

4th February 2003

Consultation Begins on High Speed Rail Services for Kent

The Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) today started consultation on new passenger services for Kent commuters using the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL). The services could begin as early as 2007 following completion of the full CTRL.

The SRA's consultation document sets out six possible service options, along with their benefits and financial and other implications. The basis of all the options is a new Integrated Kent rail franchise, which will integrate the new high-speed CTRL services with the existing network of South Eastern services currently operated by Connex.

SRA Chairman, Richard Bowker, said:

"The Channel Tunnel Rail Link opens up new travel and employment opportunities for people in Kent, London and beyond. This document balances the development of these new opportunities, many of which arise in areas where new housing is expected to be provided, with the need to maintain services for the many thousands of commuters whose route to work is already established.

"In setting out the issues relating to domestic services on the CTRL, we hope that consultees will respond with their considered views about priorities and possibilities for future development. Not everyone's aspirations can be met from day one of the new franchise, and not all aspirations are affordable or represent value for money."

The core service option would comprise four peak hour services between Gravesend and London St Pancras, with a further two trains running from Canterbury West and two from Folkestone Central both via Ashford, where they would join for the onward journey to St Pancras. Off peak, broadly half this level of service would operate. Five further options set out extensions from this core route - to Mid Kent, the Medway towns, and the Thanet towns. The full CTRL domestic service plan is likely to have a phased introduction.

The aim has been to focus on options that complement existing services between Kent and London, optimise the use of existing track capacity, improve journey times and service reliability for passengers, and support key regeneration areas. Significant journey-time savings are expected.

Additional public subsidy of at least £200m over the life of the project would be required to support high-speed domestic services. The economic appraisal shows that the core service option offers, by a significant margin, the best

value for money to the taxpayer of the options set out in the document, and it is the SRA's preliminary view that this should be the basis on which services should be planned.

Notes to Editors:

1. The SRA has prepared a Technical Specification for the new trains required for CTRL domestic services. Amongst other criteria, this requires high-speed capability and a high standard of passenger comfort. The SRA has issued an OJEC notice seeking expressions of interest from funders in the procurement of this rolling stock.
2. On 11 December 2002, the SRA announced a deal with Connex Transport UK to terminate the current South Eastern franchise at the end of 2006, facilitating the creation of a new, enlarged Integrated Kent franchise.
3. On completion of the consultation, a report will be submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT), along with a recommendation on which proposal should be advanced. Once the DfT has made a decision on the initial service plan, that plan will form the basis for the development of the Core Franchise Proposition. The Integrated Kent franchise competition is planned to begin in 2004.
4. The results of the financial and economic appraisal of the six generic service options are summarised in the table that follows:

NPV SRA subsidy £m (a)	Project NPV£m (b)	BCR (c)	NPV/ k (d)	
Core Service Option	205	235	1.56	1.15
Mid Kent Option	330	120	1.22	0.36
Medway Partial Option	325	125	1.24	0.38
Medway Full Option	300	110	1.21	0.37
Thanet Towns via Medway	385	- 75	0.88	- 0.19
Thanet Towns via Canterbury	240	200	1.44	0.84

(a) The Net Present Value (NPV) of SRA subsidy is the costs of the project deducted from the benefits, excluding non-financial costs and benefits

(b) The Project NPV is the costs of the project deducted from the benefits

(c) The Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) is the ratio of the discounted benefits of the project to the discounted costs of the project

(d) The NPV/k is the ratio of the NPV of discounted benefits minus discounted costs to the discounted NPV of SRA support

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