

Response to the Greater Anglia Franchise consultation by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Authorities

Growth and Future Services

We welcome the recognition in the document of growth and development issues across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as part of the requirements under the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England. We do however; have some concerns about being able to take a view on the new Service Level Commitment (SLC – p39 – 42). The details and proposals are sketchy and it is therefore difficult to provide comment.

Clearly there is a need to address overcrowding but this must take full account of all options. Services from Cambridge and Peterborough to London Kings Cross or possible future services to London St Pancras, London Blackfriars and London Bridge as part of Thameslink (covered by First Capital Connect) also need to be considered as part of any SLC requirements on services to London.

Notwithstanding the above, several detailed comments on service level follow:

- The Cambridgeshire local authorities supported the proposal that Great Eastern Outer Services between London Liverpool Street and Peterborough be truncated at Ipswich, provided that there were additional services stopping at Whittlesey and Manea, and opportunity for convenient interchange to services to London Liverpool Street at Ipswich. There should be an aim to achieve hourly stops at Whittlesey, and at least two-hourly at Manea. This should be included in the SLC.
- Ideally we would want the Peterborough – Ipswich service to run hourly, which would help provide for the transport demands of growth in the region. Overcrowding is currently an issue on this service.
- Train lengths should be increased on the Cambridge – Norwich service. It is understood that three carriage trains will be introduced in December 2010. Trains of at least this length should be specified in the SLC for the franchise from April 2011.
- Cambridgeshire authorities also support the proposal of Norfolk County Council that the Cambridge – Norwich service should be extended to Stansted Airport. In addition, we would also like to see further proposals to increase the frequency of this service and build on its current success. Ideally this would be half hourly, and with faster running of some services.
- While there are a significant number of services between Cambridge and Ely, the timetable often leaves irregular or lengthy gaps between trains. While the interaction of services is undoubtedly complex, a more regular pattern should be aspired to. It might be that a more frequent Cambridge – Norwich service could go some way to achieving this.
- Train lengths should also be increased on the Cambridge – Ipswich service, with the removal of any services that currently use one car units, as a minimum requirement, and again, this should be specified in the SLC.

We also welcome the recognition of the importance of services to and from Stansted Airport run by Cross Country Trains. We wish to see earlier and later services to the airport and see the Greater Anglia franchise as providing an immediate opportunity to address this issue, as noted above in relation to the Cambridge – Norwich service. Earlier and later services are important for both workers and passengers. We also support the aspiration in the East Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy for more services to the airport.

It should be made clear that this support for increased rail travel to Stansted is in the context of the airport's current permitted capacity for flights, and in no way implies any endorsement of proposals to further increase capacity for air travel from Stansted.

Capacity Issues

A major issue covering the area of the Greater Anglia Franchise is the Felixstowe to Nuneaton freight project. We are aware that this scheme will involve high levels of engineering work in certain locations including at Ely, but also that upon completion of the scheme we will see significant additional freight journeys. There are some specific issues that we wish to raise in respect of this:

- Whilst we strongly support policies to increase rail freight we are extremely concerned about the implications of this scheme, specifically at Ely. The impact of significant additional levels of freight trains will be more barrier down time that will have significant implications for Ely. At peak times vehicles already see high levels of congestion due to barrier down time, the effect of this project could bring the town to a standstill. There is a need to resolve this specific issue to ensure that Ely can function as a place and that both road and rail transport systems can function effectively.
- We are also concerned about the potential impact of large numbers of freight services upon passenger services. We would not want to see a reduction of, or limitation of improvements to passenger services due to higher levels of freight services
- We would also like some specific information about how the Greater Anglia franchise is to manage the impact of the works to complete this project. We are concerned that during the life of the new Greater Anglia franchise there may be high levels of disruption due to engineering works. We want to assurance that a robust strategy will be required to ensure that passengers are provided with a good service whilst works are taking place.

Power supply issues north of Cambridge towards Kings Lynn are a barrier to more services. In a growth area we would like to see this constraint addressed in order to ensure that services can meet demand in future. We would not want to see opportunities for improvements constrained by this matter.

Rolling Stock

We note that the document is clear that the current franchise has not seen significant new build rolling stock, yet it also suggests that bidders will be required to develop proposals that will refresh current rolling stock to extend its life for at least four years beyond the end of the franchise.

Whilst the specification does make clear that rolling stock can be replaced, the level of older rolling stock is of concern. The 30 new build trains that will form part of this franchise are primarily for the Stansted Express, although they will enable the running of some 12-car trains on the West Anglia route to Cambridge from December 2011. However, it is likely that this will be through existing rolling stock.

Whilst the current trains are generally of a reasonable standard, they are not aging well and the interiors are not attractive for new passengers. Train cleaning with regard to frequency and cleanliness can also be an issue. It is therefore important that any proposals to modernise and extend the life of current rolling stock are to a high standard, as has been achieved with similar units elsewhere on the national rail network, including by South West Trains.

London Focus

Throughout the Greater Anglia Franchise document there are numerous mentions of London in respect of the Olympics, Transport for London and also longer trains for the capital city. Whilst we appreciate that services into and out of London are important for the Greater Anglia franchise and also important for Cambridgeshire we would not want to see such a London focus at the expense of the rest of the franchise area.

Linkages with other operators

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough rail services are provided by a number of franchise operators including CrossCounty, InterCity East Coast, East Midlands Trains and First Capital Connect. It is therefore essential that links are made to these operators as part of the Greater Anglia Franchise. We would want to see partnership working amongst the operators to ensure the best services for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. These linkages are particularly important with regard to interchange locations such as Peterborough and Ely including connections for the East Coast Mainline. Journeys to Stansted Airport are also significant here.

Cambridge Station

Cambridge Station is currently run by the holder of the Greater Anglia franchise. Four franchises run services from Cambridge, and First Capital Connect (FCC) are in direct competition with the Greater Anglia franchise for services to London. The relationship between these two franchise holders has from the outside appeared to be far from harmonious, to the extent that FCC cannot get staff accommodation within the station.

The Cambridgeshire Local Authorities consider that the franchise should place a duty on the station facility owner to work in partnership with other franchise holders who use the station, and to not abuse the role of Station Facility Owner to the detriment of their competitors and potentially, of the best interests of rail passengers.

If the DfT is minded that this cannot be achieved, consideration should be given to whether shared SFO status or Network Rail management of the station would be more appropriate.

Accessibility

We are extremely disappointed that the consultation document does not make much greater reference about access to stations. Accessibility to stations is a critical issue and is especially important for rural areas. The Cambridgeshire Local Authorities want to see improvements to car parking, cycling facilities, access routes for walking and cycling and improved bus and rail interchange. We want to see the franchise agreement make specific reference to this. We believe that access is more than just the Access for All Programme.

We want to see the new franchise operator have regard for the redevelopment of Cambridge Station including the improvement of the ticket office, platform access and greatly enhanced and increased cycling facilities.

Where parking at stations is free, there should be a requirement for the franchise holder who manages a station to involve Local Authorities in any decisions relating to charging for parking. The introduction of charged parking at stations in rural areas often causes significant disruption in neighbouring areas as commuters choose to park elsewhere. An alternative to this might be a requirement for any franchise holder proposing to introduce charged parking at a station being required to fund on an ongoing basis any necessary traffic management or controlled parking measures that are required as a result, on the highway around the station. While not necessarily the case in the previous Greater Anglia franchise area, measures to improve

security at car parks have been used as justification to introduce parking charges at stations where there has been no perception of security problems in the car park by rail users.

Cambridge Station

The following point is technically a Network Rail issue rather than a franchise issue. However, its ramifications are likely to impact negatively on the Station Facility Owner if not resolved.

It is the understanding of Cambridgeshire County Council and Cambridge City Council that the design of the Island Platform at Cambridge proposes use of 'off the shelf' designs for the bridge and lifts. It is similarly understood that these standard designs have very limited capacity for cycles. This is inappropriate, as there will be a demand for many hundreds of cycles a day to use the stairs, lifts and bridge.

While the Island Platform is supported and the urgency of its delivery is appreciated, this should not result in the wrong platform access solution being delivered. Network Rail should be required to address this issue as a matter of urgency. Any influence that can be brought to avoid the inevitable congestion and resulting complaints from station users that will occur if the Island Platform is implemented with inadequate cycle access should be used. The Cambridgeshire authorities request that this point is drawn to the attention of franchise bidders.

Linked to this point is the available land to the east of the railway at Cambridge station that was secured in a planning agreement. This land was secured in order to facilitate the provision of a future bridge which could further improve accessibility of the station. Ideally, such a bridge should be provided with the island platform. If this is not possible, the design of the platform and its access should be compatible with its future delivery.

Community Rail Partnership

Fenland District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and the Fenland Strategic Partnership Transport and Access Group are in detailed discussion about a CRP between Ely and Peterborough including the Fenland Stations at March, Whittlesey and Manea. We are working on proposals for this project at the present time including discussion with the three rail operators that serve the area, and with the local community. We would like to ensure that this proposed CRP is taken into account in the franchise agreement.

Length of the Franchise

We support the idea of a longer franchise, a longer franchise may make it easier for a franchise holder to invest with confidence in improvements to the network, including in areas where there is a strong shared interest with Local Authorities. However, there must be robust review mechanisms in the franchise relating to performance.

New Stations

Chesterton

We welcome the mention of Chesterton in the consultation document, along with the recognition that franchise bidders must consider this project further.

This station will provide for passenger growth from Cambridge, but will also be particularly attractive to commuters who work in the north of the city at the Cambridge Science Park and at other Business Parks and Innovation Centres. This potential includes commuter and other business trips from a wide area which includes Ely and March in Cambridgeshire, but extends much further, including Peterborough, Ipswich, Norwich, Kings Lynn, and towns south of

Cambridge on the lines to Kings Cross and Liverpool Street. Given the strong Business Case for the station, and the congested nature of much of the road network from all of these towns and cities to Cambridge in the peak periods, this is a great opportunity to grow rail's share of trips to and from the north of the city. Chesterton will also provide an important interchange for the new town of Northstowe via the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway. This will enable access to/from Northstowe and other settlements along the Guided Busway and facilitate integration with the wider rail network.

Ideally, we would like to see a stronger requirement on the franchise holder to work with the County Council on the development of the scheme, as the partner who, as an operator and as probably as the Station Facility Owner, would get the most direct benefit from the scheme. Consideration should also be given to a requirement for the delivery of the scheme through the franchise, or a contribution to the cost of the scheme, given the financial benefit that will accrue in the longer term is to the rail industry.

March to Wisbech

We would also draw your attention to the ATOC "Connecting Communities: Expanding Access to the Rail Network" document which considers the reopening of the March to Wisbech line. The franchise should include a requirement for the franchise holder to work with ATOC and the local authorities to consider this matter further. Joint funding of study work to consider the issues with the Local Authorities would be appropriate; such work would be relatively low cost.

Soham

There should be a similar requirement on the franchise holder relating to consideration of the reopening of a station at Soham in East Cambridgeshire.