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Your ref

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Dear Sir/Madam

Southwark Council's response to the DfT's consultation on the South Eastern franchise replacement

Southwark welcomes the opportunity to comment on the replacement South Eastern franchise specification and provide the following comments.

General comments

Residents, businesses and visitors to Southwark alike rely heavily on local rail services to provide access to economic, social and cultural opportunities. Southwark suffers from poor connectivity and high levels of deprivation in some areas and this can affect travel opportunities. These factors make the provision of frequent, reliable and affordable rail services essential. We welcome the opportunity the new South Eastern franchise offers to improve rail services in Southwark.

The council wishes to see a step change in local rail services, with fully accessible stations offering metro style 'turn up and go' train frequencies to a wide range of destinations and affordable to all our community. Southwark has recently benefitted from the introduction of London Overground services to parts of the borough. We consider that the high standards of service provided by the Overground, together with high levels of customer satisfaction recorded, are the benchmark for the new franchise.

Southwark is undergoing major change with significant levels of development already underway or planned across large parts of the borough. Associated population growth and economic development will place further demand on public transport services which are already stretched. It is therefore essential that rail services in the borough are responsive to this growth and that the franchise specification plans increased capacity and service levels accordingly.

The South Eastern franchise covers a wide geographical area and caters for a diverse range of travel needs, including both local metro and longer distance regional services. An equitable balance needs to be struck between the sometimes competing

demands of such different services. While we recognise the regional economic significance of longer distance services, local rail services are vital to the success of the London economy, particularly in areas such as Southwark where alternatives may be limited. In particular, we remain concerned about the loss of the South London Line and consider it essential that the new franchise specification includes the restoration of frequent, direct links to Victoria from Peckham Rye and Denmark Hill.

Research shows that affordability is a key issue for some of our residents, effectively limiting their travel horizons. The new franchise proposes to deliver efficiencies in line with Government objectives and to transfer risk to the franchisee where appropriate. We support a more efficient railway, but also wish to see safeguards included in the specification to protect service levels and passengers from excessive fare increases. To deliver a more efficient railway, the new franchise should radically review current fare structures to make better use of rolling stock outside peak hours, providing significant incentives to more affordable travel and leading to a more efficient use of the network.

Please find our detailed response to the consultation attached below.

Yours faithfully

Cllr Barrie Hargrove
Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Recycling

Specific responses are provided to selected consultation questions below.

Consultation questions

- Q.1 What improvements do stakeholders believe could be made to the franchise through partnership working between Network Rail and the new operator?

While we welcome the objective to reduce costs on the railway we are concerned that any risk transferred from Network Rail to the new operator should not be passed on to passengers. The needs of passengers should be safeguarded including preserving service levels and offering affordable fares.

- Q.2 What, if any, changes to South Eastern services need to be made given the likely changes in demand that could result from Crossrail?

We would like to emphasise the importance of planning for connectivity to the Farringdon interchange, including recognition of the increased demand for direct access to and from the interchange for trips to and from stations in Southwark and south London generally.

- Q.3 Are consultees aware of any other rail or non-rail development schemes that might affect the new franchise?

Southwark is undergoing a significant programme of regeneration to provide for a growing population and increased commercial activity. Areas of significant growth and renewal activity include Elephant and Castle, currently served by 'shared' services on the core Thameslink route, Peckham (Peckham Rye) and Camberwell (Denmark Hill), served by various operators including Southeastern. The new franchise should accommodate growth and renewed economic activity in these areas, in particular with regard to gaps in existing timetables.

- Q.4 What increments or decrements to the specification would stakeholders wish to see and how would these be funded?

- Q.5 Which aspects of the specification, in addition to those services operating on the HS1 network, would stakeholders wish to see mandated and which aspects of the specification could be left to the discretion of the operator?

We are concerned that the proposed devolution of train service specification to the franchise operator should not adversely affect local rail services that provide vital links to the borough. An equitable balance needs to be struck between the need to deliver efficiencies and the need to provide essential connectivity. This may sometimes require protecting less profitable, but nonetheless essential local rail services.

We would wish to see the restoration of frequent, direct links to Victoria from Peckham Rye and Denmark Hill following the loss of services resulting from the withdrawal of the South London Line. We strongly support the recommendations of the recent TfL / London TravelWatch study to compensate for the loss of the SLL by specifying additional stops at these stations for longer distance services during peak times. We also support the introduction of the proposed Bromley to Victoria service to improve service frequency during the off peak period.

We would wish to see the Dartford to Victoria service, calling at Nunhead, Peckham Rye and Denmark Hill, mandated as a 7 days a week, full day service (currently this service is limited with no evening or Sunday service). We wish to see a minimum of 4tph on this key route through the centre of the borough serving Nunhead, Peckham Rye and Denmark Hill.

- Q.6 What changes to services would stakeholders propose, what is the rationale for them and would these provide economic benefit?

Improved service levels to areas of renewed economic, social and cultural activity, such as Peckham and Camberwell, will support the development of our town centres helping to drive inward investment in the borough. Improved connectivity, together with planned major renewal initiatives will bring significant economic benefits in terms of increased commercial activity and job creation. For example, the council and the GLA are investing over £10 million pounds in regenerating the area around Peckham Rye station in order to stimulate the local economy and create new spaces for local people to enjoy. Equally, we work closely with the major hospitals served by Denmark Hill and it is essential that rail services are maintained and improved for the 8,000 staff and clients of these key institutions.

- Q.7 Do respondents feel that there are other destinations that domestic high speed services could serve that would support regional and national economic growth?

- Q.8 How might better use be made of the capacity currently available?

We believe that a flexible approach in terms of train configuration, fares and frequencies across the day will be required in order to make the best use of current capacity and to plan for any changes to available rolling stock.

An efficient railway will incentivise off-peak travel to ensure that, as far as possible, services outside of busy times are still well used.

- Q.9 What steps might bidders be expected to take to meet passenger demand and what might be the most appropriate mechanisms for managing demand?

Bidders should be expected to meet passenger demand by providing frequent reliable services across the network and a 'turn up and go' metro style service in urban areas. Further increases in fares beyond inflation are not affordable to many passengers in Southwark and it is considered preferable to incentivise off-peak travel in order to reduce demand at peak times.

- Q.10 What destinations on the current South Eastern network do respondents think should be served by Thameslink core services and what is the rationale for them?

We support the incorporation of services jointly operated by FCC and Southeastern into the new franchise, including core route services calling at Elephant and Castle, Denmark Hill, Peckham Rye and Nunhead.

Where in the future core route services from Kent run via Elephant and Castle rather than London Bridge we would like to see as many of these services as possible stopping at the station, not only as existing passengers may find Elephant and Castle the closest station to their intended destination, but in order to increase train frequencies at the station to serve the growing population and relieve pressure on alternative travel options.

- Q.11 What improvements would respondents like to see made to other South Eastern services, what is the rationale for them and would these provide economic benefit?

Southeastern Metro and Mainline services serve London Bridge, the major transport gateway to Southwark and the business district in the north of the borough. We wish to see services into London Bridge maintained and enhanced in the longer term in order to reduce overcrowding and improve the journey experience for passengers. The new franchise must also effectively manage services to London Bridge during the reconstruction of the station in order to minimise disruption and preserve good access to this key destination which is critical to the economy of the borough and to London as a whole.

Southeastern services also serve the south and west of Southwark with Victoria services calling at Sydenham Hill, West Dulwich and Herne Hill. Currently, significant levels of standing during the morning peak are reported on these services. Herne Hill is one of the most highly utilised sections of the South Eastern network. We would like to see capacity improvements on this route which is particularly important to our residents given the relative lack of alternative public transport options in these areas.

- Q.12 Do respondents feel that Folkestone Harbour branch line and station should be kept open and maintained or would the funding currently devoted to supporting this line and station be better used for other rail schemes?
- Q.13 How would you like to see performance information published?
- Q.14 How frequent should its publication be?
- Q.15 What level of disaggregation of performance do you believe is reasonable?
- Q.16 What are the priorities that respondents consider should be taken into account to improve the passenger experience of using these services?

The new operator should improve the customer ratings achieved by Southeastern with the performance of London Overground services as a benchmark. Areas of particular priority based on NPS satisfaction ratings include:

- *Ticket buying facilities*
- *Value for money*
- *Helpfulness and attitude of train staff, and particularly,*
- *Dealing with delays*

- Q.17 What do stakeholders see as the most important factors in improving security (actual or perceived) and addressing any gap between the two?

Actual and perceived security is best addressed by the presence of station staff and through improvements to the quality of the station environment.

- Q.18 What is important to stakeholders in the future use and improvements in stations?

We welcome the specification placing greater responsibility on the franchisee for the maintenance, repair and renewal of stations. The revitalisation of stations now forming part of the London Overground is a model to follow in this respect.

A number of stations in Southwark require significant investment to meet acceptable standards. Important interchange stations, such as Elephant and Castle and Peckham Rye, neither of which are fully accessible, should be prioritised for investment.

We would expect the franchisee to work closely with other industry bodies to improve accessibility at our stations and to improve station facilities and the general station environment. We have delivered a number of successful schemes to improve access routes to stations in the borough and are working with industry partners to bring forward significant improvements at Denmark Hill and, Peckham Rye.

We support the development and implementation of station travel plans.

- Q.19 What priorities would respondents give to car parking and cycling facilities at locations where these are fully used?

Providing dedicated car parking, apart from disabled bays in some cases, is not appropriate for stations in Southwark. We would expect the majority of station users to walk, cycle or use public transport to travel to or from their local station.

We support the provision of cycle parking facilities in and around stations in Southwark. Wherever possible, this parking should be fully secure and should offer a range of facilities for cyclists. For example, we are currently developing proposals for cycle hubs at both Peckham Rye and Queens Road Peckham stations. Where fully secure parking cannot be provided, CCTV coverage should be sought and parking should be located prominently where there is good passive surveillance.

- Q.20 What sort of ticketing products and services would you expect to see delivered through 'smart' technology on this franchise?

- Q.21 What local accessibility and mobility issues do stakeholders see and how they might be addressed?

As per our response to Q.18 above, there are a number of stations in Southwark where physical access is limited and we would expect the franchisee to collaborate with industry partners to delivery fully accessible stations wherever possible.

Apart from physical barriers to accessibility, the availability and disposition of staff at stations and on trains can play an important role in the journey experience, sometimes affecting the decision whether to travel at all. Well resourced stations with helpful staff can help to reduce barriers to travel as can the timely and accurate provision of travel information.

Southwark holds a regular public forum on public transport issues and we would expect the franchisee to be an active participant in this opportunity to engage with local people, including disability groups and local hospital trusts.

Q.22 What environmental targets would stakeholders like to see within the franchise specification?

We would expect the franchisee to lead by example and set out and implement a strategy to reduce the environmental impacts of the railway, particularly in relation to noise impacts.