



Item 9

Report to Solent Transport

Date: 3 February 2016

Report by: Philip Marshall

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Subject: South Western Rail Franchise Consultation

1. Summary

1.1 The following decision(s) is/are sought:

That the Joint Committee approves the consultation response to the South Western Franchise in the Appendix.

2. Reason

2.1 In order to influence the specification of the South Western Franchise to deliver improved rail connectivity within and to / from the Solent to sustainably support economic growth and future travel demands.

3. Other Options Considered and Rejected

3.1 Taking no action – This would not allow Solent Transport to have any influence over the specification of the South Western Franchise.

4. Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Decision Maker or Other Executive Member Consulted – None.

5. Dispensation granted by the Conduct Advisory Panel – None.

6. Reason(s) for the Matter being dealt with if Urgent – None.

Approved by: Date:

Councillor Seán D T Woodward
Chairman
Solent Transport



Agenda Item 9

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Purpose of the Report

To provide a consultation response on the South Western Franchise specification.

Recommendations

- 1. That the Joint Committee approves the consultation response to the South Western Franchise in the Appendix.**

Introduction

1. On the 12 November 2015, the stakeholder consultation started on the South Western Rail Franchise. This franchise covers the majority of rail services in Solent, including:
 - services to / from London via the mainline routes from Portsmouth and Southampton;
 - Local east to west cross Solent services on the Netley and Botley lines;
 - Local services on the "Salisbury 6" route, serving Romsey, Chandler's Ford, Eastleigh and local stations in Southampton; and
 - Island Line services on the Isle of Wight.
2. The Solent has significant ambitions for economic growth over the life of this franchise, increasing the number of jobs and homes. It is important that the number and proportion of journeys made by rail

increase in order to sustainably accommodate the increasing travel demand associated with this growth. It is important that the franchise is specified appropriately to deliver this outcome. This report outlines Solent Transport's proposed response to the franchise consultation, which is included in full in the Appendix. The closing date for consultation responses is 9 February 2016.

Franchise Timetable

3. The current South Western Franchise is operated by Stagecoach South West Trains and is due to expire in 2017. The Government had been in negotiations with Stagecoach about a Direct Award to extend the franchise to 2019, but these failed to reach an agreement. It is anticipated that the new franchise will be for between seven and nine years, with the potential for a one year extension. This would mean that the new franchise will run until between 2024 and 2027.
4. The franchise will cover up to three Network Rail control periods. This includes the existing CP5, which runs to 2019, CP6, which runs from 2019 to 2024 and potentially the start of CP7, which runs from 2024 to 2029. Some service enhancements that could be delivered in the new franchise will be dependent on infrastructure improvements that will be delivered by Network Rail.

Consultation Response

5. The detailed Solent Transport consultation response to the franchise consultation is provided in the Appendix. The response is based on the questions provided in the consultation document. The key strategic issues from the consultation response are summarised in this report.

Capacity

6. The key capacity issues relate to main line services to / from London. Whilst this is clearly an issue during weekday peak periods, overcrowding can also be an issue at other times of day. The response notes that 2+2 seating should be the standard for all long distance services and 3+2 seating is not an appropriate way of securing sufficient capacity. 2+2 seating is the standard for similar length journeys between London and other English cities.
7. Although covered in more detail in the response to ticketing below, it is noted that more innovative season ticketing options may reduce the predicted levels of weekday peak periods demand in / out of London.

Future Impacts on Demand

8. The response to this question notes the planned growth in the Solent area, including more jobs and housing that will increase travel

demand. It also notes the ongoing overall increase in demand for rail services in the Solent, which is consistent with what's happening nationally. The total numbers of station entries and exits increased by over 6% between 2012/13 and 2014/15.

Train Service Specification

9. This is a key part of the consultation response and this part of the specification will ultimately dictate the train service that will be provided through the franchise. The response has considered a range of connectivity issues including to / from London, within Solent and to / from Dorset.
10. In terms of connectivity to / from London, the response notes that journey times to / from both Portsmouth and Southampton are uncompetitive compared to other English Core Cities. This will exacerbated further, when HS2 is completed, when, for example, Manchester will be only 68 minutes from London. The response indicates that the franchise should aim to reduce end to end journey times for Southampton and Portsmouth to circa 68 and 75 minutes respectively.
11. In order to maintain existing connectivity between intermediate stations, it is proposed that these journey time improvements should be achieved through the provision of additional services with a more limited stopping pattern. It is recognised that infrastructure improvements will be required to both improve speeds and provide capacity for additional services.
12. In terms of connectivity within Solent, the consultation response notes the relatively poor frequency and journey times of many services, particularly between Portsmouth and Southampton. It recommends
 - Improved frequency and journey times between Portsmouth and Southampton, equivalent to other city pairs in the UK;
 - minimum half hourly services on all local services as part of an aspiration to develop "Solent Metro" operations across a range of public transport modes;
 - improved connectivity between different routes (e.g. direct services via the Botley line to Southampton Airport and Southampton Central;
13. It is recognised that infrastructure improvements will be required to fully support these improvements, although there is also scope to deliver some shorter term improvements. The consultation response recommends that the specification should consider both short term improvements, together with more transformational improvements that could be delivered with appropriate infrastructure. It also notes that the franchise specification needs sufficient flexibility to allow improvements to be delivered throughout the life of the franchise.

14. Finally, in relation to connectivity to / from Dorset, the response notes the need for faster westbound services in the AM peak and later evening eastbound services in the evening.

Partnership Working and Collaboration

15. The response notes the existing partnership working Solent Transport has with the rail industry and the need for this to continue.

Island Line

16. The stakeholder consultation is seeking views on how Island Line can become a more self sustaining operation. The Solent Transport response is consistent with the views of the Isle of Wight Council. This has been supported by advisory work undertaken by transport expert Christopher Garnett on behalf of Isle of Wight Council. It is concluded that more detailed consideration should be given to the future of Island Line and it is recognised that a light rail based solution could reduce operating costs compared to the existing heavy rail operation. It should be promoted and managed more effectively and remain as part of the national network for timetabling and ticketing and have 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.

Stations / Door to Door Journeys

17. The response notes the range of improvements that would be welcomed at stations in the Solent. This is closely tied to considering door to door journeys. This includes opportunities for interchange improvements at stations, for which there has been a good track record of joint working in the Solent.

Fares and Ticketing

18. The response notes the need for the franchise to embrace smart ticketing and the need for rail products to be added to the *Solent Go* smartcard. There is also a need to for the franchise to have the flexibility to accommodate other media for smart ticketing. There is also the need for tickets to be integrated between rail and other modes.
19. The response notes the need to provide more innovative ticketing options that reflect current trends to more flexible working, including technological improvements that have allowed people to work remotely from the office. This has the potential to minimise the predicted increases in London commuter traffic, providing an option to maintain 2+2 seating on longer distance services. Within Solent,

where people have more travel options, particularly the private car, such ticketing options are likely to make rail services more attractive.

Devolution Agenda

20. Where relevant, the consultation response notes the implications of the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (HIOW) devolution proposals.

Summary

21. The new South Western Franchise provides a significant opportunity to improve rail connectivity to / from and within Solent. The Solent Transport outlines the franchise specification can achieve this.

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background papers

The following documents disclose facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report.

NB the list excludes:

1. Published works.
2. Documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.

TITLE

LOCATION

To be completed