

**8th February 2001**

## **New Trains for Yorkshire Commuters: Roll Over Terms Agreed for Northern Spirit and MerseyRail Franchises**

Roll Over Terms Agreed for Northern Spirit and MerseyRail Franchises

18 additional vehicles are to be procured by Northern Spirit, under an agreement between the Strategic Rail Authority, West Yorkshire PTE and South Yorkshire PTE, to increase capacity on routes run by the Northern Spirit franchise in West and South Yorkshire. The additional vehicles will come on stream at the earliest practicable opportunity.

Passengers on Merseyrail Electrics will benefit from an additional three coaches for morning peak services in the autumn and a further three coaches in the summer of 2002.

At the same time, the SRA, in consultation with the local PTEs, has reached agreement with Arriva plc for the Northern Spirit and Merseyrail Electrics franchises to be extended by up to two years with the option to terminate either franchise at an earlier date so that they can be transferred to new franchises negotiated competitively under the SRA's franchise replacement programme.

Arriva acquired the franchises in February 2000 as part of the acquisition of MTL Services plc. They were loss making, but Arriva agreed to operate them on existing terms until 18 February 2001. The new agreements with Arriva take effect from that date. Arriva has committed to maintain train services at the levels in the 2000/01 timetables and is aiming to improve performance and customer service. It has also agreed to restructure the Northern Spirit franchise so that it can be sub-divided between the TransPennine and Northern franchises. Operating subsidies contributed by the SRA and the local PTEs in West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Tyne & Wear and Merseyside have been set at levels intended to reflect the costs, responsibilities and risks involved in operating the services and carrying out the restructuring of Northern Spirit.

### **Notes to Editors**

1. Last year, the shadow SRA announced plans for a new Transpennine Express franchise linking the major population centres and transport hubs and a new Northern franchise to provide a coherent network of local services throughout the North of England. These are to be created by combining services currently run by Northern Spirit and First North Western. A shortlist for the Transpennine Express franchise was announced in December. The Northern franchise will be offered later this year. It will focus strongly on the SRA working with five PTEs - Nexus, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire,

Greater Manchester and Merseytravel and its content will be developed in consultation with them.

2. The SRA is in discussion with Merseytravel PTE on the future of the Merseyrail Electrics franchise with a view to providing greater local control over a replacement franchise.

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