

## SOUTH WESTERN RAIL FRANCHISE – STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

### 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 South Western Franchise specification.

Solent is home to around 1.3 million people and the local economy is worth around £25 billion GVA. Significant economic growth is planned for Solent and is outlined in the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership's *Transforming Solent Growth Strategy*, which was published in October 2014. This has set a target to increase GVA by 3.0% per annum between 2013 and 2020. The LEP is predicting that this will result in an increase in 46,500 jobs and 24,000 homes over this period. Looking further ahead, Strategic Housing Market Assessment work by PUSH has identified the need for over 4,000 homes to be built per annum in Solent over the period to 2036.

Rail currently has a relatively low overall modal share of 3% to 4% for the Journey to Work in Solent. However, this needs to be seen in a context where rail isn't suitable for many journeys. Where good quality, frequent rail services are provided, there is clear evidence that they can achieve a much more significant modal share. For example, over 12% of journeys to work from Fareham Borough to Southampton are by rail and from the area closest to Fareham station, this rises to over 30% of all journeys.

In line with national trends, rail usage in Solent has continued to grow over recent years. More recently, ORR data has shown an overall increase in station entries and exits of 6.2% in Solent over the two year period from 2012/13 to 2014/15. Interestingly, the highest proportional increase has generally been at smaller stations, which often have relatively unattractive, infrequent services. This demonstrates the potential for further growth, particularly if service improvements can be made.

The ambitious plans for economic growth in Solent will increase overall travel demand. Rail needs to support this growth by further increasing its modal share, which will improve connectivity and travel choice and relieve congestion on the road network. It is important that the new franchise is specified to a high standard to achieve these objectives, but with the expectation that potential franchisees will raise the standard even higher, with innovative submissions.

The Solent Transport consultation response has focussed on the more strategic issues facing the franchise. Solent Transport's constituent local transport authorities and District Councils

are also submitting their own individual responses, which will give more specific consideration to local issues.

### **Passenger Satisfaction**

- Do you support the key priorities that have been identified through the Transport Focus research?
- Are there other priorities you believe should be included to inform the new franchise specification?

Solent Transport supports the key priorities identified through the recent Transport Focus research. However, in terms of specifying the franchise, consideration should be given to more than the six top issues, as a total of 31 priorities were considered in the survey. If consideration was given to all the issues that the public rated as above average importance, the top ten, rather than the top six, would be included.

However, although around two thirds of the priorities for improvement were rated at less important than the average, they are still issues that need to be considered, when defining the franchise specification. Some issues are only relevant to a proportion of passengers, but will be very important to the passengers concerned. For example, although “Safe and secure bicycle parking available at the station” was ranked bottom at 31 with an index of only 10, this is an important issue for people that cycle to and from stations.

To conclude, the franchise specification does need to give appropriate consideration to all passenger priorities, but with weighting relevant to their importance.

### **Franchise Objectives**

- Do you feel that these are appropriate objectives for the South Western franchise?
- Are there any further objectives you believe should be included?

Solent Transport generally supports the Franchise Objectives, but would recommend that some amendments should be made, as outlined below:

**Objective 1** should make specific reference to supporting the economic growth aspirations of the area, rather than just “support the economy”, with reference to accommodating new housing and jobs. There should be reference to the franchise increasing rail’s modal share in order to sustainably accommodate increased travel demand associated with economic growth. “Service levels” should more specifically refer to “service frequencies and journey times”.

**Objective 3** should make specific reference to improving the entire door to door journey experience, including high quality integration with the modes of travel used to access stations at each end of the journey. There should be reference to delivering more innovative ticket products (e.g. carnet season tickets).

More specific details are provided elsewhere in this consultation response on how these suggested amendments should be incorporated into the franchise specification.

### Capacity

- Considering the planned schemes to deliver additional capacity, what are your views on additional opportunities to deliver more capacity elsewhere within the franchise area?
- Are there particular services or routes where you believe there is a need to introduce additional capacity to address overcrowding?
- It may be possible to increase overall passenger carrying capacity by introducing different rolling stock that has more standing space and/or modifying the internal configuration of trains, including rebalancing first and standard class seating. Do you have views on these potential rolling stock changes?

From a Solent perspective, the key planned capacity improvements identified through the Wessex Route Study primarily relate to the need to accommodate significant increases in passenger demand to / from London and increases in freight traffic to / from the Port of Southampton.

The main overcrowding issues are on services to / from London. Whilst this is an issue during traditional weekday peak periods, services can also be overcrowded during the off peak, particularly during times of higher travel demand (e.g. holiday periods). This can be exacerbated by the operation of shorter train formations, during the off peak. The provision of infrastructure to deliver additional peak period capacity in and out of London Waterloo can also be used to deliver additional off peak services. The response to the *Train Service Specification* questions has identified the service improvements that could deliver additional capacity and reduce journey times between the Solent area and London.

In terms of peak period capacity, the Wessex Route Study has assumed that all services would have 3+2 seating. 3+2 seating has historically been introduced on Portsmouth to London peak services as a way of delivering additional seating capacity. Whilst this theoretically provides additional capacity above 2+2 seating, comfort levels are significantly reduced and this style of seating is not appropriate for longer distance services. Journey times between the Solent and London are similar to many other English Core Cities, particularly once HS2 is completed. London to Southampton services continue as far as Weymouth, with a much longer journey time. 2+2 seating is and will remain the standard for such journeys elsewhere in the country and should be the standard for longer distance main line services within the South Western Franchise, including peak period services to / from London.

Whilst the challenge of providing sufficient capacity in and out of London is appreciated, current season ticket arrangements encourage people to travel every day. Through more flexible ticketing arrangements (including carnet season tickets), there is significant scope to better manage and spread peak period demand and reflect the increasing scope people have to work remotely from the office at least some of the time using technology. This increases the scope to use more comfortable 2+2 seating on longer distance services

throughout the day. This is considered in more detail in the response to the *Fares and Ticketing* section.

The response to the *Train Service Specification* section has also looked in detail at how local rail connectivity can be improved within Solent. This would take advantage of planned infrastructure improvements already identified in the Wessex Route Study, together with additional infrastructure improvements that need to be developed in more detail.

#### **Future impacts on demand**

- What factors may impact on demand for travel on the new South Western franchise, drawing on local impacts in particular? Please provide any evidence you may have.

Significant economic growth is planned for Solent and is outlined in the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership's *Transforming Solent Growth Strategy*, which was published in October 2014. This has set a target to increase GVA by 3.0% per annum between 2013 and 2020. The LEP is predicting that this will result in an increase in 46,500 jobs and require 24,000 new homes to be delivered over this period. The Strategy recognises the importance of improving transport connectivity to support and deliver this growth and the need for rail to be part of the mix.

In January 2014, the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH), published its Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for Solent, looking forwards to 2036. PUSH is a partnership of the local planning authorities within Solent and Hampshire County Council. The SHMA identified a requirement to deliver 4,160 homes per annum in Solent between 2011 and 2036. PUSH has subsequently commissioned work on a Spatial Strategy Review, which aims to allocate this housing requirement in the different Local Planning Authority areas across the Solent, including the identification of any strategic sites. The Spatial Strategy Review work will also consider the allocation of other land use types, including new employment development. This work is ongoing at the time of writing. Transport work is being undertaken in support of the Spatial Strategy Review and this will include consideration of the role that rail can play supporting the increased travel demand associated with this development.

In September 2015, the devolution proposal for a Combined Authority for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (HIOW) was submitted to Government. This encompasses all of Solent, together with the whole of Hampshire. This has set a target of delivering 76,000 homes across the whole Combined Authority area in eight years instead of ten years, increasing the annual delivery rate from 7,600 homes to 9,500 homes. The Combined Authority proposals are currently subject to negotiation with Government.

The international port facilities in both cities also generate a number of passenger movements from a wide catchment area for cross Channel ferries (Portsmouth – 1.9 million passenger journeys per annum) and Cruise Ships (Southampton – 1.6 million passenger journeys per annum). Southampton Airport, which is well connected by north to south rail services, generates around 1.8 million passenger journeys per annum.

In summary, there are significant plans for growth in Solent, which will increase travel demands. Although significant investment is planned on the Strategic Road Network over that period, it is also important the number and proportion of rail journeys increases in order to reduce congestion on the road network and sustainably support planned economic growth. ORR station usage shows that there has been an increase of 6.2% in the number of passengers handled in Solent over the two year period from 2012/13 and 2014/15. This shows the potential for more significant growth in rail usage, particularly if service improvements can be made.

### **Train Service Specification**

- Where, if anywhere, would you like to see any changes to first and last trains on the South Western network and why? Do you have any evidence to support this?
- Where, if anywhere, would you like to see any changes to weekend trains on the South Western network and why? Do you have any evidence to support this?
- Would you support a specification which is flexible enough to allow the operator to review how station calls are allocated to train paths, including skip-stopping, in order to improve overall line capacity? What impact might this have on passengers?
- Respondents are invited to propose any changes to the current service pattern which they feel should be considered and to explain their rationale, for example by identifying specific local factors which might influence the future level of passenger demand which should be reflected in a revised specification.
- Respondents who wish to promote service changes should clearly identify these in their response to this consultation, as well as any supporting business case or value for money (VfM) analysis.

Within the Solent Transport area, there are two key areas for Train Service Specification that need to be considered ahead as follows:

- Connectivity to / from London and intermediate locations (e.g. Basingstoke and Guildford); and
- Local East to West Connectivity
- Connectivity to / from Dorset

Consideration will now be given to these two issues. Issues relating to connectivity to/ from London have also been considered in the questions about additional capacity above.

### **Connectivity to / from London**

Connectivity to / from London is a key issue for the Solent economy. Whilst services on the mainline routes serving both Portsmouth and Southampton have benefitted from new rolling stock over the last 10-15 years, journey times and speeds are uncompetitive, when compared to other city regions in the UK. Typical journey times are currently 96-98 minutes to / from Portsmouth Harbour and 80 minutes to / from Southampton Central.

These relative uncompetitive journey times will be further exacerbated once HS2 and the Great Western electrification schemes are completed. Despite being physically further from

London than either Portsmouth or Southampton, the vast majority of English core cities will have shorter or similar journey times to / from London:

- Manchester - 68 mins
- Leeds - 83 mins
- Sheffield - 79 mins
- Nottingham - 68 mins
- Birmingham - 49 mins
- Bristol - 83 mins

Generalised journey times will also be reduced for some cities through improved service frequency. For example, post electrification, Bristol will be served by four trains an hour to / from London, instead of the current two per hour.

One of the key justifications for delivering HS2 is to rebalance the UK economy away from London and the South East, increasing the relative economic importance of the Midlands and the North. However, it is important to note that the Solent economy and Portsmouth and Southampton in particular are under-performing economically compared to the UK as a whole and the wider South East economy. Therefore, the same justification can be made for improved connectivity to / from London in order to maintain and improve the competitiveness of the Solent economy, particularly in terms of journey times. It is therefore essential that, in combination with infrastructure investment, the franchise seeks to deliver journey time improvements to / from London on the Portsmouth and Southampton main line routes. This should include a commitment to both reduced physical journey times, as well as increased service frequency to deliver improved generalised journey times.

In terms of actual journey times, the franchise should be aiming to achieve the following journey times, which would be competitive with those that will be achieved between London and most of the English Core Cities:

- London to Southampton Airport - circa 60 mins
- London to Southampton Central - circa 68 mins
- London to Portsmouth & Southsea - circa 75 mins
- London to Portsmouth Harbour - circa 80 mins

Increasing service frequency provides an opportunity for some services to have a reduced stopping pattern to deliver the above journey time enhancements, in combination with infrastructure enhancements. This would also allow existing connectivity to be maintained between Southampton / Portsmouth and key intermediate stations on the routes to London (e.g. Petersfield, Haslemere, Winchester, Basingstoke and Woking). On the Southampton route, improved journey times would also benefit locations further west, including the Bournemouth / Poole conurbation.

Improving journey times between Havant and Guildford was considered as a potential intervention, when the Transport Delivery Plan was developed in 2012 by Transport for South Hampshire (the former name for Solent Transport). This appraised an 11 minute

journey time reduction, which delivered considerable Present Value Benefits (nearly £300m at 2002 prices and values).

These will require the delivery of a number of infrastructure improvements along both routes, as identified in the Wessex Route Study during CP6 and CP7. It is important the Government commits to this investment, to ensure these improvements can be delivered through the South Western Franchise.

During the weekday AM peak, down services from London to both Portsmouth and Southampton are relatively slow and the relative speeds of these services should be increased.

### **Connectivity within Solent**

With some notable exceptions, rail connectivity is relatively poor within Solent, particularly for east to west movements between Portsmouth and Southampton.

As outlined in the response to the *Future Impacts and Demand* section above, significant economic growth is planned for Solent, with requirements for additional housing and employment development, which will increase overall travel demand. However, it's not just about the Journey to Work. Both cities are significant regional centres for retail, leisure and education facilities, which are also expanding.

Like many other densely populated urban areas, Solent suffers from traffic congestion on key strategic road corridors and local routes. It is essential that rail plays a more important role in accommodating increasing travel demands for journeys within Solent, in order to sustainably support economic growth, increase travel choice and to reduce the impact of increased travel demands on the road network. A number of specific connectivity issues will now be considered within the Solent, followed by potential suggestions on how these could be addressed through the franchise specification.

It is accepted that there will need to be a balance between certain issues and we would expect this to be reflected through innovative approaches from the bidders.

### **Portsmouth to Southampton (East to West) Connectivity – Key issues**

Whilst the cities are only around 25 miles apart by rail (Southampton Central to Portsmouth & Southsea), the fastest end to end journey (operated by Great Western Railway) is 41 minutes, with an average speed of 37 mph. The all stations stopping service, which forms part of this franchise, takes 60 minutes, at an average speed of 25mph. These journey times and speeds are uncompetitive compared to other city pairs and are limiting economic interaction between Portsmouth and Southampton. This includes the agglomeration benefits of increased business to business inter-action and opportunities for increased labour mobility. Delivering similar economic benefits is the justification by Transport for the North for more transformational rail improvements to reduce journey times between major cities in the North of England.

However, rail services also need to reflect the existing and well defined "Journey to Work" areas around both cities. Many local stations currently only have hourly services, which are

unattractive, albeit with some limited additional services during weekday peak periods. This includes:

- Local stations on the “Netley Line” between St Denys and Bursledon (inclusive);
- Chandlers Ford, Swaythling, St Denys, Millbrook and Redbridge on the “Salisbury 6” service;
- Hedge End and Botley on the Eastleigh to Fareham “Botley Line” route

Despite the relative unattractiveness of these services, looking at ORR Station usage data, many smaller stations are seeing levels of growth in excess of the average for Solent, which gives an indication of the potential for further increases, if the service is made even more attractive.

In addition to the unattractiveness of hourly services, there is a need to improve connectivity between different routes. For example, there are effectively no direct services between the Botley Line and Southampton, requiring an inconvenient change at Eastleigh. This also means there no direct rail services between Southampton Airport and the eastern part of Solent. The Salisbury 6 service also operates as a self contained operation, due to the current need to use diesel units on a largely non electrified route.

### **Portsmouth to Southampton (East to West) Connectivity – Suggested Service Improvements**

The franchise specification should aim to deliver the following improvements, with a particular emphasis on delivering a “Solent Metro” operation on local services:

- Improved frequency and journey times between Portsmouth and Southampton, equivalent to other city pairs in the UK. For example, fast services with a single stop at Fareham could potentially travel between Southampton Central and Portsmouth & Southsea in 35 minutes;
- The development of a “Solent Metro” operation with a minimum half hourly frequency at all local stations throughout the day, seven days per week;
- Direct services via the Botley line to Southampton Airport Parkway and Southampton Central;
- Looking for opportunities to link “Salisbury 6” services into services on the Netley Line and Botley Line

Note that whilst this response primarily considers heavy rail, the “Solent Metro” label applies to all public transport modes. This includes bus and ferry operations, together with potential rapid transit systems that could be developed in the future.

Some initial service improvements could be delivered without infrastructure enhancements and it is important that bidders note the current inefficiencies and opportunities available within the existing timetabled operation. For example, the Southampton to Portsmouth hourly stopping service requires three units and the Waterloo to Poole stopping service has long layovers en route. However, infrastructure enhancements will be essential to fully deliver all the service improvements highlighted. These potentially include:

- Capacity improvements at Eastleigh to allow more services to run from the Botley Line to Southampton Airport and Southampton Central and potential double tracking between Botley and Fareham;
- Signalling improvements to increase train frequencies on the Netley Line;
- Capacity improvements to allow increased frequency on the Salisbury 6 route, including an additional passing loop between Eastleigh and Romsey;
- Increased capacity at Southampton Central;
- Reinstatement of Platform 2 at Portsmouth Harbour; and
- Delivery of the Electric Spine project to electrify Salisbury to Southampton via both Eastleigh and Redbridge, which would allow electric services on all local services, with dual voltage rolling stock.

Some of these infrastructure enhancements have already been identified in the Wessex Route Study for potential delivery in CP6 or beyond. However, Network Rail has committed to working with local stakeholders (including Solent Transport) to identify what infrastructure requirements are required to support service improvements.

The provision of “skip stop” services between Portsmouth and Southampton was considered and appraised as an intervention, when the Transport Delivery Plan was developed in 2012 by Transport for South Hampshire (the former name for Solent Transport). This used the Sub Regional Transport Model (SRTM) to appraise a 20 minute interval service between Portsmouth and Southampton, with skip stopping at the minor stations on the Netley Line, but still providing them with at least two trains per hour.

The SRTM outputs showed that the proposal would offer Good Value for Money. However, the proposal modelled does have some deficiencies:

- Portsmouth to Southampton end to end journey times are still uncompetitive, saving only four minutes on the all stations stopping service (it is however accepted that a more frequent service would reduce generalised journey times); and
- Although minor stations would have a two trains per hour service, these are not evenly spread, which is less attractive than services 30 minutes apart.

Therefore, whilst skip stop is a potential option on the Netley line, it is questionable whether it delivers the outcomes in terms of end to end journey times and increased service frequency.

As the investment programmes for CP6 and CP7 will not be confirmed and committed until after the franchise is let, the following approach should be taken in relation to the train service specification in the ITT:

- Bidders should be encouraged to identify what improvements could be made from the start of the franchise with existing infrastructure provision;
- In advance of infrastructure enhancements, some connectivity improvements may be delivered through better connections between services at key interchange points (e.g. Eastleigh and Fareham). However, the longer term aim (supported by

infrastructure improvements) should be to maximise connectivity that could be delivered with through services;

- Bidders should be encouraged to specify more transformational improvements that could be made to train service provision through the life of the franchise, if supporting infrastructure improvements are made. Working with Network Rail, and other relevant organisations, bidders should identify the infrastructure improvements necessary to support their service enhancements;
- The franchise needs to provide flexibility to allow service enhancements to be delivered throughout the life of the franchise, taking account of both infrastructure improvements and opportunities for demand provided by economic growth. It is particularly important that there are incentives for the successful bidder to deliver improvements throughout the life of the franchise; and
- Finally, work is ongoing with the Solent LEP to develop transformational improvements to East / West connectivity. This might, for example, include tram / trains solutions for at least some of the “Solent Metro” type of operation, with new stations and off heavy rail operations. The franchise needs the flexibility to incorporate these more transformational solutions, if they prove to be feasible and can demonstrate good value for money during the life of the franchise.

It’s important to note that the HIOW devolution proposals are aiming to develop a 10 year guaranteed infrastructure investment plan. This would incorporate Network Rail’s investment programme.

The South Western Franchise only covers some services within Solent and any improvements need to be considered alongside services provided by other operators, including GTR, Great Western Railway and Cross Country Trains.

Finally, with reference to the question about later services, both cities are important night time economy destinations. Whilst it is accepted that it would be unreasonable for rail services to serve every aspect of the night time economy, it is therefore important that last rail services are provided from both cities allow people to attend events that finish by 23:00, which is a standard weekday curfew time for live performance venues and allow time for people to access a station. Whilst there are currently travel options between both cities at around 23:30, these require an inconvenient change of train, resulting in an extended journey time. More convenient through services should be provided.

### **Connectivity to / from Dorset**

The existing train service between Solent and Dorset is generally good. For example, journey times and frequencies between Southampton and Bournemouth / Poole are much more attractive than Portsmouth to Southampton. There are some detailed improvements that would be beneficial:

- Faster services from Southampton to Bournemouth / Poole during the AM peak period;
- A later evening service(s) from Bournemouth / Poole to allow Solent residents to access the night time economy in Bournemouth / Poole by rail

### **Performance and reliability**

- Are there any specific stations or services where you believe reliability or punctuality should be improved?
- Where possible, please explain your reasoning when responding to this question.

Data shows that Mainline South West Trains services (which form the bulk of the franchised services in the Solent area) are less reliable than they were around five years ago, although there has been a slight improvement over the last year. Clearly there are a wide range of factors of affecting reliability and many of those are not under direct control of the train operator. The latest data indicates that two thirds of delays to South West Trains services are due to Network Rail issues (including infrastructure, operations and external factors) and less than a third (29%) are attributable to South West Trains themselves.

It is clear that the mainline routes serving the Solent are operating close to capacity at certain times of day and once any disruption occurs, significant knock on impacts can occur. It is also important to recognise that the majority of improvements in reliability and punctuality are beyond the control of the South Western franchise holder and rest with Network Rail. It is therefore recommended that when the investment plan for CP6 is determined, that a commitment is given to infrastructure enhancements identified in the Wessex Route Study that will deliver reliability improvements.

### **Managing disruption**

- Respondents are asked to suggest what mitigating actions and steps the South Western operator should be expected to take to meet the needs of its passengers both during the planned disruption to the franchise as a result of enhancement works and when 'force majeure' events, such as extreme weather or unplanned events that impact the smooth operation of the network.
- Respondents are asked to consider whether they would support replacing first/last train services with alternative transport where it can be demonstrated that a longer period of engineering access for Network Rail would improve the infrastructure reliability and reduce disruption overall.

As highlighted in the Transport Focus research, communication with passengers, particularly during times of delay and / or disruption is important. This should include the appropriate use of staff at stations and on trains and making full use of all media platforms, including social media.

Replacing first / last services with alternative transport is an acceptable solution for infrastructure improvements, providing the alternative transport options are attractive in terms of journey times and cater for all passenger requirements, including accompanied luggage / bicycles and accommodate disabled passengers.

### **Partnership working and collaboration**

- We are interested in your view on the best way to achieve efficient operation of this

railway through partnership and collaboration. Please describe how such working arrangements might support this objective.

Solent Transport is a partnership of the four transport authorities in the Solent, which considers transport issues strategically for the Solent as a whole. Solent Transport also works in close partnership with many relevant external organisations, including both Network Rail and South West Trains. A good example is further development of investment priorities for the Wessex Route Study for the Solent area, where Solent Transport is intending to work in partnership with Network Rail. The Solent Transport authorities have also had a good track record of jointly delivering projects with the rail industry. This includes current improvement schemes at Southampton Central, The Hard Interchange (Portsmouth Harbour) and Eastleigh station.

Solent Transport is keen to continue this close partnership working with external organisations, including with the successful bidder for this franchise. This will be important to define both the investment programme for CP6 and CP7 and the consequent train service improvements that could be included within the franchise. As noted elsewhere, the franchise needs the necessary flexibility to incorporate improvements as and when infrastructure improvements are implemented.

Looking forwards, the proposed HIOW Combined Authority is likely incorporate Solent Transport's partnership work with external bodies, although the commitment to partnership work would remain. The Combined Authority proposals include a 10 year Transport Investment Fund, which would incorporate Network Rail's investment proposals.

#### **Community rail and other local partnerships**

- What opportunities are there for Community Rail Partnerships and other local partnerships to expand their role and range of activities to support local communities, businesses and other organisations?

Solent Transport supports the existing role of Community Rail Partnerships in Solent and would welcome an expansion of their role. Appropriate funds should be provided to enable them to achieve this.

As noted in the response above to *Partnership working in collaboration*, Solent Transport is a partnership of the four Solent local transport authorities and would want to continue its existing partnership working with the rail industry, including Network Rail and the successful franchise bidder.

#### **Island Line**

- What factors do you consider should be taken into account in assessment of options for the Island Line?
- Do you have any innovative proposals for how the Island Line might operate on a more self-sustaining basis?

Solent Transport's comments on Island Line are consistent with the views of the Isle of Wight Council.

The value of maintaining and improving Island line is recognised as a traffic-free, direct and reliable connection between towns in the eastern side of the Isle of Wight and the cross Solent Catamaran and Hovercraft services that operate from the Pier Head and Ryde Esplanade. The line is popular with locals and tourists and gives access to a number of towns within the eastern half of the Island, the population of which together represent almost half of the Island's resident population.

The line, infrastructure and rolling stock is understood to be in poor condition and that re-tendering the Isle of Wight Franchise gives an ideal opportunity to bring Island Line up to a far better modern standard. This should be done by replacing the near 80 year old London Underground tube trains currently used, by more modern vehicles thereby improve the quality, frequency and viability of the service in the longer term.

All opportunities to improve the service within the context of the franchise should be explored. It is understood, for example, that a move away from heavy rail to a lighter tram type system could bring about benefits in terms of simpler operation, reduced signalling and lower cost of maintenance. This, however, needs to be investigated in much more detail. A switch to a tram system could also offer the potential for expansion and "street running" at a future date if funding were available, something that would be very difficult or impossible to achieve under the current heavy rail operation.

The opportunity should be taken through a new franchise to reconnect Island Line and the local heritage steam railway line at Smallbrook Junction. This will give steam trains access to Ryde, and bring about a number of benefits including generating additional passenger numbers on both lines as well as offering the significant advantage of being able to draw on local rail expertise, skilled manpower and locally based heavy maintenance equipment and facilities.

It is essential that as part of any changes, Island Line is retained within the national rail network for timetabling and ticketing and that it must remain subject to the normal protection that a franchised railway has in the event of a failure of the operator, or unforeseen issues with the track or infrastructure.

#### **Third party funded changes**

- Are you aware of any proposals for third party funded changes?
- Please provide details in line with the requirements set out above, or provide sufficient detail for further dialogue to take place to understand the proposals.

Solent Transport is not aware of any proposals for third party funded changes.

#### **Stations**

- What improvements would you like to see at the station(s) you use to enhance your journey experience?
- Please indicate the name of the station(s) and the rationale for your specific comments.

Individual local authority responses have identified specific improvements at specific stations in Solent. The Solent Transport response therefore outlines key principles that should be applied:

- Improved safety and security, especially for early and late services, including increased periods when staff are available and provision of staff at currently unstaffed stations for at least part of the day;
- Improved waiting and other facilities, including toilets;
- Better provision of Ticket Vending machines, including further roll out of the direct video link facility;
- Improved accessibility for disabled people;
- Better car and cycle parking facilities at appropriate locations (dealt with in more detail in the response to *Door-to-door journeys*);
- Encourage commercial opportunities at stations to improve community profile;
- Free Wi-Fi provision at all stations; and
- Delivery lockers and "Click and Connect" services at key stations;

#### **Door-to-door journeys**

- What are your proposals for providing passengers better and safer access to different modes of transport at stations (including bus, car, cycling and walking)?
- What opportunities exist for improved integration between modes, citing relevant examples to support your comments?

It is essential that rail journeys are seamlessly integrated into other modes at each end of the journey. This maximises the attractiveness of rail as a transport mode and further enhancements delivered through this franchise to improve door-to-door journeys will help ensure that rail continues to be attractive for an increasing number and proportion of journeys.

In terms of physical infrastructure, accessibility to stations should be attractive for all modes. This will include the provision of high quality pedestrian and cycle access (including safe and secure cycle parking) and good quality access to other public transport modes, including high quality interchange facilities and comprehensive information. Provision of appropriate access for people arriving by car is also important, including pick up and drop off facilities and car parking. However, in the immediate vicinity of station entrances, priority should be given to pedestrian movements. The franchise holder should examine the scope for stations that could act as Park & Ride hubs.

The Solent has a good record for delivering improvements to door-to-door journeys at railway stations, with the local transport authorities working in close partnership with South

West Trains and Network Rail and developing a jointly funded package of improvements. Current schemes include Southampton Central Station Quarter, The Hard Interchange at Portsmouth Harbour and Eastleigh Station forecourt.

The franchise holder should be required to work closely with the local transport authorities to develop a jointly funded programme of further improvements at other stations to enhance to the door-to-door journey experience.

Integrated ticketing is an important component of improving door-to-door journeys with other public transport modes and this is dealt with in the response to the *Fares and Ticketing* and *Smart ticketing* sections below.

#### **Fares and Ticketing**

- What are your views on the availability of retail staff and the ability for passengers to have widespread access to ticket buying opportunities (e.g. through new and improved approaches such as smart ticketing, increased advance purchase ticketing or via mobile phones), adequate measures to ensure vulnerable passengers are not disadvantaged, and more effective customer service by both station and on-train staff?
- Do you have any evidence to support your views?

#### **Smart ticketing**

- What are your experiences of using smartcard technology within the franchise area to date?
- To what extent do you believe that smartcard technology could be used to manage passenger demand and to create an integrated journey experience for passengers?

Given the significant overlap between the *Fares and Ticketing* and *Smart ticketing* sections, a single, comprehensive response is provided to cover the relevant issues. The provision of appropriate ticketing options is key to further increasing the proportion of journeys made by rail. There is a need for innovation, both in terms of how ticketing products are sold and how these better reflect changes in the way people need to travel. Seamless ticketing integration between other public transport modes is important and the use of smart ticketing will be key to this.

#### **Smart Ticketing**

Solent Transport has recently developed the *Solent Go* multi operator, multi modal smartcard, which is the only one developed outside of London and the metropolitan authority areas. This was largely funded through the *Better Connected South Hampshire* Local Sustainable Transport Fund project, with ongoing support provided by the three mainland transport authorities. Currently *Solent Go* has products for bus, ferry and hovercraft services. No rail products are currently offered on *Solent Go* and this should be addressed through the new South Western franchise. The HIOW devolution proposal includes the establishment of a Passenger Transport Executive function for the Wider Hampshire area and provision of smart ticketing.

The franchise specification should include a specific requirement for the inclusion of appropriate smart ticketing rail products. Whilst this might initially be through the *Solent Go* smartcard, there should be flexibility in the specification to ensure that this can be extended to other media as appropriate throughout the life of the franchise (e.g. mobile phones).

General season tickets should be available via smart ticketing from the start of the franchise. Other more innovative ticketing options (such as the “carnet” type of product described below) should be introduced within six months.

Solent Transport is keen to work in partnership with the successful bidder to help deliver these products through Solent Go.

### **Innovative Season Tickets**

More innovative ticketing products are important to reflect the changing working patterns. Many employees, particularly in the office sector, now work more flexible hours and technology now enables many people to work remotely from home and other locations. Current season tickets are designed around the assumption that people travel to work every day. It is essential that the new franchise introduces innovative “carnet” products that are competitively priced, compared to buying separate tickets on a daily basis, but ensure that people only pay for the journeys they take. Smart ticketing is the appropriate and ideal media for such a product.

Interestingly, the impact of more innovative products is likely to have different outcomes in different markets. For commuter journeys to / from central London, rail effectively has a captive market. The majority of jobs there are office based, with the greatest focus for flexible and remote working. For this market, more innovative and flexible ticket products are likely to suppress the demand for peak hour travel. The Wessex Route Study has identified that the implications for accommodating planned increases in commuter demand to / from London are significant. It would be beneficial if ticketing products could intelligently manage this demand to ensure that the planned increase in high peak demand is reduced compared with what was identified through the Market Study. This could allow the provision of 2+2 seating on longer distance peak period services to / from London.

Within Solent, spare capacity currently exists on many existing services to accommodate more commuters and this could be increased further with the improvements suggested in the response to *Train Service Specification*. In contrast to journeys to / from central London, commuters have much more choice about which mode of travel to use, with over half of journeys to work made by private car and rail having a relatively small overall modal share. Increasing the number and proportion of commuter journeys made by rail within Solent would sustainably accommodate the increasing travel demand associated with economic growth, minimising impact on a congested road network. In overall terms, the provision of more innovative season ticket products is likely to make rail a more attractive option and increase usage, which would be beneficial to the Solent area.

### **Integrated Ticketing**

Reference has been made to “Solent Metro” in the response to *Train Service Specification*, noting how this encompasses all public transport modes. Seamless integration between different public transport modes, including rail, is essential to ensure they are an attractive alternative option. Rail services only directly cater for specific journeys and the use of other public transport modes is often necessary to complete the entire journey.

Expansion of rail products onto the *Solent Go* smartcard will help deliver the necessary integrated ticketing between rail and other public transport modes. In the context of the proposals for a Passenger Transport Executive function in the HIOW devolution proposals, there is scope for the provision of a range of integrated ticketing options to extend beyond the Solent. The franchise specification needs to provide the necessary flexibility to accommodate a range of innovative integrated ticketing options between rail and other public transport modes, throughout the life of the franchise.

### **Customer Service**

Whilst there is a clear need for innovative ticketing options, utilising smartcard technology and primarily purchased via the internet, high quality customer service via both station and on train staff is key, particularly for more vulnerable passengers.

As noted in the response to *Stations*, the franchise specification should require increased staff presence stations. This should include extended staffing hours at existing stations and staff provision at currently unstaffed stations.

### **Passenger Information**

- Are there areas of improvement in customer information and engagement you would like to see before, during and after your journey?

Customer information has improved significantly in recent years, with the comprehensive installation of real time information screens at all stations. The franchise specification should retain existing information provision and seek to provide additional information, particularly making use of the Internet.

### **Service quality**

- What areas of customer service within your end-to-end journey would you expect to see monitored and reported on to improve the service quality for passengers?

Customer service should be excellent, including staff in stations and on trains. They should be seen as ambassadors for the service, making passengers feel welcomed and valued.

### **Passenger compensation**

- Please provide details of your experience with the current delay repay passenger compensation arrangements, and suggestions for how this might be modified in the new franchise to make compensation more transparent and convenient for

passengers.

As promoted by Claire Perry MP earlier this year, when applicable, immediate compensation should be available at the most convenience to the passenger, with the option of cash, card repayment or voucher for future travel. Compensation measures should be similarly easy for season ticket holders.

As suggested by Transport Focus, Solent Transport supports that PPM be renamed to "on time at my station" to increase transparency. The measure should also account for passengers missing connecting services or cumulative delays over a period e.g. several delays of less than 30 minutes over a week. The measure should be personalised to relate to actual passenger journeys not just final destinations.

### **Security and Safety**

- Do you have any proposals to improve security and safety at stations and on trains that you would like us to consider?
- Please provide details of the stations(s) and/or train(s) where appropriate that have informed your comments, and provide supporting information where available.

The response to *Stations*, an extended staffing presence would have benefits for security and safety. The British Transport Police text line should be better advertised and staff at key stations and on trains should be visible later in the evenings.