

A new approach to rail passenger services in London and the South East - Working in partnership to improve services and support growth

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?

██████████ is concerned that there needs to be an appropriate balance of interests represented in any future partnership agreement to run rail services in London and the South East. There is a concern that the interests of Transport for London concerning inner suburban services could outweigh the interests of the wider South East region when strategic decisions are made about the best use of limited infrastructure capacity. The Network Rail Sussex Area Route Study¹ predicts that, notwithstanding the Thameslink Programme capacity improvements, there will continue to be a significant demand-capacity gap for longer distance Brighton Main Line services into London requiring major infrastructure investment. Therefore it is important that balanced decisions are taken regarding future investment in and use of new capacity.

Local authorities outside London currently have very limited involvement in arrangements for delivery and investment in rail services. This leads to poor integration with plans for regeneration and growth which could be mutually beneficial and fails to maximise the benefits for rail users of local authority investment programmes.

██████████ considers that there is potential for greater involvement of local authorities in monitoring poor performance of the network and rail operators, and in investment decision-making across the South East. Recent reliability and performance problems affecting Brighton Main Line and Sussex coast services have been a key concern for ██████████. As rail services rarely affect a single local authority, ██████████ are keen to work collaboratively with ██████████ to monitor, assess and invoke penalties in line with contractual arrangements. We believe this would help greatly, as rail operators would be held to account for the poor quality of current services in real time. A closer involvement of local authorities and LEPs in the specification and the management of franchises would also allow rail service delivery and investment decision making to be more closely aligned with growth plans and allow advantage to be taken of the proceeds from growth.

Question 2

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

██████████ agrees that the principles of more frequent services, better interchanges and increased capacity; greater reliability for all passengers and

¹ Sussex Area Route Study, Network Rail, September 2015.

high standards of customer service are key issues for the delivery of rail services.

A further key issue for the wider South East is the variable speed of rail services both to and from London and between regional economic centres. With the December 2015 timetable change, the fastest morning peak journey time between Chichester and London Victoria is 1 hour and 31 minutes for a distance of 54 miles at an average speed of 36mph compared to the fastest journey time between Southampton Central and London Waterloo of 1 hour and 16 minutes for a distance of 69 miles at an average speed of 55mph. The fastest morning peak journey time between Southampton Central and Brighton is 1 hour and 50 minutes for a distance of 56 miles at an average speed of 31mph. This variation in journey times puts locations such as the Sussex Coast at a competitive disadvantage contributing to lower performance of the economy in these areas relative to the regional average.

Improving journey times and direct connectivity between regional centres outside of London would support economic growth across the whole region, relieving some of the demand pressure for journeys into London. In terms of West Sussex the focus on radial routes into London and the lack of orbital connectivity means there are particular problems for travelling to destinations such as Heathrow Airport, Kent and towns in the Thames Valley which provide an important role in supporting the economy by connecting businesses to their customers. It is important that there is an appropriate balance between the local connectivity provided by stopping services, as well as faster, longer distance services between key centres. We believe that journey time improvements between key centres should also be reflected in the key headline improvement principles.

Question 3

Do you agree with the proposed governance arrangements?

As noted in response to Question 1, we are concerned that the interests of Transport for London concerning inner suburban services could outweigh the interests of the wider South East region when strategic decisions are made about the best use of limited infrastructure capacity. However, we consider that there is greater potential for local authority involvement in the specification and management of franchises, and in investment decision-making. We have set out comments in question 4 on what form the governance arrangements could take for some of the local authorities to the south of London.

Question 4

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

are in on-going discussions with Government about devolution proposals for the region.

[REDACTED]

- I [REDACTED]
- I [REDACTED]
- I [REDACTED]

We believe that there needs to be a clear mechanism in place for local authorities outside of London to influence rail service commissioning and operation within any new partnership approach for the management of future London and South East rail franchises. This could include the establishment of a sub national Transport Board based on the provisions of the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill. [REDACTED], with Government, the Department for Transport and Transport for London about how this body would input into future management of rail franchises in London and the South East.

Question 5

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

The prospectus does not set out specifically which inner suburban services would be transferred to TfL management and for clarity it would be helpful for the prospectus to do this. In terms of Southern services, it is assumed that this would include services operating from central London as far south as Epsom, Epsom Downs and South Croydon³, and this does not includes services to Horsham via Dorking or Crawley, or services to East Grinstead.

The prospectus notes on page 22 that there should be 'No adverse impacts on the frequency, journey times or stopping patterns of longer distance services to and from London. Extra capacity on peak local London services would only be added if there is no negative impact on longer distance services'. This headline assurance is sufficient to safeguard existing longer distance services, although capacity enhancements are needed on some of these services. As currently presented, this assurance would not be sufficient to ensure future capacity enhancements ensure a fair balance is maintained between local and longer distance services. The assurance could be strengthened by saying; "No adverse impacts on the frequency, journey times or stopping patterns of existing longer distance services to and from London. Extra capacity on peak local London services would only be added if there is no negative impact on existing longer

³ Devolving rail services to London Towards a South London Metro, London Assembly Transport Committee, October 2015.

distance services and a fair balance is maintained between local and longer distance services in the planning of future capacity enhancements.”

██████████ is also concerned that proposals to separate services into a separate business unit under the responsibility of TfL could cause fragmentation of rail services along key rail corridors into London. In terms of the Brighton Main Line this could conflict with one of the main objectives behind the creation of the new Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise to improve integration between services previously operated under the separate Southern and Thameslink franchises.

We are concerned to ensure that there are safeguards in place with respect to the creation of any separate business units or operations so that this does not create problems in terms of the separation of rolling stock and staff, economies of scale, and in terms of management of disruption because of the creation of additional operational interfaces.

Finally, we are concerned that proposals could incentivise integration with connections in London, including London Underground, at the detriment of integration with less frequent services operated by other rail franchises or bus operators outside London. There also needs to be safeguards in place to ensure that this does not result.

Question 6

Are there other outcomes you might expect to see achieved?

In addition to outcomes around service frequency, better interchanges and increased capacity, greater reliability and customer service, as well as journey time improvements, there are a series of other key outcomes that ██████████ have previously identified for rail services as outlined below.

Services using the Brighton Main Line and are heavily affected by engineering works. We accept that these are necessary in order to support reliability and enhancements but there is a strong perception amongst residents that works should be managed a lot more efficiently, and we would like to see this as a key focus of any new partnership approach to franchise approach.

Further to the prospectus comment on page 28 about investigating the potential of additional London inner suburban services at night, this issue is also relevant outside of London. This also applies to later evening services from London to the Sussex Coast to support the evening economy particularly at weekends, and earlier morning and later evening services from Gatwick Airport to serve passengers on early departures and late arrivals, as well as airport staff.

██████████ has also identified the role out of wifi on rail services in West Sussex, which is particularly important for longer distance services as it enables longer journeys to be used productively for business journeys.