

A NEW APPROACH TO RAIL PASSENGER SERVICES IN LONDON AND THE SOUTH EAST

CONSULTATION RESPONSE



Introduction

Solent Transport was established in 2007 as a partnership of the four local transport authorities in Solent (Hampshire County, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth City and Southampton City Councils). Solent Transport was established to consider strategic transport issues across the Solent area as a whole. Solent Transport works in partnership with relevant organisations, including the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH), Solent LEP, Department for Transport, Highways England, Network Rail, South West Trains and the South Hampshire Bus Operators' Association. Solent Transport welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the proposed new approach to rail passenger services in London and the South East.

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?

Solent Transport supports the principle of a partnership, but this partnership must provide an effective opportunity for local authorities, or partnerships of local authorities, outside of the London area to have a greater influence over the specification of rail passenger services. It is key that any improvements delivered to rail services within the London area do not stand in the way of improvements to longer distance services to London from the Solent area.

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

Solent Transport generally supports the principles that the partnership will work to. Whilst it is appreciated that a key objective of the proposed partnership is to improve the frequency of Inner London suburban services (the South London Metro), Solent Transport welcomes the fact that "the specific need to improve fast long distance services to support commuting and regional growth" is also recognised.

It is important that where a conflict occurs between these two principles (for example, where capacity constraints mean it is not possible to deliver increased frequency on both inner suburban and longer distance services) the partnership has a defined process that gives fair consideration to the relative priorities of both services. The partnership needs to specify how conflicts of this nature will be resolved.

Solent Transport supports the principles to deliver greater reliability and high standards of customer service, including proposals to simplify the fare structure.

3. Do you agree with the proposed governance arrangements?

Solent Transport supports the proposed governance arrangements, including the key principle that Inner Suburban services would be managed by TfL rather than the DfT.

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

Input from both local authorities and LEPs could take a number of forms. Traditionally, input has been made through the franchise specification consultation process. Once the franchise specification has been defined, local authorities and LEPs have had limited opportunity for input. Rail North has recently provided an alternative model, where the local authorities have much greater direct control over franchise specification and management.

Solent Transport would anticipate that the local authorities and LEPs should have a greater role in both the specification and operation of rail franchises than is currently the case. Whether or not this extends to direct membership of the partnership as per Rail North, there should be an absolute requirement to take account of the views of local authorities and LEPs. This would include the initial specification of the franchise and any further specified train service changes during its lifetime.

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

Solent Transport generally supports these safeguards, although the wording of the second bullet point should be modified as follows. This will ensure that any adverse impact also considers the impact on future, as well as current, longer distance services:

- No adverse impacts on the frequency, journey times or stopping patterns of longer distance services to / from London. Extra capacity on peak local London services would only be added if there is no negative impact on longer distance services. ***In both cases, adverse impact should not just be considered against existing long distance services. Adverse impact should be considered against any identified future requirement for additional long distance services to improve capacity and connectivity, and considered against potential schemes to improve journey times on longer distance services.***

6. Are there any other outcomes you might expect to see achieved?

It is important that rail operators are required to comprehensively deliver a range of smart ticketing. Solent Transport has already introduced the multi-operator *Solent Go* smartcard. This currently covers bus and ferry services and it is important that this is expanded to cover rail services, through the South Western franchise. Solent Transport therefore welcomes the statement that “the objective should be for new ticketing technology to be fully available across London and the South East”.