

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND  
REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOARD**

Date: 10 July 2008

Subject: **South Central Franchise**

Report of: Regional Planner

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Board notes the issues identified in this report and agrees that the content of Annex I be developed into a consultation response.

**Purpose of Report:**

To enable a response to the Department for Transport's consultation on the specification for the South Central franchise to be submitted.

**Key Issues:**

The Department's consultation on the specification for the South Central franchise provides an opportunity for the Board to ensure that it supports delivery of the regional policy framework as set out in the draft South East Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy.

The Board has previously identified those issues that it considers should be included within the franchise specification.

This paper provides an analysis of how the draft franchise specification relates to the Board's identified priorities and suggests a response where there is a difference.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1. The franchise covering South London, eastern Surrey, most of East Sussex and West Sussex is known as the “South Central Franchise”. The present franchise, awarded in May 2003 (operated by Southern), expires on 31 December 2009.
- 1.2. The Department for Transport invited input from key stakeholders during the development stage of the franchise specification earlier in the year. This Board received a presentation from DfT Rail as part of that process. The Board subsequently wrote to the Department setting out the strategic issues that need to be addressed through the franchise in order for it to support delivery of the regional policy framework set out in the draft South East Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy. At the end of May, the Department issued the draft franchise specification and commenced a period of formal consultation.
- 1.3. Work is also underway on the Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for the Sussex area. The RUS, prepared by Network Rail in liaison with stakeholders, provides a longer-term view on the future role of the rail network. Some of the issues identified by the Board may be more appropriately addressed through the RUS. As a result it will be possible to ensure that the letting of the next franchise can take place within a longer-term framework that is more closely aligned with the need to ensure that rail’s potential to support the regional policy framework is maximised.

## **2. Consultation process and franchise timescales**

- 2.1. The closing date for comment on the draft franchise specification is 14 August 2008. Short-listed franchise applicants will be announced in September 2008 with invitations to tender issued to pre-qualified bidders in November 2008. It is expected that bids will be returned in February 2009 and the successful bidder announced in early summer 2009. The new franchise will commence on 20 September 2009. It will combine the existing Southern on the Tonbridge to Redhill route and the Gatwick Express services.
- 2.2. The length of the franchise (until 2014) is influenced by the timing of works associated with the Thameslink project. It should be noted that the strategic investment associated with the franchise is already largely fixed through the financial framework associated with the next Control Period (CP3).

## **3. Key issues and discussion**

- 3.1. Annex A identifies the core requirements and priced options identified by the Board in its earlier submission to the Department. It sets out how these relate to the draft specification on which views are now being sought by DfT Rail.
- 3.2. In addition there are a number of general points relating to the franchise that it is suggested could be highlighted in the Board’s response:
  - i) There is a need for a general clause in the franchise agreement (if not already in place through existing change mechanisms and /or industry processes) to ensure opportunities for enhancing services allowed by infrastructure improvements in the franchise area, are delivered:

- a. Improvements associated with the 2012 Games, to stations/interchanges for example, could impact on service levels, accessibility etc. The franchisee will need to take this into working with the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) on detailed arrangements for the Games period;
  - b. The Access for All stations (identified as major schemes in the franchise area) also include: Haslemere, Havant, Southampton Airport (Parkway) and Winchester. Although these may not be operated under the franchise, improvements at those stations may impact on services;
- ii) The level of funds for minor works to stations (e.g. to improve accessibility and mobility) is being reviewed. The Board's response to the consultation should indicate that the level of funds should not be reduced;
- iii) Moves towards a seven day railway should be welcomed, especially by way of proposed improvements to weekend and evening services on parts of the franchise network.

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## Department for Transport consultation franchise specification compared to RTB input (earlier in May 2008)

RTB observations/ recommendations		May 2008 DfT consultation proposals		Recommended action/ response by Regional Transport Board
Core/ priced	Franchise issue	Core/ priced	Franchise issue	
<b>Brighton – Hastings – Ashford corridor (East Coastway)</b>				
Priced	i) Construction of the Willingdon chord to reduce Brighton-Hastings-Ashford journey times; provision of a fast service (hourly or better) to take advantage of it.	Core	DfT are aware of Network Rail's plans to enhance journey times on the Ashford – Brighton service, by removing a number of speed restrictions. Some timings will be altered driven by timings of long-distance trains in the London area.	Welcome Network Rail's plans, but highlight the importance of the Willingdon chord in delivering spatial and economic priorities for the sub-region.
Core	ii) Co-operation of franchisee with local authorities to examine potential to relocate Polegate Station adjacent to A27 in support of development proposals in Hailsham-Polegate area and with strategic park & ride opportunities;	Priced	Consultation states that none of the proposals for new stations have reached a sufficient level of feasibility and development to be included as committed schemes. If satisfactory business case and funding package can be developed during the life of the franchise existing industry processes can be used to facilitate delivery.	Set out the policy context that underpins the need for franchisee to work with local authorities in developing detailed proposals associated with Polegate Station.
Priced	iii) Infill electrification of Hastings-Ashford services;	-	Acknowledged as one of two parts of the franchise area not electrified, but no proposals for infill electrification.	Continue to press the case for infill electrification
Core	iv) Provision of increased capacity on Brighton-Ashford service.	Core	Bidders will be asked to judge whether viable case exists to lengthen some of these trains, or to alter service patterns.	Welcome inclusion of this criterion; continue to press the case for increased capacity in the context of regional policy objective set out in the South East Plan and Regional Economic Strategy.
Core	v) Co-operation of franchisee with proposal to construct new station at Park Farm identified as part of the Ashford Masterplan as an integral element of the growth strategy.	Priced	Consultation states that none of the proposals for new stations have reached a sufficient level of feasibility and development to be included as committed schemes. If satisfactory business case and funding package can be developed during the life of the franchise, existing industry processes can be used to facilitate delivery.	Set out the policy context that underpins the need for franchisee to work with local authorities in bringing forward detailed proposals for Park Farm station.

RTB observations/ recommendations		May 2008 DfT consultation proposals		Recommended action/ response by Regional Transport Board
Core/ priced	Franchise issue	Core/ priced	Franchise issue	
<b>Brighton-Portsmouth/Southampton corridor (West Coastway)</b>				
Priced	i) Construction of additional passing loops at appropriate locations along the West Coastway; provision of a fast service (hourly or better) to take advantage of improved operational flexibility whilst maintaining adequate local services.	Core	Recognise timetable patterns dictated by few opportunities for faster trains to overtake stopping services. No major changes to specification are envisaged, although some timings will be altered, driven by timings of long-distance trains in the London area.	Continue to press the case for investment in provision of additional capacity on the west coastway to support delivery of planned growth in South East Plan and Regional Economic Strategy.
<b>Crawley/Gatwick – Redhill – Tonbridge – Ashford corridor</b>				
Core	i) Retention of existing 2tph on Redhill – Tonbridge route;	Core	In view of the low levels of demand on off-peak Tonbridge line trains consideration was given to reducing the service to peak only, however it is proposed that the hourly off-peak Charing Cross service might increase patronage, so it will be continued for a trial period.	Continue to press the case for a permanent solution as a means of supporting delivery of agreed policy objectives for the region. Press for need for clarity as to the basis on which trial service will be judged and for involvement of the statutory planning bodies in any discussion on future levels of service.
Priced	ii) Explore use of capacity on Tonbridge-Ashford route released following introduction of domestic services on the CTRL to develop direct services from Ashford-Tonbridge-Redhill	-	No clear inclusion in consultation	Highlight policy requirement to improve service levels on this part of the network in order to deliver policy objectives in the South East Plan and Regional Economic Strategy.
Priced	iii) Provision of direct rail services from Tonbridge via Redhill to Gatwick Airport	-	No clear inclusion in consultation	Continue to make the case as to why direct rail services between Government designated Growth Areas and international hub airport are central to regional policy framework.
<b>Brighton – Gatwick – Redhill – London corridor</b>				
Core	i) Increase services from London to Gatwick Airport through to Brighton;	Core	From December 2008, six trains in each peak period will be extended to/from Brighton. Improvements of BML RUS will be retained in SLC1, and there will be no fundamental changes in SLC2 and 3 (but some re-timings).	None – new timetable from December 2008 addresses this.
Core	ii) Co-operation of franchisee with Network Rail/ Central Rail Corridor partnership (consisting of regional and local authorities) GRIP2 assessment of the potential to reopen the Lewes-Uckfield rail corridor.	Priced	Consultation states that it is unlikely that the route would be re-opened within franchise period; DfT does not propose to include a requirement to operate services along the route within the life of the franchise.	None - change mechanism within franchise will provide the means of engaging with the franchisee if circumstances change.

RTB observations/ recommendations		May 2008 DfT consultation proposals		Recommended action/ response by Regional Transport Board
Core/ priced	Franchise issue	Core/ priced	Franchise issue	
<b>Gatwick – Redhill/Reigate – Guildford – Reading corridor (indirect impact)</b>				
Core	i) Co-operation of franchisee with Network Rail to remove constraints preventing delivery of the Great Western franchise requirement to increase Reading-Guildford-Gatwick Airport direct through service to 2tph.	-	No clear inclusion in consultation	Continue to press the need to deliver on unfulfilled franchise commitment associated with Greater Western franchise to have 2 trains per hour linking Reading and Gatwick Airport
<b>Franchise-wide</b>				
Core	i) Requirement on franchisee to work with Network Rail and Local Authorities to deliver a package of access improvements, improved public transport at hub stations and increased car parking provision at parkways;	Core	Bidders are encouraged to develop proposals to enhance car parking provision across the franchise area (requirement for approx 1,000 additional spaces across the franchise); DfT proposals to extend pilot travel plans to cover 30 stations across the franchise area (covering all modes); operator required to work with local authorities to develop station travel plans; for local authorities to decide which stations are important and whether local station access is a priority; minimum of 1,000 additional cycle parking facilities to be provided, bidders to decide on locations in consultation with stakeholders.	Welcome parking, travel plan and cycling proposals. Cycle and car parking requirements should be picked up as part of stations travel plans. Franchise specification should highlight the need to give priority to developing travel plans for regional hubs within the franchise area.
Core	ii) Requirement on franchisee to work with Local Transport Authorities and bus operators to promote PlusBus;	-	No clear inclusion in consultation	Franchisee should be required to work with other transport providers outside London (e.g. bus operators) to deliver coordinated public transport services, such as PlusBus.
Core	iii) Training for customer facing staff, ticket sales staff in particular, to raise awareness of PlusBus;	-	No clear inclusion in consultation	Highlight importance of staff training on PlusBus, and its contribution to delivering coordinated public transport services.
Core	iv) Training for customer facing staff to raise awareness of accessibility issues faced by disabled and reduced mobility passengers;	Core	Successful bidders will be required to produce Disabled Persons' Protection Policy (DPPP) that sets out the policy for accessibility and service levels that disabled people should expect.	Highlight importance of staff training to raise awareness of accessibility issues faced by disabled and reduced mobility passengers, and its contribution to delivering the franchisee's DPPP.

RTB observations/ recommendations		May 2008 DfT consultation proposals		Recommended action/ response by Regional Transport Board
Core/ priced	Franchise issue	Core/ priced	Franchise issue	
Core	v) Co-operation of franchisee with local planning and transport authorities, and other partners, to deliver step-free infrastructure complementing rolling stock (for example step-free access between platforms and trains, or between bus stops and buses on station forecourts)	-	The consultation outlines under the role of Transport for London that all public transport operators work together to provide a seamless travel experience.	Franchisee should be required to actively support joint working between transport providers outside London (where practicable).
Core	vi) Requirement to provide ITSO compliant equipment across the franchise area	Core	Require operator to develop and roll out smartcard products across the franchise area (based on ITSO standard); Integration with other modes outside London will be encouraged.	Welcome inclusion of criteria and remind that existing integrated ticketing systems, such as PlusBus, set out the legal framework for cross-modal ticketing.