

Report to Cabinet
4 February 2015
Report of Executive head of regeneration and development
Subject Response to the East Anglia rail franchise consultation

Item

13

Purpose

To consider the council's response to the East Anglia rail franchise consultation

Recommendation

To agree the council's response to the East Anglia rail franchise consultation as set out in this report.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority "A prosperous city" and the service plan priority New Jobs and Homes.

Financial implications

Ward/s: All wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Stonard – Environment development and transport

Contact officers

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Background documents

Rail Executive East Anglia Rail Franchise Consultation:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/384309/east-anglia-franchise.pdf

Report

Background

1. A reliable, improving rail service between Norwich, London and the rest of the country is vital to the economic well-being of the city and its hinterland. The current East Anglia Rail franchise is held by Abellio (Netherlands Railways) and commenced in 2011 – was extended in 2013 – and will end in 2016. The next franchise period will run from 2016 for at least 12 years and possibly longer. Tenders will be sought later in 2015.
2. Prior to letting the current 'short' franchise, the Great Eastern Mainline (GEML) Vision Group (which includes council representation) met with the Department for Transport and with the three companies invited to tender. This provided an opportunity to discuss aspirations for improving rail services on the GEML and other lines and with a view to assisting potential tenderers to better respond to the needs of service users. All potential tenderers were made aware of work commissioned by the group demonstrating the economic benefits of investment in rail in the eastern region and costing the investment required.
3. The work of the GEML Vision group has been taken up by MPs from Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex (the Great Eastern Mainline Taskforce). This group are lobbying the Treasury for investment to deliver capacity and journey time improvements between Norwich and London.
4. All stakeholders, therefore, now share a common understanding of what is required to improve this service in terms of infrastructure and rolling stock.
5. Over the next franchise period investment in infrastructure and new rolling stock will take place. Ensuring the operator understands the requirements of users is therefore extremely important.
6. The council's suggested response to the consultation document (to be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/384309/east-anglia-franchise.pdf) is given below.

Numbers in the left-hand column refer to questions in the DFT consultation document.

1	Please select 3 of the Passenger Focus recommendations set out in paragraph 4.6 which you believe require particular attention in order to improve your end to end journey?
	<p>All answers to this question refer to the Great Eastern Mainline (GEML)</p> <p>1- <i>Providing a punctual and reliable service</i></p> <p>This applies during normal operation and especially during periods when engineering works prevent through running of trains between Norwich and London.</p> <p>Bus substitution makes for an unpleasant (and frequently more crowded) travel experience. This is a major disincentive to travel for many, for example those with travelling with young children and the elderly. At present alternative</p>

	<p>routings via Cambridge are insufficiently well publicised, and cheaper advance tickets are frequently not available. Major improvement is needed here.</p> <p><i>2 - Effective management of disruption, especially through information to passengers</i></p> <p>It is recognised that acute disruption is often outside the control of the train operator. However please refer to answer (1) above.</p> <p><i>3- The comfort and adequacy of accommodation on the train, especially on longer distance journeys</i></p> <p>Despite its age, comfort levels in the current intercity rolling stock are reasonably good in certain respects (such as seating density, arrangement of tables, noise levels). There must be no diminution of the travelling experience in new stock.</p>
2	<p>Are there any examples of outstanding customer service experiences, related or unrelated to passenger rail services, which you believe the new East Anglia rail franchise should aspire to? If so, please provide supporting details or evidence in your answer.</p>
	<p>None identified</p>
3	<p>Are there any changes to the current passenger rail service (i.e. number or trains per hour/day), as set out in paragraph 5.8, which you feel should be considered?</p>
	<p>Service frequency on the GEML between Norwich and London is adequate. Two direct services per hour (especially during peak travel times) between Norwich and Cambridge would do much to improve connectivity between these two major employment centres. Improved connectivity between the two will help balance growth between the centres and help to stimulate investment in Norwich which has the largest economy in East Anglia.</p> <p>The council welcomes the prospect of an additional station at Chesterton / Cambridge Science Park.</p> <p>An additional Norwich-Cambridge service would also deliver improved connectivity to Peterborough. With changes to the East Coast timetable in recent years, the quality of Norwich's connections to Scotland and the Northeast has suffered. An improvement in Norwich-Peterborough connections (via an additional Cambridge service) would do much to mitigate this.</p> <p>The council supports any improvements which may be deliverable on other regional / local services feeding into Norwich such as Sheringham, Yarmouth, and Lowestoft.</p>
4	<p>Results indicate that rail is not the preferred mode of transport when travelling to Stansted Airport. What improvements do you believe should be made to the rail service in order to make this your first choice of travel?</p>
	<p>The extension of some Norwich-Cambridge services to Stansted Airport has previously been suggested. This would do much to improve rail connections between Norwich and the airport and would promote modal shift to rail from both Norwich and intermediate centres such as Thetford and Ely. The council would therefore welcome extension of these services.</p>
5	<p>If you have a view on or would be affected by the proposal set out in paragraph 5.10, please answer the following:</p> <p>Which direct service would you most value? Where possible please explain</p>

	your rationale when responding to this question.
	<p><i>A direct service between Norwich and Liverpool</i></p> <p>Anecdotally, few passengers travel the whole length of this route, especially since journey times on the west coast mainline are now much improved. The slowness of the journey and non-intercity rolling stock certainly make long-distance travel on this route unattractive. Its value lies more in connecting Norwich and Norfolk with the East Midlands and (especially) Peterborough. Therefore, so long as good connectivity to the northwest were maintained, the loss of the direct service to Liverpool may be acceptable.</p> <p>The council would most value the following:</p> <p><i>A direct service between Norwich and Peterborough providing connections to Liverpool</i></p> <p>If the direct Liverpool service were to be withdrawn, it would be essential to ensure that timetabling and platform allocation at Peterborough ensured a seamless transfer to services to Nottingham, Sheffield and the Northwest.</p> <p><i>A direct service between Norwich and Peterborough providing connections to the East Coast Main Line (ECML)</i></p> <p>As discussed in response (3), Norwich has experienced poor connections with Scotland and the northeast since ECML timetable changes in 2011. A direct hourly service to Peterborough is essential, the current twice-hourly connection (one direct East Midlands train; one connection via Ely) is less than ideal since the trains depart 17 minutes apart.</p> <p>Therefore, connectivity to Peterborough would be much improved if a 'clockface' approach were adopted with departures 30 minutes apart with arrival at Peterborough similarly spaced. Norwich-Peterborough services must be considered alongside Norwich-Cambridge services in order to maximise benefits for all destinations.</p>
6	<p>Do you have any proposals to improve Community Rail Partnerships so as to deliver more of the beneficial outcomes for passengers achieved so far? Please provide any evidence in support of your proposal.</p>
	No suggestions
7	<p>Do you wish to submit a proposal for a future third party promoted scheme that would involve a change to the current rail service in the franchise?</p> <p>If so, please include any supporting business case or value for money analysis together with your proposal.</p>
	No suggestions
8	<p>How can the franchise operator help you better during a) planned disruption, such as engineering works and forecasted bad weather, and b) unplanned on-the-day disruption? Please provide separate answers for both cases.</p>
	<p>a) Although the situation has improved somewhat in the last couple of years, the GEML is still subject to regular disruption due to planned works and falls well short of passenger expectations for a seven-day railway. The council supports all actions taken to minimise all-line blocks and would support use of the diversionary route via Ely whenever possible to provide direct trains between Norwich and London.</p> <p>Although Greater Anglia has altered timings and sought to make it easier for passengers to travel via Cambridge during planned works, this option is</p>

	<p>insufficiently well publicised and cheaper advance tickets are frequently not available. Much improvement could be made here.</p> <p>Bus substitution must be a last resort on the GEML and regional services. This makes for an unpleasant (and frequently more crowded) travel experience and is a major disincentive to travel for many, for example those with travelling with young children and the elderly. Norwich is a major tourist destination, the council is therefore extremely concerned at the very limited direct weekend service planned between Norwich and London during February-March 2015.</p> <p>b) The 'short' GA franchise saw an improvement in information management with increased use of social media and issuing of smartphones to train staff. Any further improvements to real-time information management would be welcome.</p> <p>More resilient infrastructure would also be beneficial such as greater track capacity for trains to pass or more cross-overs to allow wrong line running. Through its involvement in the GEML Vision group, the council has worked with others to identify infrastructure required to increase capacity and resilience. The train operator's support will be crucial in securing the required investment.</p>
9	<p>To improve the railway's ability to match growth in demand with appropriate levels of capacity, we recognise that an increase of carriages per train, or in the number of services per hour, would help. However, we are confined by limited timetabling and infrastructure constraints and are therefore looking for other innovative ways to resolve the issue. When travelling on a service where capacity is stretched, what opportunities do you see which would improve your on board experience?</p>
	<p>This question appears most relevant to commuter routes into London, while the council's principal concern is with the intercity route between Norwich and London. Any diminution in passenger experience (e.g. reduction in seat pitch, leg space or numbers of tables) on this service would be counter-productive and would be opposed. Crowding on these trains tends to occur as a result of Essex commuters using intercity services in preference to slower or less comfortable alternatives. Therefore, if these alternatives become less attractive due to increased standing or other factors, the result may be further crowding on intercity services as commuters from (say) Manningtree.</p> <p>Ultimately, the only realistic long-term solution is increased capacity – this argument does appear to have been accepted as a result of work by the GEML Vision Group and latterly, the taskforce of MPs from the eastern region.</p> <p>If new rolling stock is procured, the council does not wish to see any diminution in passenger comfort or in luggage storage space. The specification of new stock should be based on the new intercity express trains, not that of class 444s or similar. Any refurbishment of existing Mk 3 stock should look to East Coast trains as example, rather than First Great Western.</p>
10	<p>What are your views on removing first class seating in order to provide more overall seating and reduce standing?</p>
	<p>Again, this question appears most relevant to commuter services into London. Removal of first-class seating on the intercity services would be completely unacceptable.</p>

11	Are there any specific stations or services that you feel could improve on reliability or punctuality? Where possible, please explain your reasoning when responding to this question.
	GEML services in general do appear especially prone to disruption – we assume this is because the line is working close to capacity. Until this is addressed it is hoped that improvements in providing information to passengers will continue when disruption occurs.
12	What sort of improvements would you like to see prioritised at the station(s) you use? Please provide details and reasoning for these as well as the name of the station(s).
	The council welcomes the improvements in cycle provision made at Norwich station and looks forward to the proposed Cycle Hub. The new franchise is an opportunity to maximise rail/cycle integration (see also (15) below).
13	Do you have any proposals to improve security and safety at stations or on trains that you would like us to consider? Please provide any supporting evidence and details of any specific stations and/or rail services which you feel merit consideration for future improvement under these schemes.
	No specific proposals. The council supports maintenance of appropriate levels of lighting and CCTV at less busy stations, and welcomes the presence of police (both British Transport Police and other forces) to assist passengers and deter anti-social behaviour at stations experiencing significant use during weekend evenings at for example Norwich.
14	Are there areas of improvement in customer information and engagement you would like to see before, during and after your journey?
	The operator during the next franchise period is expected to continue to develop existing and new channels of communication to share information with passengers on and off the train.
15	On a scale of 1 to 9, how would you rate the following on board passenger facilities (1 = not important; 9 = very important):
	<p><i>Luggage holds 8</i></p> <p>Sufficient luggage space is extremely important on longer distance services; insufficient space can have a major impact on the travelling experience. Anyone doubting this should attempt to travel on Virgin's Pendolino services on the West Coast mainline at peak time – luggage stacks and racks on these trains are far from adequate. This must be taken account of in specifying new rolling stock or refurbishing existing intercity rolling stock.</p> <p><i>Cycle storage 9</i></p> <p>The council is supports rail/cycle integration. It is investing heavily in improving cycle infrastructure and considers that cycling is a potentially very attractive means of providing connecting travel. To fulfil potential there is a need for adequate cycle storage on both trains and at stations. Any operator should be able to react flexibly to increased demand for either.</p> <p>Cycle storage on Norwich-London intercity services is already adequate but should be maintained in any new rolling stock. Norwich-Cambridge services will only accommodate 3 cycles; this is inadequate at peak times and needs improvement. It is accepted that this could impact on passenger accommodation, but could be achieved through provision of additional folding</p>

	<p>seating (this would also increase wheelchair spaces).</p> <p>Cycle storage on services on the Bittern and Wherry lines (4 spaces per train) is completely inadequate during the summer months and would benefit from being increased when stock is refurbished / renewed.</p> <p><i>Audio Passenger Information 8</i></p> <p>Very important</p> <p><i>Visual Passenger Information 7</i></p> <p>Where this is provided it is of value, especially to those with hearing difficulties.</p> <p><i>Provision of different classes of service 8</i></p> <p>This response refers only to the Norwich-London intercity service, on which a first class service is valued by passengers and is essential. On other services standard class only is acceptable.</p> <p><i>Catering 9</i></p> <p>Maintenance of full buffet facilities on Norwich-London intercity services is considered to be essential.</p> <p><i>Tables 5</i></p> <p>Passengers like tables on longer journeys; they allow for more productive working and allow family and social groups to enjoy travelling together. The travelling experience does appear to diminish when they are removed in order to increase seating densities. First Great Western removed many tables from their mk3 stock during refurbishment to increase density, whereas East Coast retained tables during refurbishment – the passenger experience on the latter is far preferable to the former.</p> <p>Any refurbishment of Norwich-London intercity rolling stock (and to a lesser extent between Norwich and Cambridge) should maintain most carriages with the present proportion of at-table seating.</p> <p><i>Staff presence 6</i></p> <p>Visible staff are particularly important on evening / night services.</p> <p><i>Baby changing facilities 6</i></p> <p>These are of most importance on longer-distance services between Norwich and Cambridge or London. Also less critical these must also be maintained on the rural services feeding into Norwich, all of which are busy mixed-use routes carrying much holiday traffic.</p> <p><i>Plug sockets 7</i></p> <p>These are of importance on intercity services and the council welcomes news that they are to be provided shortly through planned refurbishment. They would also be valuable on services to Cambridge.</p>
16	<p>What areas of customer service within your end-to-end journey would you expect to see monitored and reported on in the new franchise, in order to improve the service quality for passengers?</p>
	<p>Punctuality</p> <p>Numbers of passengers unable to sit</p> <p>Numbers of toilets out of service by end of journey</p>
17	<p>Based on your experience or knowledge of rail passenger services, do you have any observations that may assist us in our commitment to have due regard to the Environment, Equality, Social Value and the Family (as set out in</p>

	paragraphs 6.16 to 6.20) in the development of the specification of passenger services for East Anglia?
	Abellio Greater Anglia's sourcing of refreshments made in Norwich has supported economic and environmental its objectives, the council would like to see this continue.
18	In summary, what three aspects of your current East Anglia rail journey would you like to see improved to enhance your overall travel experience?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improved overall reliability of journey – the GEML seems particularly subject to disruption – Improved management of planned engineering works to minimise disruption – Improved cleanliness of trains and toilets, etc.
19	Please indicate if there are any additional areas that you think it is important for us to consider and that have not already been addressed in this consultation.
	No suggestions

Integrated impact assessment



NORWICH
City Council

Report author to complete

Committee:	Cabinet
Committee date:	4 Feb 2015
Head of service:	Andy Watt
Report subject:	Anglia Rail franchise
Date assessed:	20 January 2015
Description:	Norwich City Council's response to consultation on re-letting the East Anglia rail franchise

	Impact			
Economic (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Finance (value for money)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other departments and services e.g. office facilities, customer contact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ICT services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Economic development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial inclusion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Social (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Safeguarding children and adults	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<u>S17 crime and disorder act 1998</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Human Rights Act 1998	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Health and well being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Equality and diversity (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Relations between groups (cohesion)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	Impact			
Eliminating discrimination & harassment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Advancing equality of opportunity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Environmental (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Natural and built environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Waste minimisation & resource use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Pollution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sustainable procurement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Energy and climate change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(Please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Risk management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Recommendations from impact assessment	
Positive	
Negative	
Neutral	
Issues	