



Dear Sirs

Consultation: Priorities for the next East Midlands franchise
Submission by APTU (The Association of Public Transport Users)

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this Consultation.

APTU (The Association of Public Transport Users) is the rail user group for passengers between West Hampstead Thameslink and Harlington inclusive. This includes both Luton (Town) and Luton Airport Parkway. Our response has been informed by prior feedback from our members on the issues that matter to them.

Neil Middleton
APTU Chairman

Q1	How do you think closer co-operation between staff in Network Rail and the operator of the next East Midlands franchise can be achieved?
A1	It is most essential that goals and measures for Network Rail and the Franchisee are fully aligned – A common issue is that Network Rail can achieve its goals but the Train Operator does not. A classic example of this occurs in our area – A regulation decision is made to prioritise an EMT service over a Thameslink service travelling south. Network Rail Derby can claim ‘success’ as both trains are within PPM at the edge of their Network Rail area (as the EMT Train terminates and the Thameslink train transfers to the Kent Region). However, the late running Thameslink train then loses more time travelling through south London and also causes delay to other trains, finally arriving beyond the PPM limit. In this example, it is essential that Network Rail East Midlands bears the full ‘consequence’ of the late running outside their region.
Q2	How can the operator of the next East Midlands franchise engage with community rail partnerships or heritage railways to support the local economy to stimulate demand for rail services in the region?
A2	No comment; no CRPs or Heritage Railways in ‘our’ area.
Q3	Do you think that the operator of the train service, stations and support services should take the following into consideration when they run the franchise: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The environment?• Equality?• Communities in the areas they operate? If so, how should they do this?
A3	The environment? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Equality? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Communities in the areas they operate? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If so, how should they do this? <i>Environment</i> We believe that the Franchisee should be required to operate a 100% electric service south of Kettering; they should not be allowed to operate a fossil fuel only powered service south of Kettering

	<p>and required to operate ‘bi-modes’ on electric south of Kettering. Consequently, Network Rail will need to be required to improve the overhead line south of Bedford to allow operation at 125 mph.</p> <p>Equality</p> <p>The Franchisee should be expected to set different goals for its various interactions; for instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passengers: A focus on making sure all can use their services – eg support for passengers of reduced mobility is of high quality and reliably delivered and toilets are clean and available (for those who need to use them more regularly). A comprehensive analysis should be undertaken. • Staff: Demonstrating that all parts of society understand that roles are available and that they could well have the personal and technical knowledge to succeed. <p>Community</p> <p>The franchisee should be expected to engage particularly with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government and equivalents such as LEPs • The wider rail user community such as Railfuture and User Groups such as ourselves • Those who live close to the railway where the Franchisee is the lead operator (stations, depots etc)
Q4	<p>Do you agree with our proposed approach, which could reduce journey times on long distance services and increase the likelihood of getting a seat?</p>
A4	<p>Partially</p> <p>We do agree with the two goals – speeding up the long distance service and providing more seats, but feel that the analysis behind the proposals needs a considerable re-work.</p> <p>We believe it is an oversimplification to say “there are distinct intercity and London commuter markets on the Midland Main Line”. This ignores:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commuters who do not travel between London and stations to Corby – we are aware of distinct markets from Bedford, where passengers travel north from there to Market Harborough, Leicester and further north; presumably there are commuters to Bedford as well. We also imagine that there are other substantial Commuter markets to/from Sheffield, Nottingham, Leicester and Derby that use intercity trains. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. When we last travelled to an East Midlands Trains stakeholder meeting – on a train that arrived in Leicester around 08:00, there were noticeable numbers of commuters. 2. Travellers other than commuters who want to travel from Leicester and further north to stations Wellingborough to Luton Airport inclusive (and possibly on to Thameslink served stations). Adding an additional change to their journey is a distinctly retrograde step. It will: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Add delay and inconvenience for all travellers. This is particularly true with the current hourly service where a single cancellation can add an hour’s delay to a journey. In particular, we do not want to see a double or triple change requirement – as in <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Bedford ① Kettering ② Leicester ③ Derby ii. Harpenden ① Bedford ② Kettering ③ Leicester ④ Derby b. Be particularly inconvenient for less mobile travellers, and somewhat in contradiction to the aspirations sought in Q3. 3. The potential income stream available from passengers to/from Luton Airport. With the completion of the Mass Transit system from Luton Airport Parkway in the early years of the franchise, travel by train will be become a more appealing option and growth in the share of travellers should be a goal for the Franchisee. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. We know from our own discussions with the airport that their passenger demand is spread throughout the day, rather than the “twin peaks” of commuter traffic, which is another reason to seek this incremental revenue.

4. The development of East West Rail, which during the life of the Franchise, will provide a new revenue source. It should not be forgotten that it is widely accepted that the Oxford/Milton Keynes/Bedford/Cambridge corridor is a fast expanding technology area with increasing numbers of businesses and homes and that it will require excellent transport links which can only be provided at Bedford if long distance trains continue to stop there.
5. That the long distance market can be segmented between peak hour business travellers (and commuters) who are charged high fares and expect fast journey times and leisure and other travellers at other times, who are less time sensitive and more sensitive to the convenience of their journey (eg less mobile travellers).

Capacity needs to be equitably shared amongst all the above groups. Whilst the market from intermediate stations northward may be smaller than the to/from London market, this market should not be ignored.

We can, however, understand & support the rationale of moving from two largely interchangeable fleets (HST and Meridian) to a more segregated fleet of (a) longer distance and (b) shorter distance trains. For our members, mainly travelling from Luton to St Pancras or Kettering, comfort and possible journey time increases will be less of an issue, but we can understand the concern of others regarding both comfort and journey time (when compared to a HST or Meridian) on the shorter distance trains (we have heard suggestions of both a lower top speed and lower comfort levels). In both cases, fast boarding and alighting is an important part of the specification as this can reduce journey times by reducing station dwell times.

We believe that bidders should be given considerable flexibility to respond; in our view, the service specification should:

1. Require long distance services to continue to call at Luton, Luton Airport Parkway and Bedford as they do at present.
 - a. Bedford stops are useful for travellers from north of Luton and also involve no more changes for travellers from busy stations such as Harpenden & St Albans.
 - b. Ensure that the Corby and long distance timetables are set up so that interchange times at Kettering are reasonable, thus increasing the effective service frequency.
 - c. We recognise the need to deliver seats for longer distance travellers, and at time of heavy demand recognise that passengers for stations between London and Kettering be directed to the Corby service and longer distance services become pick up only at stations south of Kettering when going north, and there is merit in being set down only going south (mainly to reduce station stop times and reduce the unload time at St Pancras). With the increased capacity expected to be available on Corby services, this should be viable to deliver.
2. Ensure that at least the same capacity is provided in peak hours for travellers to/from Bedford, Luton and Luton Airport Parkway. Even though Thameslink capacity increases substantially with the arrival of the full Class 700 fleet, this is matched by an expected increase in demand, so there should be no substantial switch of travellers from East Midlands to Thameslink at Bedford et al. We recognise that this should be met by stops on Corby services.
3. Consider the revenue benefits of adding additional Luton Airport Parkway stops, particularly off-peak in order to stimulate the switch of airport traffic from car to train.

Q5	What are your suggestions about how to mitigate the potential loss of some direct services between Oakham, Melton Mowbray and London?
A5	No comment (not in 'our' area)
Q6	What are the particular services, routes and times of day when you think additional space for passengers are most needed?
A6	See our response to Q4

Q7	<p>Which on-board facilities in order of are most important to you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On short distance journeys (up to 60 minutes) • On long distance journeys (over 60 minutes)
A7	<p>In view of the relatively short distances travelled by our members on these trains, we do not have a strong view.</p> <p>Even though journey times for our members will be short, free wifi and at seat power are considered important.</p>
Q8	<p>Which other on-board facilities should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced? • Improved?
A8	<p>In view of the relatively short distances travelled by our members on these trains, we do not have a strong view.</p>
Q9	<p>How could your local train services be changed to better meet your current and future needs?</p>
A9	<p>See our response to Q4</p>
Q10	<p>What additional services would you wish to see provided in the next franchise?</p>
A10	<p>See our response to Q4</p>
Q11	<p>Do you support the proposal to reopen the line between Shirebrook and Ollerton to passenger trains? If so, what sources of investment could be identified to fund this proposal?</p>
A11	<p>No comment (not in 'our' area)</p>
Q12	<p>Do you think that the current number of services on the Midland Main Line to and from Luton Airport Parkway is adequate?</p>
A12	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>As explained in our response to Q4, we believe there is a commercial opportunity for the Franchisee (and the Rail industry generally) to grow its share of the travel to airport market and this should be considered a priority, particularly as much of that demand is off-peak. Offering an hourly service is a considerable disincentive to airport travellers – travelling to the airport they are fretful about delays and leaving the airport, the time of arrival at the train station is not predictable, arising to the worry of a 59 minute wait.</p> <p>With an increase in service, Luton Airport Parkway also becomes a more attractive stop for travellers living in the south east – it is close to the M1 and has a large car park.</p>
Q13	<p>Would you like additional fast trains from London each hour to call at Luton Airport Parkway if this meant that, as a trade-off:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some services are withdrawn from other stations, such as Luton? • Journey times to other stations may increase? • Freight capacity and/or frequency is reduced?
A13	<p>Some services are withdrawn from other stations, such as Luton? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Journey times to other stations may increase? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Freight capacity and/or frequency is reduced? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Luton is served by the Corby service most of the time and we believe that off-peak it is reasonable for these trains to serve both Luton and Luton Airport Parkway.</p> <p>We accept that there might be a small increase in journey time, but believe that there may be considerable commercial benefits.</p>

	We understand there are one to two paths per hour on the Midland Mainline south for freight and as most Thameslink trains are already planned to be on the slow lines at Harpenden (going north) we do not anticipate this will be an issue.
Q14	How could the train service be better at meeting the needs of passengers travelling to and from airports within the East Midlands Franchise
A14	See our response to Q4 and Q12; we have no comment on any airport other than Luton.
Q15	What ideas do you have for improving the current service on the Liverpool – Norwich route?
A15	No comment (not in 'our' area)
Q16	Would you support changing the destinations served by the existing Birmingham – Stansted Airport service, such as serving Norwich instead of Stansted Airport?
A16	No comment (not in 'our' area)
Q17	Are you in favour of these route changes?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liverpool – Norwich <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birmingham – Nottingham • Birmingham – Leicester/Stanstead
A17	No comment (not in 'our' area)
Q18	Would you like to see any other routes transferred to or from the East Midlands franchise? If so, which routes?
A18	No comment (not in 'our' area)
Q19	Do you support increasing the frequency of train services in Lincolnshire despite the impact this may have on level crossing users?
A19	No comment (not in 'our' area)
Q20	How can we improve all aspects of your door-to-door journey experience?
A20	<p>The current operational practice of measuring performance at the individual train level should be revisited – for instance by measuring the impact on passenger journeys – for instance, if a train is not held for 5 minutes to allow passengers on a late running journey to continue their journey without delay, then the delay statistics should reflect the total delay to the passengers who have missed their onward connection.</p> <p>We have no comment on station matters as the Franchisee will not operate stations in 'our' area.</p>
Q21	What more could be done to improve access to, and provide facilities at stations, including for those with disabilities or additional needs?
A21	No comment – The Franchisee will not operate stations in 'our' area
Q22	How could the next franchisee operator make better use of stations for community and commercial purposes?
A22	No comment – The Franchisee will not operate stations in 'our' area
Q23	What could be done to improve the way tickets are sold and provided?
A23	<p>Your view:</p> <p>Fares in 'our' Area are determined by Thameslink. Our main expectation is that the Franchisee will accept all ticketing methods – for instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thameslink's Key smartcard product – including the PAYG option • Oyster (assuming that this product is extended to Luton Airport)

	In particular, the Franchisee should be required to accept new methods from day 1 as and when they are launched.
Q24	What changes to the fares structure would be of benefit to you?
A24	<p>Fares in 'our' Area are determined by Thameslink. Our main expectation is that the Franchisee will accept any new ticket types introduced by Thameslink.</p> <p>The current Franchisee does not accept the GroupSave product widely available in the South East. The new Franchisee should be required to accept this product from Franchise start for the ex Network South East Area (ie between Bedford and London).</p> <p>Once Smart ticketing is fully deployed (now scheduled to before this Franchise commences), the Franchisee's contract should require them to adopt new products offered by Thameslink (as and when they are created) such as part time season tickets and carnet tickets – and also innovative products that become possible with the better records available from Smart discounts such as reductions in price of single tickets the more the train is used.</p>
Q25	What additional information would be useful to you when planning or making your journey, such as seat availability, journey times and connections? How would you like it to be communicated to you?
A25	Our members are most likely to use information sources that aggregate multiple operator's offerings – whether a TOCs (probably Thameslink [as provider of the majority of services]), National Rail or third party (eg Realtime Trains). Our main expectation is that the Franchisee will participate enthusiastically in open data and similar initiatives to support third party developers.
Q26	How could staff can be more effective in providing the service and assistance that passengers need on a modern railway network?
A26	Staff at Stations in our area are provided by Thameslink, so as regards our travellers, this question is only really applicable to the On Board Manager. He/She should have a job description (and training) that emphasises supporting travellers – including those who need (or might benefit from) help. By removing tasks such as door opening (and possibly closing) the on-board staff member can then focus on helping those who need it – eg help in boarding or alighting.
Q27	How would you prefer the next operator to engage with:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You as an individual • Your organisation (if applicable)?
A27	<p>The TOC should appoint a Stakeholder Manager(s) to keep stakeholders informed and to provide a point of contact. We believe interaction should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular (at least annual) stakeholder conferences - these provide a useful two-way link between the TOC and stakeholders of all kinds (e.g. user groups, local authorities, business representatives). • Also more frequent updates for stakeholders over a more localised area. These have worked well under EMT and should continue in the next franchise – and should include regional conferences, attendance at stakeholder organised meetings and direct liaison.
Q28	What would make you feel safer and more secure on your journey in relation to:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trains? • Routes? • Stations? • Other?
A28	The presence of CCTV will encourage 'good behaviour' on trains. As regards stations, no station in 'our' area will be managed by the Franchisee.

Q29	How do you think more investment might be put into the railways to match money already coming from government through Network Rail?
A29	This is not our area of expertise and we therefore have no comment.
Q30	Are there any other areas that you think it is important for us to consider that have not already been discussed in this consultation?
A30	<p>As regards stops at St Albans, we believe the Franchisee should be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allowed – and encouraged to do so – to stop there in times of severe disruption to provide an alternative to Thameslink. Going north, we accept this should not be at the expense of longer distance travellers and envisage an arrangement where St Albans passengers remain on the concourse whilst longer distance travellers board and then get on last. Going south, this would be less of issue as longer distance travellers would already be seated. 2. Encouraged to consider an hourly stop for the Corby service, mainly to stimulate demand for travel to north of Bedford, by reducing the number of changes. As with our response to Q4 for Bedford, we would understand if this stop was to be pick up only northbound in peak hours.