

2nd August 2002

Benefits Package Secured for Midland Mainline Passengers

The Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) has secured quicker delivery of new trains and measures to improve service performance on Midland Mainline's South Yorkshire to London rail franchise.

The first of two new agreements announced today commits Midland Mainline to the earlier introduction of the full fleet of new 'Meridian' trains, improved train maintenance facilities, refurbishment of High Speed Trains and other passenger benefits. This alteration to the company's franchise extension agreement prioritises service performance over infrastructure improvements, which further analysis has revealed cannot deliver significant journey time reductions.

The second agreement is a passenger benefits package worth £10.3 million. The action plan that has been agreed is directly targeted at improving reliability and punctuality and is already delivering improvements. The package takes account of service cancellations on Midland Mainline between Summer 2000 and Autumn 2001 resulting from poor train reliability.

Nick Newton, SRA Chief Operating Officer, said:

"The package announced today focuses on continuing to improve performance for passengers on Midland Mainline. This follows a period up to last Autumn when performance slipped from what had been a high standard - a situation that the company has already taken major strides in rectifying.

"We have reassessed priorities for the franchise extension, and the medium term emphasis will now be on delivering better performance and higher standards of passenger comfort and service. Longer term enhancements to the route infrastructure will be considered as part of the SRA's strategic planning, in consultation with Midland Mainline and other key stakeholders."

Passenger Benefits

The following improvements replace the infrastructure element of the franchise extension agreement, or compensate for poor performance. These improvements are in addition to other key elements of the franchise extension, including the construction of a new East Midlands Parkway station, additional peak time services, and an hourly service to Leeds.

Bringing forward full introduction of the new fleet of 127 Class 222 'Meridian' carriages to January 2005 (as announced in February - originally a phased introduction until May 2007)

Leasing of two additional High Speed Train sets and an additional Turbostar Train set to improve reliability
Internal and external refurbishment of the existing High Speed Train fleet
The renewal of engines in 14 High Speed Train power cars
Creation of a larger pool of spare engines and parts for High Speed Trains
New maintenance depots in North London and South Yorkshire
New Head of Engineering appointment & recruitment of 12 additional train maintenance staff
Improved passenger satisfaction targets from Autumn 2006
Installation of customer information screens in Derby and Leicester station car parks*
Provision of more detailed and up-to-date passenger information regarding performance
Various operational, marketing and capacity improvement initiatives

Notes to Editors

1. The Midland Mainline franchise was awarded to National Express Group for a 10-year duration in April 1996. In August 2000 the SRA awarded a two-year extension to the franchise; it is now due to expire in April 2008.
2. Midland Mainline operates High Speed and Turbostar train services along the M1 corridor between London, the East Midlands and South Yorkshire. The majority of Midland Mainline passengers travel to and from London, though a significant number travel between intermediate stations along the route. There is a mixture of leisure, business and commuter travel.

**For further details contact the Department for Transport Rail Press desk:
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