

**28th July 2003**

## **SRA Announce Preferred Bidder For TransPennine Express Franchise**

The Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) today announced that FGK, a consortium of FirstGroup plc and Keolis SA has been selected as the preferred bidder and heads of terms have been signed for the new TransPennine Express franchise. The franchise will operate services on principal inter-city routes across the North of England.

Improvements delivered by the new franchise, which incorporates a total private sector investment of around £260m, will include:

The introduction of a new fleet of 100 mile/h diesel multiple units leading to improved capacity, service quality, performance and the reliability of rail services on these routes, together with the construction of associated new maintenance facilities

Introduction of a new timetable in December 2004 which delivers a regular hourly service pattern, together with some increases in frequency and reductions in journey times, together with some increases in capacity during peak hours. The new timetable also supports the growth objectives of Manchester International Airport  
Improvements to the Passenger's Charter commitment that compensates passengers for the late running of individual trains  
Comprehensive staff training and development schemes, with particular focus on improving customers' experience

The new franchise is planned to commence in early 2004. It will run for eight years with the option to extend for up to a further five years.

SRA Chairman, Richard Bowker said:

'When we talk about Britain's railway, properly delivered, this is what we mean. This franchise will deliver better trains with better performance, improved services and more capacity - the things that matter to passengers.'

### **Notes to Editors**

1. The services comprising the TransPennine franchise currently form part of the networks operated by Arriva Trains Northern and First North Western.
2. The franchise has been developed by the SRA in consultation with five local Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) whose region it will serve: Greater Manchester, Merseyside (Merseytravel), Tyne & Wear (Nexus), South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire.
3. FGK is a consortium of First Group plc and Keolis SA. First Group plc currently operates the First Great Eastern, First Great Western and

First North Western franchises. Keolis SA in consortium with Go-Ahead Group plc as part of GOVIA, is the incumbent franchisee of South Central Trains and Thameslink Rail.