

To the Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport.
Great Minster House, Horseferry Road,
London SW1

Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association
PO Box 191 Sevenoaks
Kent TN13 2AW

14 October 2016

Dear Secretary of State

DEVOLUTION OF SOUTHEASTERN SERVICES

Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association would like to reiterate its strong support for TfL's case to be the commissioner of metro services, out as far as Sevenoaks.

We remain convinced by the benefits of devolution. These were clear in the 2013 bid by the then mayor, and we have seen how those north-of-London services that were transferred then have benefitted. The South East missed out on these benefits last time, and it must not be allowed to miss out again.

For us the benefits of devolution of metro services to TfL and bringing Sevenoaks and Dunton Green into the TfL system would include:

- A relentless focus on customer experience and getting passengers where they want to go, rather than on train performance and on the railway as an end in itself.
- The Oyster/Contactless fare system, in its full form, including beginning-to-end integrated charging and automatic application of the correct and lowest fare for the journey undertaken, will have major benefits for Sevenoaks area travellers, most of whom use both rail and tube services to get where they actually want to go and are frustrated by separate ticket systems with different rules.
- Strategic planning of the services taking account of development and economic needs of London and the South-East. The current oversight of the services has not given sufficient weight to the needs of businesses and passengers that the rail companies ultimately serve. Overcrowded and unreliable services have wider negative effects on the quality of life and the economic performance of the region.
- Scope for future metro services to reflect the changing needs of travellers to London, as jobs move out of existing centres
- Potential new investment in service and capacity improvement which no DfT franchise arrangement is likely to deliver, but which through its wider view and longer-term outlook TfL has shown itself capable of delivering.
- Manned stations to ensure lower fare evasion and help and safety for passengers.
- High standards of service and active management of the private operator of metro services, based on standards for quality of service to ensure that they meet them, as already evidenced on London Overground. This is an area where, for monopoly services, the existing franchise model has failed to drive up performance .

- Better reliability and time keeping thanks to more focused management of both metro and long distance West Kent mainline services. Ten years of the “Integrated Kent Franchise” has shown that integration does not deliver operational excellence in the existing model, and a more focused approach gives better prospects for the future.
- Better management of costs, including through focusing the operator on things they can control, and re-investment of any surpluses into improving the transport system.
- A fresh contract management team with a proven record of success.

We are particularly pleased to see that strong guarantees have been given to protect long distance services for commuters and others. However protecting the existing mainline commuter services, while crucial, should only be the start. In due course, and with greater involvement of local government in rail service commissioning, we want Kent rail services to be developed further to improve the quality of passenger experience and to support the economic and social development of Kent as a whole. As with the metro services, the mainline services have also been falling behind the needs of the population, and that needs to be changed too. An early devolution of metro services to TfL will make clearer what then needs to be done for the remaining Kent services, and will make it easier to do in a way focused on Kent's needs.

There is strong local support for rail devolution, starting with devolution of metro services to TfL, and so we want to see TfL proposals put into action as soon as possible. The Business Case, with a benefit to cost ratio of 4.3 to 1, and further strategic benefits is overwhelming. These gains to Sevenoaks (and other Kent) travellers must be secured as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely



Tony Clayton
Chairman
Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association



Andrew Stott
Secretary
Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association

Copied to:

Sir Michael Fallon, MP for Sevenoaks, Secretary of State for Defence

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London

Peter Fleming OBE, Leader Sevenoaks District Council