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Building a Better Railway: Four Shortlisted for New TransPennine Express Franchise Map

Four Shortlisted for New TransPennine Express Franchise

Four parties have been shortlisted to compete for the new TransPennine Express franchise, a new strategic franchise designed to improve fast rail services across the North of England.

The new franchise will link Liverpool and Manchester with Leeds, York, Newcastle and Sheffield as well as other key towns and cities in the North West and North East. Commitments will include the progressive improvement of rail links to Manchester Airport, together with enhanced frequencies and journey times on key TransPennine routes.

The shortlisted parties are:

Arriva plc (franchisee of Northern Spirit and Merseyrail)

Connex Transport UK Ltd (franchisee of South Eastern, and also South Central pending handover to GoVia)

Serco Rail (operators of Manchester Metrolink)

ViaGTI in partnership with **FirstGroup plc**. (ViaGTI are partners in GoVia which runs the London Thameslink franchise and it is also the preferred Counterparty for South Central. FirstGroup run the Great Eastern, Great Western and North Western franchises)

Mike Grant, Franchising Director and Chief Executive of the sSRA said:

"TransPennine Express is designed to offer many benefits for those who travel and live in the North of England, offering a genuine alternative to the congested motorway and trunk road network, and additional capacity to reflect the growth forecast for Manchester Airport.

"This new franchise has attracted keen interest both from existing and would-be operators. By providing fast, frequent and reliable rail services between large towns and cities and key rail, air, sea and road interchanges, Transpennine Express will encourage the greater use of rail throughout the North of England. Its objective is to offer upgraded, fast services in the Leeds and Sheffield to Manchester corridors, opening up many new journey opportunities in and around the region.

"I am confident that we are taking forward exciting and robust proposals. The number of parties is expected to come down to two in the New Year, when we reach the next round. We shall need to take time to allow proposals to be put together in the light of the pressure of current network problems on operators. Ultimately I aim to select the best deal for passengers, delivering an innovative and strategic approach to the future operation of the TransPennine Express franchise."

Notes to Editors

1. A map detailing the existing TransPennine area is attached. Bidders are expected to expand and develop on this.

2. TransPennine Express is a new franchise designed to offer frequent, fast and high quality train services in the North of England between: Towns and cities including Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Hull, York, Newcastle, Scarborough, Middlesbrough, Preston, Doncaster and Sheffield and other key destinations including Manchester Airport

3. Other intended benefits include:

A quality alternative to the M62, M56, M6 and A1 (M)

Good links with other local and long distance rail operators in the North East and North West

4. After South West Trains, this is the second franchise to reach the shortlist stage from the second batch of four brought to the market by the sSRA in March. The other two franchises are Wales and Borders and Central Trains, both of which will be shortlisted soon.

5. The new TransPennine Express franchise was announced in March and featured in the sSRA's re-drawn franchise map issued in June, as did the proposed Northern franchise, which will offer more local services to the region served by TransPennine.

6. The new franchise will also serve five Passenger Transport Executive (PTE) regions. The sSRA is working closely with the PTEs in Greater Manchester, Merseyside (Merseytravel), Nexus (Tyne & Wear), South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire.

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