours sincerely

