

East Midlands Consultation Co-ordinator  
 Department for Transport  
 2/21 Great Minster House  
 33 Horseferry Road  
 London  
 SW1P 4DR

September 2nd 2017

### East Midlands Franchise Consultation Response

This response is sent on behalf of The Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF). The observations given have been agreed following discussions between members of the Forum's planning group with the other members given an opportunity to comment. LLAF is an independent statutory body, set up as a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000, and exists to represent the interests of everyone concerned with access to the countryside and the public rights of way network including footpaths, bridleways and byways, cycleways and areas of open access. Section 94 of the CROW act makes it a statutory function of the forum to give advice to a range of bodies, including local authorities and government departments, on access issues.

These following are our specific observations where we feel it falls within our remit.

**Q1 How do you think closer co-operation between staff in Network Rail and the operator of the next East Midlands franchise can be achieved?**

A1

We wish to see a franchise which has a passenger focused approach with improved performance of train services but feel such co-operation arrangements are outside our remit. We do feel there should be more local involvement between Network Rail and other access interests as whilst we wish to see improved services it must be balanced by the needs of users of highways and rights of way giving an integrated network of travel; possibilities including sustainable travel without the use of motorised transport. We also feel that Network Rail, as the infrastructure provider, should be involved directly in Community Rail Partnerships.

**Q2 How can the operator of the next East Midlands franchise engage with community rail partnerships or heritage railways to support the local economy to stimulate demand for rail services in the region?**

A2

We consider that Community Rail Partnerships are very important, and voluntary help is always welcome and as such they should continue to be recruited and supported as a valued resource, with appropriate funding and administrative support. We also feel that Network Rail as the infrastructure provider should be represented.

**Q3 Do you think that the operator of the train service, stations and support services should take the following into consideration when they run the franchise:**

- **The environment?**
- **Equality?**
- **Communities in the areas they operate?**

**If so, how should they do this?**

A3

We believe the National Government should ensure the delivery of a more sustainable, environmentally responsible rail provision, and see an early need for electrification of the Midland Mainline all the way from London via Leicester to Nottingham and Sheffield.

Franchise Bidders should be encouraged to detail how they would promote diversity in the industry and their intentions for the provision of apprentices from a full range of backgrounds

The railway should engage fully with local communities and seek to add value to them, rather than simply provide a train service for them. They must take responsibility for not only their customers but the impact of services on and communities living near to the railway, and those having to cross rail tracks. The Access Forums bring together all interests in the countryside and could play a part in any ongoing dialogue.

**Q4 Do you agree with our proposed approach, which could reduce journey times on long distance services and increase the likelihood of getting a seat?**

A4 We broadly agree but with some issues on the emphasis on certain elements.

It is essential that a reliable and well connected rail service and network fully supports economic growth across the area. That means connectivity to all potential markets and places of employment. One ill served link from Leicester is to the north west of England. We obviously wish to reduce travel times but not at the expenses of other means of transport and the closure of at grade crossings without bridges or tunnels can have a detrimental effect locally both on commerce and public safety.

We strongly advocate enhanced local services providing better access for smaller communities into the major towns and cities. This can take pressure of the road network and help negate air and noise pollution levels. There is one major link that is missing in Leicestershire and that is a suburban service from Leicester to the west linking Coalville, Ashby de la Zouch and possibly Burton on Trent to the City whilst providing local transport from the outer suburbs of Leicester for commuters. The existing freight line could provide much of the route with some upgrading and any early year's subsidy would be offset by savings in road repairs and less health demands on the NHS locally. Variants of this potential route could feasibly be connected to mainline services somewhere in south Leicestershire and could take in East Midlands airport or have a spur off to that facility.

**Q5 What are your suggestions about how to mitigate the potential loss of some direct services between Oakham, Melton Mowbray and London?**

A5 Whilst the improved capacity into London is very welcome, loss of a direct service to London from Melton Mowbray and Oakham can in no way be described as progress or an enhanced service. If we are to employ bi-mode trains we cannot see any justification for not maintaining these links. If this has to be accepted, then considerable thought is needed about time-tabling at interchanges to make those journeys as seamless as possible, with reasonable through ticketing fares. Also we feel that there is a possible diversion to Kings Cross via Peterborough, which would also serve Stamford. A service from Derby via this route would also benefit Loughborough, which has no direct connections with East Anglia at the moment

**Q6 What are the particular services, routes and times of day when you think additional space for passengers are most needed?**

A6 Most services need some capacity enlargement. Not necessarily through increasing frequency, but probably by increasing train length. We accept that some stations cannot take longer trains which makes for organisational challenges and can slow the process of picking up and putting down, but feel customer comfort and seat availability is more important than speed or frequency. Platform lengths should not be a major issue with selective door opening technology available. If all trains have corridor connections between carriages and the facility for on-board announcements/displays to direct passengers to the doors available and all pre-booked seats were at the correct position on the train then this issue can be adequately managed.

**Q7 Which on-board facilities in order of preference (these are listed in the response form), are most important to you:**

- **On short distance journeys (up to 60 minutes)**
- **On long distance journeys (over 60 minutes)**

A7 Train interiors could be much improved. Facilities for luggage and push chairs etc on many services are inadequate, as they are for cycles – if economies of scale mean that the same rolling stock should be able to perform on services with different user profiles then a more flexible layout is required presumably with fold down additional seating.

We cannot see that any first class or catering services can be justified for journey of less than 90 minutes if there is insufficient seating for other users.

**Q8 Which other on-board facilities should be:**

- **Introduced?**
- **Improved?**

A8

As previously mentioned, cycle, luggage, pushchair storage space needs to be addressed urgently.

**Q9 How could your local train services be changed to better meet your current and future needs?**

A9 We are looking to secure local services into Leicester, helping with onward travel to other areas. A commitment to liaise with bus providers to cooperate and coordinate timings should also be sought.

**Q10 What additional services would you wish to see provided in the next franchise?**

A10 We have already answered this in general terms but would highlight gaps as we see them. There should be a regular and probably hourly service between Leicester and Manchester and the North West. There should be improved links to Leeds and North East, extending the existing Leicester, Derby, Sheffield services to Leeds and beyond.

We favour more frequent trains to Coventry from Leicester (possibly as part of a through service from Nottingham). Some to be limited stops and some serving intermediate communities. Alternate trains to be limited stop with the others perhaps not always stopping at the same intermediate stations.

More and faster journeys to Lincoln and Newark from Leicester with limited stops on alternate trains.

**Q11 Do you support the proposal to reopen the line between Shirebrook and Ollerton to passenger trains? If so, what sources of investment could be identified to fund this proposal?**

A11 Outside our remit

**Q12 Do you think that the current number of services on the Midland Main Line to and from Luton Airport Parkway is adequate?**

A12 Probably, but the airport is expanding and there will be increased demand and eventually we feel more through trains will be required to stop there, even at the expense of journey times.

**Q13 Would you like additional fast trains from London each hour to call at Luton Airport Parkway if this meant that, as a trade-off:**

- Some services are withdrawn from other stations, such as Luton?
- Journey times to other stations may increase?
- Freight capacity and/or frequency is reduced?

A13

Eventually this is going to be needed if we are to have an integrated transport system. We have no figures as to usage of Luton station itself but a local shuttle is proposed from the Parkway to the airport and this could possibly be extended into Luton. Also the existing Thameslink service meets the needs of the airport to the London area so the demand for passengers joining the service going south could be managed by enhancing that service reducing stopping time at the Parkway. Some journey times would possibly be affected but not by enough to make any real difference. We would however be reluctant to push more freight onto the roads

**Q14 How could the train service be better at meeting the needs of passengers travelling to and from airports within the East Midlands Franchise?**

A14

To improve access to Birmingham and East Midlands airports, regular and evenly spaced services are needed. We need improved rail access between the East Midlands Airport Parkway station, and Leicester

Any improvement of services at East Midlands Airport will also attract additional contributory funding by the airport.

**Q15 What ideas do you have for improving the current service on the Liverpool – Norwich route?**

A15 Outside our remit

**Q16 Would you support changing the destinations served by the existing Birmingham – Stansted Airport service, such as serving Norwich instead of Stansted Airport?**

A16 A link from Leicester to Norwich would be useful but the Leicester to Stansted airport service is very useful

**Q17 Are you in favour of these route changes?**

- **Liverpool – Norwich**
- **Birmingham – Nottingham**
- **Birmingham – Leicester/Stansted**

A17

Largely outside our remit but in as far as it affects Leicester we would welcome the routes being part of the franchise as they provide key connections across the East Midlands linking up with other EM services.

**Q18 Would you like to see any other routes transferred to or from the East Midlands franchise? If so, which routes?**

A18 None affecting Leicester directly

**Q19 Do you support increasing the frequency of train services in Lincolnshire despite the impact this may have on level crossing users?**

A19

This is a major issue we have already touched on. The closure of level crossings in Leicestershire is a very hot subject causing a lot of disquiet. We would only support these if there were adequate mitigation measures in place and have engaged with Network Rail on numerous occasions to try and agree workable and safe compromises.

This is not a safety issue but a financial one. If increased speed makes a crossing problematical then a bridge or tunnel is almost always a possibility at a price.

**Q20 How can we improve all aspects of your door-to-door journey experience?**

A20

To improve the door-to-door journey, stations need to be easy to access by all modes of travel with bus times coordinated where bus services are infrequent. Timetables should be well communicated and reliable, and through ticketing should offer best value.

**Q21 What more could be done to improve access to, and provide facilities at stations, including for those with disabilities or additional needs?**

A21 We cannot comment on specific locations but the Franchise has to commit to current legislation about the needs of the less able and demonstrate the financial muscle to make good any deficiencies.

**Q22 How could the next franchisee operator make better use of stations for community and commercial purposes?**

A22 We believe that there is a win-win situation if we can bring disused/underused station buildings back into productive life. Possibly also, stations could be converted into pay on train or in advance with no railway presence and the buildings find alternate use. Either way by definition these are presumably going to be in smaller communities which may have lost their corner shop or post office and buildings could double up or change use. They could also become museums, visitor centres or pubs

**Q23 What could be done to improve the way tickets are sold and provided?**

A23

Ticketing should be made available offering best value at all times and where possible could be integrated with bus and tram services allowing travel by combined means on a pay-as-you-go or advanced basis. Possibly with a prepayment card or an account.

**Q24 What changes to the fares structure would be of benefit to you?**

A24 Quite simply fairer pricing with best option obvious and a simpler means of buying them from multiple sources.

**Q25 What additional information would be useful to you when planning or making your journey, such as seat availability, journey times and connections? How would you like it to be communicated to you?**

A25 An automated individual quote and suggestions following input of specific requirements.

**Q26 How could staff can be more effective in providing the service and assistance that passengers need on a modern railway network?**

A26 They should be much better informed and up to date with problems and more willing to actually try and help. It is also essential that staff can be found when needed

**Q27 How would you prefer the next operator to engage with:**

- You as an individual
- Your organisation (if applicable)?

A27 Over and above measures already suggested user groups and the LLAF should have a meaningful role in the on-going franchise management.

**Q28 What would make you feel safer and more secure on your journey**

A28

Reduced risk of passenger luggage crime

Station design removing dark corners, more CCTV and either staff or help points

Reliable connections

**Q29 How do you think more investment might be put into the railways to match money already coming from government through Network Rail?**

A29 It is part of the national infrastructure but with limited funding available it is probable that the users should pay the cost of travel if not the tracks and furniture in much the same way as road traffic. If public funds are available we would feel assisting in the provision of bus services to link villages to major towns with train stations would be better value

**Q30 Are there any other areas that you think it is important for us to consider that have not already been discussed in this consultation?**

A30 If the envisaged length of the franchise is likely to coincide with the opening of HS2 in the East Midlands then the connectivity to that station should be considered.

There is one other area where we feel there should be more clarity. That is the issue of managing stations used by more than one franchise. We were under the impression that the rules were that it was run by the major user but applicants for a new franchise must be told which if any they will have to manage.

**John Howells Chairman, Leicestershire Local Access Forum,**

**Roy Denney, Chair LLAF Planning & Travel Committee**

**C/o Room 700, County Hall, Leicester, LE3 8RJ**

**([www.leics.gov.uk/laf](http://www.leics.gov.uk/laf))**

**Telephone - County Hall 0116 305 7086**