
Secretariat memorandum

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LTW477

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Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise award

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1. To update members on the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern (TSGN) franchise award, and London TravelWatch's previous involvement and recommendations to the Department for Transport (DfT).

2 Recommendation

- 2.1. Members are asked to note this report.

3 Background

- 3.1. DfT has recently announced that Govia has won the TSGN franchise, and will operate the network until September 2021, with a further extension of around two years possible after that.
- 3.2. TSGN is a merger of the former Thameslink (First Capital Connect), Southern, Gatwick Express, Great Northern and some Southeastern services.
- 3.3. Govia is a joint enterprise, owned 65% by the Go-Ahead group and 35% by Keolis. They currently operate the Southeastern, Southern and London Midland franchises.
- 3.4. The franchise has been let as a management contract rather than as a revenue risk bearing contract. This is similar to how Transport for London and London Overground operate, and should allow the operator to concentrate on managing the network through the disruption of the construction of the Thameslink Programme, as well as the introduction of new trains, signalling and operations after construction.
- 3.5. The main announcements from DfT and Govia have included the confirmation of the new trains for the main routes, but additionally, new trains on the Northern City Line (from Moorgate) and Gatwick Express.
- 3.6. London TravelWatch called for increased capacity as a priority in our consultation response in 2012, before the process was halted after the problems with the West Coast franchise. Other measures that we called for, that have been included in the franchise, include an extension of smartcard ticketing across the network, improvement to stations, retention of through services from the Wimbledon Loop and retention of the Great Northern services within TSGN. We also called for closer

working between DfT and London TravelWatch given the importance of the franchise to London, and have been more involved than ever before given our assistance in the review of the bids.

- 3.7. London TravelWatch also called for “first to last” staffing at all stations. This has been committed for the busiest stations, so this is a partial success.
- 3.8. There are no major gaps missing from the franchise that we called for. However, we are concerned that just £1.5 million on station access improvements, over 7 years and 239 stations, is not adequate for an area that our research has shown is of importance to passengers. It may be that this is only one budget and more funding is available, but not mentioned in press releases, but it is alarming.

4 London TravelWatch priority

- 4.1. The items and issues raised in this report fall within the remit of London TravelWatch and they meet the criteria for relevance and impact on transport users in the London TravelWatch area. In particular, the TSGN franchise is the largest franchise in Great Britain, in terms of passenger numbers, with a large proportion of these travelling to, from or through stations in the London area. TSGN makes up roughly one fifth of Britain’s passengers, and one third of London’s passengers.

5 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 5.1. There are no equalities or inclusion implications arising from this report.

6 Financial implications

- 6.1. None – report is for information only.

7 Legal powers

- 7.1. Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider - and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight). Section 252A of the same Act (as amended by Schedule 6 of the Railways Act 2005) places a similar duty upon the Committee to keep under review matters affecting the interests of the public in relation to railway passenger and station services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area, and to make representations about them to such persons as it thinks appropriate.