

31st January 2002

Merseytravel to Assume Responsibility for Region's Local Train Network

A significant step has been taken towards achieving the goal, outlined in the Strategic Plan, of transferring the responsibility for the future management of the Merseyrail Electrics franchise to Merseytravel, the Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority and Executive.

John Spellar, the Minister for Transport, announced in Parliament today that he would take forward the proposal to exempt the Merseyrail Electrics franchise from the SRA franchising process, allowing Merseytravel to let the services as a local concession. The move provides the opportunity to gain the benefits of closer integration with other transport modes in Merseyside whilst retaining national rail network advantages, such as through ticketing and access to the National Rail Enquiry Scheme (NRES).

Subject to the successful passage of a Parliamentary Order, it is anticipated the successful bidder for the concession let by Merseytravel will assume control from the end of the current franchise on 2nd February 2003. The SRA is working closely with Merseytravel on the letting process.

Richard Bowker, Chairman of the SRA, said:

"The Merseyrail Electrics franchise is Merseyside's commuter rail system. Its self-contained nature makes it uniquely suited to greater local control and accountability. It therefore makes sense that Merseytravel should take greater responsibility in order to facilitate better integration with their overall transport portfolio."

Mark Dowd, Chair of Merseytravel, welcomed the announcement saying:

"This is great news for the travelling public on Merseyside. We can now move forward in delivering a first class railway system as part of our integrated public transport network which will be accessible to everyone."

Notes to Editors

1. Arriva Trains Merseyside currently operates passenger rail services between Liverpool and Southport, Ormskirk, Kirkby, Hunts Cross, New Brighton, West Kirby, Chester and Ellesmere Port. The greater part of Arriva Trains Merseyside's services are supported by, and operate to, the specification of, Merseytravel (the Merseyside PTA and PTE).

2. The self-contained nature of the network, the services and the market it serves means that the Merseyrail Electrics network is uniquely suited to

greater local control and accountability. There are no plans to transfer responsibilities for other franchises.

3. The Parliamentary Order will be laid following a period of consultation. The Order then lies before Parliament for 3 months.

4. Under the current franchise conditions the Merseyrail Electrics franchise will continue to be run by Arriva PLC until 2nd February 2003.

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