



campaigning  
by the  
Railway Development  
Society Limited

## London and South East

Department for Transport,  
Essex Thameside franchise replacement  
consultation,  
Consultation Co-ordinator,  
Zone 1/14 Great Minster House,  
33 Horseferry Road,  
London  
SW1P 4DR

**Please Reply to:**

**26 Millway,  
Mill Hill,  
London  
NW7 3RB**

**Tel: 020 8359 7147**

**E-Mail: keith.dyall@railfuture.org.uk**

10<sup>th</sup> May 2012

Dear Sirs,

### **Response to Essex Thameside Franchise Consultation**

#### Introduction

Railfuture is long established and increasingly recognised as the UK's leading independent organisation campaigning for better rail services for both passengers and freight. Our local branches and volunteers campaign to get stations and lines opened for the benefit of the community, economy and environment. We have had a major part in getting over 350 new and reopened stations and over 500 miles of route to join the network over the past half century.

This document sets out our response to the Essex Thameside Franchise Consultation.

As a general statement of policy, we think that future franchises should require franchisees to invest in infrastructure, new and improved rolling stock and service improvements during the life of the franchise.

Specifically, we recommend the following:-

- Investment in infrastructure enhancements and service improvements should be given priority over payments to the DfT., e.g., removing speed restrictions and raising line speeds.
- The new franchisee should work with other public transport organisations to obtain maximum interchangeability.
- Binding agreements should be enforced, so that travel restrictions are consistent nationally.
- Energy saving schemes such as solar power for station lighting should be adopted.

We expect a new franchisee to maintain and improve upon the generally current high standard of service on this franchise, paying particular attention to areas of relatively poor customer satisfaction as reflected in the National Passenger Survey.

Reduction of overcrowding and standing should be a key part of the franchise commitment. This can be addressed through a number of measures including platform markings to indicate likely more and less crowded parts of trains, infrastructure improvements designed to increase line speeds and thereby make more efficient use of existing rolling stock and by increasing the size of the fleet.

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[www.railwatch.org.uk](http://www.railwatch.org.uk)

### Rolling Stock (Questions 2, 6 and 7 refer)

If other measures such as those outlined above prove insufficient to solve the overcrowding problem, bidders should commit themselves to procuring more EMUs, with the objective of running all peak hour services as 12 car trains, making use of the recent platform extensions on the Tilbury loop lines via Ockendon and Rainham. The peak hour overcrowding problem exists now and was meant to be alleviated by the transfer of Class 321 units from London Midland but this did not materialise.

### Other Service Improvements (Questions 2, 5, 6, 7 and 11 refer)

In line with TfL's aspirations for a 15-minute off peak frequency on all London suburban services, we would like an additional 2 trains per hour on the London – Grays route, with these extra trains routed via Stratford and Forest Gate. For Essex Thameside residents, this would provide direct access to the new Stratford City shopping centre and onward travel connections to North London, Stansted Airport and East Anglia, as well as to Paris, Brussels and other Continental destinations via Stratford International, as and when HS1 services call at the station.

On the question of possible greater use of Liverpool Street station by Essex Thameside services, passengers want certainty as to where their journeys will start/finish. For this reason, we think it is important that all Monday – Friday services (with the possible exception of the existing Liverpool Street – Grays evening services) should run to/from Fenchurch Street, which has ready access to the City for commuters. We recognise, however, that Liverpool Street has better onward travel connections, in particular via the Underground and, within the life of the franchise, Crossrail, to the West End.

Accordingly, we take the view that all weekend services should operate to/from Liverpool Street, so long as this would be operationally robust. This arrangement would provide certainty for passengers and leave Fenchurch Street free for engineering work at weekends without disrupting the scheduled service. It would also enable a 15-minute frequency Liverpool Street - Grays service to run via Rainham on Sundays in place of the present inadequate hourly Barking - Grays shuttle. If, however, this proposal would put too great a strain on the use of the junctions at Barking and Forest Gate, then we would recommend that trains to and from Grays via Rainham should run into and out of Liverpool Street and that all services via Upminster should use Fenchurch Street.

### Service Patterns and Connections (Questions 2, 5, 6, 8 and 11 refer)

Sunday services should run to the same times, east of Barking, as weekday off peak services to ensure that connections are maintained.

Bank Holidays are popular travelling days so services on these days, including Boxing Day, should operate to a Saturday timetable rather than a Sunday timetable.

On the question of separate "metro" and "Suburban" type services, the District Line effectively provides a Metro service across most of the London part of the franchise, with C2C trains making only limited stops west of Upminster. The current service pattern enables the Class 357 units to run anywhere within the franchise area, maximising operational flexibility. It is questionable whether spending money to convert some units into Metro style trains would be a sound investment, given the reduced flexibility that would result from such an arrangement and the need to provide turn-back facilities at, for example, Upminster.

The Consultation Paper refers to the limited connections the Essex Thameside franchise has with other train services. One of these is the Greater Anglia Upminster – Romford service which only runs at half hourly intervals, leading to long waits for many passengers arriving at Upminster on C2C trains. More efficient operation, providing 3 trains per hour rather than 2, would greatly enhance the usefulness of this service. This should be given serious consideration as part of the long-term Greater Anglia franchise process and we shall return to this subject in that context at the appropriate time.

The Consultation Paper also asks whether the bus service linking Tilbury Town station with the Gravesend ferry terminal should remain as part of the franchise. We take the view that this is a vital public transport link between Thurrock and Kent which should not be severed and that the viability of the ferry service would be threatened without a link to the rail network. Accordingly, the bus service should remain part of the franchise with the timetable continuing to provide convenient connections with ferry sailings.

### Working with Network Rail (Questions 2, 4 and 5 refer)

The new franchisee should be required to work with the local authority, the developer and Network Rail to deliver the new station at Beam Park, between Dagenham Dock and Rainham, to serve the proposed new development, as and when it takes place.

On the more general question of partnership working between the operator and Network Rail, we would expect the new franchisee to continue with the Alliance Framework already in operation between C2C and Network Rail Anglia.

### Station Improvements (Questions 11 and 13 refer)

The new franchisee must continue to improve facilities at stations, including full mobility access, to provide a consistent level of service across the network.

The reasoning behind the suggested transfer of Fenchurch Street station to the franchisee is unclear; particularly as it was transferred in the reverse direction in the relatively recent past and that Network Rail directly manages all other London terminal stations. If the objective is to develop retail opportunities, Network Rail has a solid track record of doing this.

### Fares and Ticketing (Question 9 refers)

A rapid move must be made to zonal ticketing and the new franchisee should be required to introduce ITSO based smart ticketing within 18 months of the commencement of the new franchise. Integration with Oyster (ITSO on Prestige) must be a requirement to facilitate full inter-ticketing. Working with TfL and building on the extension of Oyster validity to Grays, we would like a further extension to incorporate the whole franchise, within the Oyster PAYG and TfL Travelcard area.

We would like bidders to make provision for the sale and top up of Oyster cards at all stations within the franchise area.

### Rail Replacement Bus Services

The new franchisee should be required to run rail replacement bus services as a last resort only and must work with Network Rail and other train operators to minimise the use of buses by use of diversion routes and/or single line working.

When rail replacement buses are unavoidable, train operator staff must be present on buses to provide advice and issue/check tickets.

Consideration should be given to offering cheaper fares to passengers when rail replacement buses are in use.

Yours faithfully,

*KDyall*

Keith Dyall  
Chairman  
Railfuture, London & South East