

Ten questions on TfL's bid to run Great Northern Services to/from Moorgate

Financial risk taking & governance	TfL's update
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 https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/how-we-work/corporate-governance/board-members 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? (inside London, GN Inners are already on TfL's fare structure & prices).	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. <i>NM comment: I hope to find out more about the GBR/GTR perspective at the GTR stakeholder event on 8 December.</i>
Handling disruption	
5. How will disruption be handled? For stations such as Hatfield, Potters Bar and Welwyn, GTR have 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? Are they 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>NM 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>

Stations	
7. Who is going to operate the stations on the East Coast Mainline served by GN Inners and GN Outers? And, for that matter, stations in Hertfordshire served only by GN Inners – eg Watton-at-Stone. And 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?	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. 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.
Integration and interfaces	
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?).	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. Arrangements for maintenance have yet to be finalised, but a potential arrangement is a contract (or contracts) for the necessary maintenance at Hornsey.
9. The GN Inners uses 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?	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. No meaningful savings are anticipated; it is recognised that this operation will be autonomous as regards rolling stock. The ECTS programme is multi-operator and TfL's operator would of course play its part as its coverage is extended.
Capacity	
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?	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. 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.