

EXTRACT FROM EMAIL RESPONDING TO DfT/TfL CONSULTATION ON 'A NEW APPROACH TO RAIL PASSENGER SERVICES IN LONDON AND THE SOUTH EAST' – JANUARY-MARCH 2016

Dear Rail Prospectus,

Railfuture is the UK's leading independent organisation campaigning for better services for passengers and freight. A voluntary organisation to which many rail user groups are affiliated, the organisation is independent both politically and commercially.

The prospectus is high-level and strategic about a new partnership and a framework of principles rather than specifics and details, and so our response is also aimed at that level.

**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?**

Railfuture endorses the strategic approach of a new partnership between the DfT and TfL. It will be vital for the partnership's credibility that the forum it will provide for LEPs, local authorities, and other local and regional bodies such as Railfuture, is inclusive, responsive and capable of behaviours akin to an 'intelligent client'.

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

We support the three primary principles set out, in the first 'recognising the different needs of the shared users of the railway' being especially important to maintaining the confidence in the partnership of the very broad range of stakeholder interests across the London and south east region as a whole, being clear about the balances to be struck and choices to be made.

As Transport Focus consistently identify in successive National Rail Passenger Surveys, dealing with disruption and delays is second only to toilet facilities as the lowest passenger satisfaction score (35% for London and South East, Autumn 2015) and the biggest single cause of passenger dissatisfaction (56% in Autumn 2015) and so that issue, not captured thus far, merits a specific commitment in the third principle of 'High standards of customer service'.

**3 - Do you agree with the proposed governance arrangements?**

Railfuture is broadly comfortable with the governance arrangements being proposed. One particular relationship to be resolved may be that between the new partnership and the TfL Board.

The proposed 'Timing of changes' puts all three replacement franchises - and their inner suburban services planned for transfer to the Mayor of London/TfL - within the 7.5-year period of the next concession for London Overground starting this November. A question arises as to whether those services will be absorbed by the new concession, as happened last year with the absorption of inner West Anglia into the LOROL concession, potentially implying a single London-wide and therefore eventually very large London Overground concession, or whether at some point a second concession will be awarded, potentially starting with inner South Eastern and later possibly absorbing inner Southern and inner Great Northern. The arrangements for inner South Western services post-2020 and on into Crossrail 2 potentially add a further dimension; a 'TfL Rail Mk 2' might be one interim option there. These questions are raised as the answers will be important for the direct relations between local stakeholders and the new concession operator/s which all parties seek, and value.

Finally, it would be naive to ignore the potential impact of national/regional/local electoral cycles on the rail devolution process and its governance.

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

In our experience this may work best at two levels - a regular working group of officers supporting a high-level steering group of elected representatives. The latter may convene around an annual summit, a model that has worked well for Kent County Council and for the current MP for Hastings and Rye, for example. Input from local authorities and LEPs will however be critically dependent on the quality of knowledge and understanding of those making it, and Railfuture is aware of a wide range varying from demonstrations of strategic insight and vision to near-non-existent engagement.

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

Railfuture is content with the safeguards for transfer of inner suburban services to TfL, but observes that those actual and potential users of transferred inner services may need less convincing of those safeguards and the benefits of a change to London Overground operation than others will need reassuring that they too have explicit safeguards to ensure that such change will not be to their disadvantage.

**6 - Are there other outcomes you might expect to see achieved?**

We propose the addition of 'A safe and secure travelling environment' (which includes stations and trains) as a broad outcome to encompass objectives such as demonstrable reductions in anti-social behaviour, trespass and vandalism, and ticketless travel. While the latest NRPS shows the very lowest levels of 'dissatisfied or poor' as passenger responses for 'Your personal security whilst using the station' and 'Your personal security on board' - just 4% each - perceptions amongst potential and rare users, even some frequent users, are important to acknowledge with an explicit outcome in the 'Formula for success' which ultimately must aspire to win proportionately more users for rail.

Our support for rail devolution is well established and we look forward to continuing to play a role in its evolutionary development.

Yours faithfully,

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