

# Railfuture - London & South East Branch

## Metro Division

### Campaign Newsletter December 2025



*Great Northern service from Stevenage to Moorgate via Hertford North, on route calling at Finsbury Park*

#### TfL SEEKS TO TAKE OVER THE 'GREAT NORTHERN INNER SERVICES' TO MOORGATE

Transport for London (TfL) continues in its efforts to take over (from Govia Thameslink Railway) the running of the Great Northern Inner Suburban services that operate to and from Moorgate. The affected services are the Moorgate - Hertford Loop services and the Moorgate - Welwyn Garden City services (the Great Northern services out of Kings Cross are not affected). The change would affect passengers using around 20 stations in north London (in Islington, Haringey, Barnet and Enfield Boroughs) and many using stations situated in Hertfordshire, so our Metro and our Herts & Beds Divisions are working together seeking clarity from TfL on the detail of what it is proposing and generally on implications. The matter raises many questions.

Neil Middleton, Railfuture Vice Chair and Hertfordshire resident said to our editor:

“Railfuture would like to see the most cost effective, efficient and reliable train operator running services serving Moorgate. We want to see improvements to the service - for reliability, for delivering 4 trains per hour and for station staffing. The question is - who is best placed to deliver these at the lowest cost to the taxpayer and ticket buyer, Great British Railways or Transport for London?”

“We’ve heard that TfL has promised investment and service frequency increases and fare reductions for some passengers - we welcome all these, but it isn’t clear who is funding these improvements - and what is going to happen if costs are higher than expected or revenue lower? Is TfL confirming that it will underwrite these risks, or will it say “We’ve not been given extra money for that?”

In pursuit of clarity, Railfuture wrote to TfL with 10 key questions it considers needs answering - and has had a follow up meeting and received answers:

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<b>Financial risk taking &amp; governance</b>	<b>TfL's update</b>
1. Will TfL and London council tax payers be taking on the financial risk for service costs and revenue for stations in Hertfordshire? For instance, if money needs to be spent on repairing Hertford North station who is going to pay for it? The question applies both to the annual budget, and what happens if the budget isn't achieved, or costs over run.	TfL's operator will pick up the responsibilities currently held by GTR in this regard, relating to the day to day maintenance and the operation of the service more generally. Where matters relating to the infrastructure (including stations) are currently the responsibility of Network Rail (e.g. larger scale station upgrades) that will continue, including station repairs and renewals. Costs (budgeted and actual) will be the responsibility of Network Rail (GBR in time). Revenue risk for train and station service operation will be a TfL responsibility (TfL's proposal assumes the relevant subsidy at the time of transfer will itself move from GBR to TfL).
2. How will the residents of Hertfordshire be able to hold TfL accountable? We're not aware of any mechanism to do this.	The two current Transport for London (TfL) board members responsible for representing out-boundary users of TfL services are Peter Strachan and Mark Phillips. The requirement for at least two such members is mandated by the Railways Act 2005 to ensure the interests of those living outside Greater London but using TfL's railway passenger services are represented. Their specific responsibilities are to act as a link with neighbouring authorities and represent the interests of people living, working, and studying in areas outside Greater London served by TfL rail services. Their biographies are available <a href="https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/how-we-work/corporate-governance/board-members">https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/how-we-work/corporate-governance/board-members</a> There are no plans for a GN Inners specific supplement. The day to day route for escalation for Hertfordshire rail users is their Herts CC Councillor > Herts CC Rail Team > TfL, between which there is regular liaison at working level.
3. What incentives is TfL offering to Hertfordshire's residents? Will fares for Hertfordshire residents actually reduce?	If TfL takes responsibility for services, then TfL fares will apply to/from the transferring stations and London; the fare tariff does not change, but because different criteria are applied to it, a lower fare is applied most notably for through journeys beyond the National Rail London termini (including Moorgate). Hertfordshire residents will also benefit from the enhancements to station facilities, ambience and staffing.
4. We have aspirations for the GN Inners – more station staffing, improved reliability and 4 trains per hour. Will TfL deliver these, all of which cost money, and why can't GBR also deliver these improvements if funded with the same amount of extra money?	Yes, TfL will deliver these train service enhancements of four trains per hour to both parts of the line for which funding will be set aside in our business plan.  TfL observe that In theory GBR could deliver the same enhancements but the incentive they have to do so is weaker, given their lesser accountability to local stakeholders and their budgetary need to focus on more financially remunerative services to bear down on subsidy requirements.
<b>Handling disruption</b>	
5. How will disruption be handled? For stations such as Hatfield, Potters Bar and Welwyn Garden City, GTR has full responsibility for looking after passengers on all services that call at these stations.	TfL's view is that they have extensive experience of operating on a multi-user passenger railway (GWML / Elizabeth line and BML / Windrush line) and have been successful there. They also highlighted the way they work with the substantial freight traffic on the North London line, whose operating characteristics are very different to TfL's services.
6. Will TfL have a strong enough voice during disruption? GTR is the dominant operator (measured on number of trains). Will TfL have the same influence? Is it planning on basing staff in the York Railway Operating Centre (which looks after services from Kings Cross and Moorgate)? How will "Blame the other side" be avoided? GBR is about reducing barriers and contracts – a TfL operation can easily create them.	TfL's operator would plan to have staff in the York ROC.  Our operator will establish processes for managing disruption, liaising with other operators and Network Rail, to deliver the best possible outcomes against the demanding performance targets that we will set them. They will be required to minimise delays affecting GNI services regardless of their attribution to ensure they work effectively with other stakeholders to deliver the best possible customer service. This is the model TfL use with LO and Elizabeth line and which has established both as top performers nationally.  <i>Railfuture comment: This increase in interfaces on the railway probably cannot be mitigated away to zero and is a downside to the proposal – the issue is whether it is small, medium or a 'deal breaker'.</i>



<b>Stations</b>	
7. Who is going to operate the stations on the East Coast Main Line served by GN Inners and GN Outers? And, for that matter, stations in Hertfordshire served only by GN Inners – e.g., Watton-at-Stone. Also what about future improvements at stations in Hertfordshire – will TfL be paying for these? Or will there be complexity (and probable delay and cost) because GBR will be paying?	<p>TfL would like its operator to operate them where it has over half the services calling, but do not regard this as critical. Stevenage would not be a TfL operator station under this arrangement, but other shared stations such as Finsbury Park would.</p> <p>TfL would pay for station enhancements but not station renewals for which NR / GBR is already funded. This is analogous to how TfL undertook works at Weaver Line stations after its service transferred in 2015.</p>
<b>Integration and interfaces</b>	
8. The GN Inner and GN Outer services are fully integrated for many aspects – drivers and a single maintenance depot are key aspects. Splitting the service will cause inefficiencies – who is paying for these costs, or where are the compensating savings?	<p>Any additional costs would need to be absorbed by TfL and its operator, but they do not believe these costs will be at all material; they have received driver diagrams from GTR and believe that diagrams can be created that are as least as efficient as they are now.</p> <p>Arrangements for maintenance have yet to be finalised, but a potential arrangement is a contract (or contracts) for the necessary maintenance at Hornsey.</p>
9. The GN Inners use recently delivered rolling stock from Siemens (very similar to that used on Thameslink). It is quite different to the Bombardier / Alstom stock used elsewhere on the Overground (and the Elizabeth Line). Even the signalling system is different (next generation ECTS). Are any promised synergies realistic?	<p>TfL's operator would continue to use class 717s. This operator would be different from the one for existing London Overground lines or indeed the Elizabeth Line.</p> <p>No meaningful savings are anticipated; it is recognised that this operation will be autonomous as regards rolling stock.</p> <p>The ECTS programme is multi-operator and TfL's operator would of course play its part as its coverage is extended.</p>
<b>Capacity</b>	
10. A key driver for wanting this change is to increase the service to meet the needs of the new town envisaged for Crews Hill. Has there been any form of study to work out if there is capacity at Moorgate and between Moorgate and Alexandra Palace – and are there enough trains – can TfL actually deliver any promises it makes in this area?	<p>Yes, TfL believe there are enough trains to operate their planned service, which enhances services to 8 off-peak and 10 or perhaps 12 in the peak using the existing 25 train class 717 fleet.</p> <p>Further work is required to assess the requirements of the additional housing proposed along the route (including Crews Hill) to ensure that the usage it generates can be suitably accommodated on the public transport network as a whole, including the GNI services.</p>

We have also discussed this bid with GTR. The key differentiator it mentions is that rather than run 4 trains per hour from Welwyn Garden City to Moorgate, its preference is to convert the current peak hours Welwyn Garden City to Sevenoaks service into an all-day service.

Compared to TfL's proposal, this would provide larger stations on the East Coast Main Line with more services (or new services) to the Thameslink Core - and the interchange options that provides, with the downside that smaller stations would remain at 2 trains per hour.

Please join our next Herts and Beds Division meeting (a Zoom meeting on 14 January 2026, starting 7.30pm) and/or our next Metro Division meeting (at the Alan Baxter Gallery in Farringdon on 22 January 2026, starting 7pm) when these matters will be discussed.

## EXPANSION OF CONTACTLESS PAYMENTS OUTSIDE LONDON - PARTIALLY DELAYED

Our members will be well aware that 14 December 2025 was set as the key date when what is essentially London's contactless system would be expanded to include 50 more stations. As this was to include Stansted and Southend airports, it would mean passengers from the capital could tap-in and tap-out at all London airports for the first time, with Heathrow, Gatwick and Luton already using the technology. Stansted Airport in particular has been an issue, with many passengers being fined after travelling from Liverpool Street or Tottenham Hale on the Stansted Express apparently unaware that there is no contactless payment at the airport end of the journey, even though it is possible to tap in at the London stations.

However, with just weeks to go it has been announced that the expansion will only happen in part. System issues mean that neither Stansted nor Southend airports are to be included in the 14 December expansion, the delayed expansion effecting Greater Anglia routes within our Metro and Eastern Division (to give its full name) including trains to Southend Victoria via Shenfield and along the Great Eastern Main Line to Witham.

The usual warnings associated with 'contactless' apply. For example, concession cards do not work with contactless, so those with railcards will find existing ticketing options are cheaper. For those within London it should be remembered that London Oyster cards and contactless should not be confused. Oyster is only usable within Greater London boundaries (with a very few limited exceptions) whereas contactless may be used further afield.

Rail Minister Lord Peter Hendy said: "Rail ticketing is far too complicated and long overdue an upgrade to bring it into the 21st century. Through the expansion of tap-in tap-out technology and shortly through GBR, we're doing just that and making buying tickets more convenient, more accessible and more flexible - and ensuring passengers can get the best fares."

That ticketing is too complex is not in doubt. However, it is not entirely accurate to say contactless will ensure passengers get the best fares. This is an important issue upon which Railfuture campaigns, and readers are encouraged to read our recent press release on this matter at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display4218>

## RAIL FARES FROZEN NEXT YEAR – BUT NOT FOR LONDONERS

It has been widely reported that national rail fares in England will not be subject to the usual price rise next year, but will be frozen. Annual rail ticket price rises are usually aligned to the July Retail Prices Index (RPI) figure of the preceding year (sometimes with an added percentage point), which would ordinarily mean a rise of at least 4.8% in 2026. However this is only part of the picture. In fact it is only 'regulated fares' that are being frozen, which represent a little under half of tickets typically sold. Regulated fares are, in essence, season tickets, day singles and returns, most commuter journeys, off-peak returns between major cities, and some flexible fares around urban centres.

Unregulated fares are not directly controlled by government but are set by the relevant train operator. The Government has been conspicuously silent as to what will happen to unregulated fares, and one can only assume that is deliberate, and that accordingly they will be rising. The math is simple. With unregulated fares making up about half of ticket sales in England, and with operating costs inevitably rising with inflation, the increased cost of operating the railway will need to fall on the unregulated tickets, or on some other form of funding.

There are two issues for London. First and foremost, the fare freeze does not apply to TfL services, including the Overground and Underground. This is because a condition was stipulated in the Government's recent £2.2 billion funding settlement with TfL to the effect that it must annually increase its fares by RPI plus one per cent. The Government has indicated to TfL that that position remains. Indeed on 11 December TfL announced that Underground and Overground fares will increase by an average of 5.8% from March 2026, although TfL Travelcards and Tramlink fares are frozen.

It should be noted that many trains operating within London are not run by TfL but are operated nationally. If some of those fares are to be frozen, what will that mean for TfL revenue? As some of TfL's income from mainline rail travel will be frozen by the national fares freeze, will that mean more revenue will need to be raised somehow by TfL, and in the longer term will that impact fares on TfL's own underground, overground, tram and bus network? Some questions here remain to be answered.

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## LONDON OVERGROUND – CHANGE OF TRAIN OPERATOR SHOULD BRING IMPROVEMENTS

London Overground will have a new operator from May 2026 after the expiring Arriva Rail concession was granted to FirstGroup.

Transport for London (TfL) made the announcement in December 2025 of its intent to award the new contract to First Rail London Limited, a subsidiary of FirstGroup PLC. It will take over on Sunday 3 May 2026.

Under the new concession, First Rail London is obligated to introduce a range of service and operational improvements, in particular:

- Extra peak-time trains on the Mildmay Line from May 2026, with shuttle services between Clapham Junction and Shepherd's Bush during peak hours; and
- More frequent trains on the Windrush Line from December 2026, with services through the core section of the line increasing to 18 trains per hour.

In addition there will be:

- A focus on the safety of customers and staff with upgraded help points and CCTV;
- Collaboration with partners such as Network Rail and Alstom, the manufacturer of the London Overground trains, to maintain high performance and customer satisfaction;
- Investment in people and technology to improve reliability, manage disruption, and provide better customer information;
- Targeted upgrades on the Mildmay Line infrastructure to boost performance for customers;
- Innovative customer information solutions, including expanding digital screens to display live travel updates for stations and nearby interchange services, such as buses;
- Continued work to improve accessibility in partnership with leading advocacy groups.

The Overground is operated by way of a concession, under which TfL sets the fares, procures the rolling stock, and decides service levels. Set up in 2007, the London Overground was operated by a joint venture between Laing Rail and MTR, and was subsequently taken over by Arriva Rail.

The improvements to the Windrush Line had been anticipated, there being a current re-signalling upgrade that will enable more frequent trains on the busiest section of that line, in the core between Dalston Junction and Surrey Quays. It is expected that trains will increase to 18 per hour, with potential to increase to 24 per hour in the further future. The southern destination of the initial extra trains is likely to be Crystal Palace.

The exact nature of the extra peak-time trains on the Mildmay Line is unclear at the present time, but Railfuture has long supported extra trains on the busy Camden Road - Stratford section.

David Thomas, Head of Concession for London Overground, said: 'London Overground is one of the most popular parts of our transport network, and this new concession puts customers at its heart, helping make the service even better. We're delighted to welcome First Rail London Limited as our preferred new partner and look forward to working together to deliver a range of benefits for everyone who uses the network.'

Railfuture campaigns for improvements to the London Overground, and so welcomes this announcement.

## CAMPAIGN UPDATE - GATWICK EXPRESS AND BRIGHTON MAIN LINE CAPACITY

Our Gatwick Express and Brighton Main Line capacity campaign continues.

Following our meeting in Salfords on 20 November 2025 attended by representatives of Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) and Network Rail, Railfuture has written to GTR requesting a meeting to discuss this matter further. We will keep members advised of progress.

In the meantime, the LSE Branch has created a campaign committee to deal specifically with this issue. Meetings with a number of Members of Parliament to discuss this campaign have now been arranged.

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## METRO DIVISION: AFFILIATED RAIL USER GROUPS

Railfuture affiliated Rail User Groups within our area comprise:

- Cambridge Heath and London Fields Rail Users' Group
- Chesham & District Transport Users Group
- Chingford Line Users' Association
- East Surrey Transport Committee
- Hadley Wood Rail User Group
- Watford Rail Users Group

We maintain regular contacts with our Metro located affiliated rail user groups, attending some of their meetings and assessing how we may aid their campaigns. Many of them also attend our regular Metro Division meetings in Farringdon. A number of rail user groups located outside our area maintain contact with us, primary because their focus is on train services to London. These include Sevenoaks Rail Travellers' Association and Tonbridge Line Commuters.

**Call to Affiliated Groups:** Should any of our affiliated rail users group wish to discuss rail issues with us, please contact our chairman at [richard.bowry@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:richard.bowry@railfuture.org.uk)

**Not Affiliated?** Please contact us and lets chat how we can work together. About half of all rail user groups in the UK are affiliated to Railfuture. Why not join us?

### **Interested in Rail User Groups?**

Take a look at Railfuture's monthly magazine, 'Rail User Express' dedicated to rail user groups.

<https://railfuture.org.uk/Rail+User+Express>

## RAIL USER GROUP: MEETINGS

### Chesham & District Transport Users Group

Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 6 January 2026, and will be held in Chesham Town Hall starting at 7.30pm.

### Watford Rail Users Group and Abbey Flyer Users' Group

Next meeting is scheduled for Monday 23 February 2026 and is scheduled to be held in the Training Room at Watford Junction Station commencing at 6:30pm. Although open to the public, individuals are asked to state their intention to attend by emailing [wrug2@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:wrug2@hotmail.co.uk) beforehand.

## MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2026

Due to availability issues at our venue (Front Basement Room, Alan Baxter Gallery, 75 Cowcross Street, Farringdon) some changes have been made to our meeting schedule for 2026. Our meetings will continue to be held once every two months (in January, March, May, July, September and November) on Thursdays, however they will no longer be set for the third Thursday of the relevant month. Actual meeting dates are as follows:

- |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| - Thursday 22 January 2026 | Thursday 23 July 2026      |
| - Thursday 12 March 2026   | Thursday 17 September 2026 |
| - Thursday 21 May 2026     | Thursday 12 November 2026  |

Please join us at our Thursday 22 January meeting when we will be discussing our campaign priorities for 2026.

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## METRO DIVISION – WHAT WE DO

Chair: Richard Bowry

Vice Chair: Charlie King

Committee Member: Howard Thomas

Metro Division covers Greater London, the London Overground, the Underground, the Docklands Light Railway, all former c2c service areas (e.g., Southend and Shoeburyness), the East Anglia Main Line as far as Witham and the Braintree branch, the former Greater Anglia services from Liverpool St and Shenfield to Southend Victoria and the Southminster branch, the West Anglia Main Line from London to Bishop's Stortford and the London - Stansted Express.

### **We are active every month**

Meetings: We hold meetings in London in January, March, May, July, September and November.

Our venue is the **front basement room of the Alan Baxter Gallery, 75 Cowcross Street, Farringdon**, starting at 7pm.

Newsletter: The Metro Campaign Newsletter is issued in February, April, June, August, October and December.

Campaigning: Much of our campaign work involves discussions with governmental authorities, politicians, rail authorities and rail operators.

Our current campaigns include:

- Extension of the Docklands Light Railway to Thamesmead
- Introducing a passenger service on the West Orbital Route
- Extension of the Bakerloo Line from Elephant & Castle to Lewisham
- Turn up and go services throughout London of at least 4 trains per hour
- KenEx tram (tram link between Grays, Essex, and Ebbsfleet International, Kent)
- Improvement to capacity issue on the Brighton Main Line and changes to the Gatwick Express

Contact: To contact us on any matter concerning Metro Division please email [richard.bowry@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:richard.bowry@railfuture.org.uk)

**JOIN US** ([www.railfuture.org.uk/join](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/join))

Railfuture is the UK's leading independent organisation campaigning for better rail services. We are a voluntary group representing rail users, with around 20,000 affiliated and individual members.

**The Metro Division of Railfuture is dedicated to improving services in London - if these services effect you - join us.**

Are you an individual with concerns about your railway? Are you a Rail User Group looking for support from Railfuture and connections with other affiliated groups? Are you a commuter or leisure traveller?

Join the UK's leading independent railway campaign group today.

Use this link to our membership page: <https://railfuture.org.uk/join>

**Metro is a division of the London and South East Branch of Railfuture - the Divisions comprise:**

Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire

Kent

London Metropolitan and Eastern (Metro)

Surrey

Sussex and Coastway

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