



campaigning
by the
**Railway Development
Society Limited**

London & South East

The Combined Franchise Replacement Sponsor
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13th September 2012

Dear Sirs,

**CONSULTATION ON THE COMBINED THAMESLINK, SOUTHERN AND GREAT NORTHERN
FRANCHISE**

Railfuture is the independent national railway development campaign for a better passenger and freight rail network.

The London and South East Branch on behalf of the Society have prepared this submission after consulting our East Anglia and Wessex Branches. In our meetings around the franchise area the consistent message is that everyone is looking for an operator who has the experience and management capability to handle the huge disruption that is inevitable with the rebuilding of London Bridge and its approaches, with the minimum of inconvenience to passengers. It is therefore important that the winner of the franchise should have a stakeholder manager who is experienced and in a senior position. All considered that meetings between the successful bidder and stakeholders should be on a frequent basis so that users could be aware of the changes to their journey well in advance and that mitigations could be discussed. The other major item was that robust contingency planning should be in place for when anything goes wrong. The bidders' approach to these issues must form a significant part of the tender assessment process.

Questionnaire responses:

Rail Value for Money Study:

Q1: What improvements do stakeholders believe could be made on the combined franchise through partnership working between Network Rail and the new operator?

The different Route Directors covering the large new franchise area will have to work at least as well together as they do with the new operator. The interests of other operators in the same area will also have to be respected and not disadvantaged by any arrangements for the new combined franchise operator.

Crossrail. Other initiatives. Other station developments:

Q.2: Do consultees have any other specific aspirations for the new franchise that they wish to bring to the Department's attention?

Stations should be brought up to the standards mandated for London Overground by Transport for London.

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www.railwatch.org.uk

At appropriate times post-completion of the Thameslink Programme, there are compelling arguments for devolution of some additional suburban service groups to TfL, such as the non-Thameslink Great Northern inner suburban services from Welwyn GC and Hertford North/Stevenage to Moorgate, and the metro services currently in South Central.

Within London there are important strategic interchanges where the successful bidder must work with TfL, Network Rail and the local authorities to deliver improvements to capacity and passengers' experience. Examples include Clapham Junction, East Croydon, Finsbury Park, Highbury & Islington, Peckham Rye and West Hampstead.

Q.3: Are consultees aware of any other rail or non-rail development schemes that might affect the new franchise?

Luton Airport expansion. Proposed Freight terminal at Radlett, with potential for gauge enhancement through Elstree and Finchley Road tunnels. Proposed new stations at Alconbury, Wixams, and Brent Cross. Proposed redevelopment of Whitgift Centre Croydon. New developments including a new college at Ore. New housing at Uckfield.

Q.4: What increments or decrements to the specification would stakeholders wish to see and how would these be funded?

Railfuture would not wish to see the loss of any of the increments in the South Central franchise that have been funded by TfL, which should be continued within the new franchise.

Train service requirements:

Q.5: Which aspects of the specification, other than for those services operating through the Thameslink core route, would stakeholders wish to see mandated and which aspects of the specification could be left to the discretion of the operator?

In this franchise with its high level of changes a high level of specification will be appropriate to ensure the best offer of services to passengers; frequency should be specified by route and ensure a proper balance of stopping and limited-stopping services. Services must also be specified by route so that the popular but less commercially attractive do not lose out. Station calls should be specified by period of the day not just aggregated across the whole day during the week, and separately for the weekend days. Weekday peak period capacity should be met by specifying minimum numbers of vehicle arrivals into each of the central London termini. First and last trains must be mandated. There is a strong demand for better Sunday services with an earlier start.

Q.6: Are there other approaches to train service specification which you would prefer?

Nothing to add to the Q5 response.

Q.7: What changes to services would stakeholders propose, what is the rationale for them and would these provide economic benefit?

The majority of Gatwick services should come through the Thameslink Core as opposed to Victoria; this would give a wider selection of places with direct links to the airport and also places with only one change to reach Gatwick. It will mean also that two other airports are accessible with just one change after the completion of Crossrail. With most longer distance services going through the core it will leave the traditional terminals freer to concentrate on commuter services.

Pending completion of the Thameslink Programme the Great Northern suburban services should be increased outside the weekday peaks and at weekends. Wherever possible stations within and immediately beyond London should have a minimum all-day every-day even-interval 4tph service; there is gathering experience that doubling a service frequency to 4tph more than doubles patronage and therefore passenger and wider benefits.

Capacity and crowding:

Q.8: How might better use be made of the capacity currently available?

Although contentious, selective rolling stock internal reconfiguration is an option to be explored, such as on Great Northern where the high-density class 313 stock is the same as on the former Silverlink Metro where before replacement by new class 378 stock some seats were removed to give extra standing

space on routes with a high volume of short journeys. A wider range of fares and ticket products can assist 'peak-spreading'.

Q.9: What steps might bidders be expected to take to meet passenger demand and what might be the most appropriate mechanisms for managing demand?

During the London Bridge works in particular there will need to be the closest possible collaboration between all TOCs and Network Rail to ensure that not only is there an overall sufficiency of capacity to keep abreast of demand but also that passengers are fully informed of their travel options for avoiding particular pressure-points wherever possible. As above, an enhanced offer of fares and tickets, including 'early bird' fares, have to be part of the equation

Train service proposal for this franchise, Transfer of services from Southeastern in April 2014 and 2018:

Q.10: What destinations on the current Southeastern network do respondents think should be served by the combined franchise's services and what is the rationale for such proposals?

There is a balance to be struck between passenger needs, performance and capacity. Whilst a reasonable balance of inner-suburban and longer-distance services need to run through the core section, in order to make the most efficient and effective use of the new high-throughput infrastructure and the new high-capacity trains, and reduce performance risk, that balance may have to be tilted towards routes with end-points relatively closer to central London. This may therefore include places such as Orpington and Dartford.

Brighton Main Line services:

Q.11: How might better use be made of the capacity available on the Brighton Main Line?

Abolish the premium fare structure on Gatwick Express services, which has nothing but an entirely distorting effect on the passenger market and use of the total range of services on offer between central London and Gatwick Airport. The class 442 stock is singularly inappropriate to be dedicated primarily to airport services and should be re-deployed on longer-distance limited-stop Sussex coast services, replaced by class 377 stock. Gatwick Express services should also contribute more to capacity utilisation and meeting demand by making one intermediate call at either Clapham Junction or East Croydon, possibly alternating as Stansted Express alternates between half-hourly calls at Harlow Town and Bishop's Stortford.

Q.12: What steps should bidders be expected to take to improve performance on the route?

Commit to Joint Improvement Plans with Network Rail. Best practice in train and station operations.

Great Northern services:

Q.13: What destinations on the Great Northern route do respondents consider would be appropriate to become destinations for trains which serve the core Thameslink route?

Cambridge Science Park, Peterborough, Welwyn GC 4tph.

Q.14: Do respondents believe Great Northern trains which do not serve the Thameslink core route should remain as part of this franchise or be transferred to the new Inter City East Coast franchise?

As in our response to Q2, we see longer-term possibilities for further franchise re-mapping beneficial to passengers post-Thameslink programme completion. Therefore, we would not support the transfer of Great Northern inner suburban services to ICEC.

Nevertheless, there may be merit in the transfer to ICEC of fast inter-urban (non-core) services from King's Cross to Kings Lynn, which run non-stop to Cambridge then serving all stations to King's Lynn. The specification of this service (regardless of operator) needs to ensure a robust and frequent level of service on this important and growing corridor. However, we would strongly oppose the use of the highly unsuitable Inter-City Express (IEP) stock on this service. IEP trains would inevitably lead to increased station dwell times due to single leaf end-coach doors and platforms north of Cambridge are too short to accommodate a train of 5x26m coaches necessitating SDO and inconvenience to passengers. We would suggest that a more suitable approach would be to use trains of similar high quality to the class 379 stock, already successfully deployed on West Anglia services.

It is also possible that the remaining non-core semi-fast trains from King's Cross to Peterborough should be ceded to ICEC. This would make a better business case combined with the King's Lynn trains for rolling stock deployment, which again would dictate against using IEP units as the increased dwell time would severely jeopardise time keeping over the congested two track section north of Welwyn GC.

Q.15: What improvements would respondents like to see made to Great Northern services as part of the combined franchise and what is the rationale for this?

There is a strong demand for an improved level of service for King's Lynn and intermediate stations. As well as increased non-peak services on the Hertford Loop, there is believed to be a growing case for services on the Moorgate branch to become all-day/every-day. This reflects the growth of Highbury & Islington as a strategic interchange since completion of the London Overground service upgrades, the changing nature of the City and City fringe around Moorgate and Old Street into 24/7 mixed-activity communities, and later the arrival of the Crossrail interchange at Moorgate.

Airport services:

Q.16: What services would be appropriate to serve the Airport market?

Southampton Airport. There is a major request from users for improved rail access to the airport for trains coming from West Coastway and the Arun Valley lines.

Gatwick Airport. There is strong demand from within Kent for a direct service extending beyond Tonbridge, either to Ashford international or to the county town of Maidstone. Equally strong is a desire for restoration of a through service via the West London line. Mirroring Luton, Gatwick is the single most-desired destination south of London for people living north of it.

Luton Airport. Luton Airport is preparing to expand and there is scope for the expansion of services especially at times of peak passenger demand. The increase in volume should access the airport by rail, and both existing and new airport users need an improved rail service offer overnight on weekdays and at weekends. Luton is the one place above all others mentioned by people living south of the river that is on their wish list of places that they would like to be able to reach.

Q.17: What improvements could be made without adversely affecting the service provision on the remainder of the franchise?

As in our response to Q.15, we believe that services from Moorgate should run all day and 7 days per week. With the bay platform being put back at Gordon Hill we believe that more frequent services to outer destinations should be operated on the Hertford loop.

As in our response to Q.11 we believe there is a case for Gatwick Express services to make one intermediate station call.

Wimbledon loop and Thameslink core services via Elephant & Castle:

Q.18: What services that run via Elephant & Castle do respondents think should run via the Thameslink core route?

There appears to be a conflict between deriving a suitable service pattern based on the use of 12-car trains and limited platform lengths on some of the routes, which could form part of the Thameslink Core specification. This applies to both Southeastern and Wimbledon Loop services. The Department, Network Rail, the franchise bidders and especially the winning bidder will need to collaborate to resolve this conundrum. If all Wimbledon Loop services have to terminate at Blackfriars then in mitigation the service frequency should be an all-day every-day 4tph.

Q.19: Recognising that not all of these services can run via the Thameslink core route, what would be the most satisfactory way of managing the interchange at Blackfriars?

Encouraging passengers to change at Elephant and Castle could be an option.

Coastway East and West services:

Q.20: What improvements would respondents like to see made to Coastway East and West services, the rationale for such proposals and the economic benefit expected to be delivered from these changes?

East Coastway is having infrastructure improvements that will give journey time savings. These can be invested in either quicker journeys or/and more frequent calls at intermediate stations. We are looking for Marshlink trains to call at Ore [aka Hastings east] all-day every day and for minor Marshlink stations such as Winchelsea and Three Oaks to get consistent weekend services i.e. Sundays increased to the Saturday level, to reflect the growing tourism market. We are looking for the development of a service pattern equivalent to a 4tph local metro service in the Hastings-Bexhill area, which for operational reasons may extend to Ore and even as far as Eastbourne. The current use of class 313 units is unpopular principally because they have no toilets and must be confined to diagrams with short-distance trips.

Other Southern services:

Q.21: What improvements would respondents like to see made to other Southern services as part of the combined franchise from 2015, what is the rationale for such proposals and the economic benefit expected to be delivered from these changes?

Services along the West London line from the WCML extended to Gatwick and increased to 2tph initially in the peaks combined with lengthening to 8-cars, in order to relieve severe overcrowding.

Also, services from Gatwick extended beyond Tonbridge to cater for increasing patronage.

There is already a demonstrable need, most recently recognised in the July 2012 HLOS statement, for additional weekday peak period capacity on the Uckfield line. There is now the prospect of platform lengthening by Network Rail during CP5 to enable the operation of 10-car trains to address that capacity requirement, for which the new franchisee must procure the additional rolling stock required. Building on these investments, we expect the winning bidder to work closely with us on developing plans for extending Uckfield line services to Lewes and beyond [e.g. Newhaven as a town in need of regeneration supported by improved transport links] in the next, long, Thameslink franchise in the early-2020s.

In parallel we are working closely with local partners to build the case for securing the necessary infrastructure investment, for an initial single-track non-electrified connection from Uckfield to Lewes, in CP6. We have taken careful note of the inclusion in the ITT for the new Great Western franchise the option for running services to Tavistock. See www.tinyurl.com/c893136 for further details of our campaign.

Q.22: What are respondents' views on the practice of splitting trains at stations such as Haywards Heath?

While opinion is divided it is common practice elsewhere around the network and is seen as an efficient way to make best use of capacity and provide a reasonable balance of services between core and non-core routes.

Newhaven Marine station:

Q.23: Do respondents feel that the Newhaven Marine branch line and station should be kept open and maintained or should the rail industry deploy the relevant funding elsewhere on the rail network?

There is no case to retain the station. There may be a case to retain the branch line as a turn-back for operational resilience.

Performance information in the franchise:

Q.24: How would you like to see performance information published?

On the operator's website and in posters at stations.

Q.25: How frequent should its publication be?

Per four-weekly railway period.

Q.26: What level of disaggregation of performance do you believe is reasonable?

Disaggregation by service group, and for key stations.

Improving customer experience:

Q.27: What are the priorities that respondents consider should be taken into account to improve the passenger experience of using these services?

Targeted actions to raise levels of customer satisfaction, as recorded in the twice-yearly Passenger Focus NPS scores, on this consistently and generally poor-performing franchise area, with levels of progressive improvement mandated in the franchise specification and penalties for under-achievement.

Q.28: What do stakeholders see as the most important factors in improving security (actual or perceived) and addressing any gap between the two?

Secure Station accreditation. Monitored CCTV on stations. Help Points. More obvious staff presence both on board and on stations. Better station lighting. Agreed and implemented station travel plans. Graffiti removal, scratched glass prevention.

Better stations and better connections:

Q.29: What is important to stakeholders in the future use and improvements in stations?

Toilets. Obvious staff presence. Cleanliness. Clear up to date information on train information and indicators. Wherever possible retail outlets. All-services summary CIS on each platform at stations with more than two operational platforms. Monitored CCTV. Help Points. Long-line public address. Induction loops and wheelchair-level ticket office till windows.

Car parking and cycling facilities:

Q.30: What priorities would respondents give to car parking and cycling facilities at locations where these are fully used?

Car parking is an essential for many stations especially those away from the metropolitan areas. Far too many stations are not served by buses after 18.00. The quality as well as quantity of cycle parking must be improved.

Fares, retailing and Smartcards:

Q.31: What sort of ticketing products and services would you expect to see delivered through 'smart' technology on this franchise?

Closing booking offices is not something that most passengers would want and booking office staff are the one point of contact with the travelling public. It is important that stored value cards are developed and because two (Key and Oyster) are already available it is essential for compatibility over the whole of the franchise area. Holders of Freedom Pass cards who wish to travel beyond zone 6 need their cards to be modified in future issues to allow stored value capability.

We would expect close integration of the whole franchise area into the South East Flexible Ticketing (SEFT) scheme.

Equality Act 2010:

Q.32: What local accessibility and mobility issues do stakeholders see and how they might be addressed?

The franchisee should commit to making a significant number of stations DDA compliant each year. Many stations have platforms and train height at significant variance; local ramps should be built so that at least one door of the train can be readily accessed by people with limited mobility.

Improving the environmental performance of the railway:

Q.33: What environmental targets would stakeholders like to see within the franchise specification?

Franchisees should commit to ensuring that all stock with a life exceeding the franchise length should be converted to allow regenerative braking. The traction electricity usage of units should be metered and

charged on that basis to encourage efficient usage and to provide a real incentive to the operator. All trains with on board toilets should have retention tanks.

Following the lead of Blackfriars Station a programme should be started to put in solar panels to power station lights for at least part of the day. The franchisee should roll out a suitable Driver Advisory System to reduce power consumption and to improve reliability of service.

We trust you will find these comments of help.

Yours faithfully,

KDyall

Keith Dyall
Railfuture
Chairman – London & South East