

From Chair, London TravelWatch
Tel: 020 3176 5942
Stephen.locke@londontravelwatch.org.uk



Rt.Hon Patrick McLoughlin MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
LONDON
SW1P 4DR

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Dear Secretary of State,

Devolution of rail franchising in the London area

As you will be aware, London TravelWatch welcomed your decision earlier this year to publish a partnership arrangement with the Mayor of London that would see the further devolution of rail powers to Transport for London (TfL). Further extensions of the successful model of the London Overground promise to bring major benefits to many passengers throughout the rail network London and the surrounding areas.

The strategic partnership, and the principle of devolution embedded within it, has overwhelming support from key stakeholders and all political parties in the London area as well as elected representatives of passengers in the surrounding commuter belt, and is seen as a critically important step in delivering the increased capacity and improved services that the capital so urgently needs.

It is of great concern to us, therefore, to be made aware of what appears to be some serious backtracking on the partnership strategy. In particular, we have heard in recent weeks that the competition for the Southeastern franchise may be based directly on the existing arrangements, in sharp contrast with the previously accepted view that the Metro part of Southeastern should be tendered by TfL as a concession along the lines of West Anglia and TfL Rail. This issue has now acquired some urgency: without a clear decision to devolve such powers before the Parliamentary Recess, it would be virtually impossible for TfL to conduct a reasonable tendering exercise in time for any concession to start operating at the end of the current Southeastern franchise. This decision also has significant implications for the management of the South Western and TSGN franchises in future.

Given the very large numbers of passengers affected, and the major shortcomings identified with many existing services, I urge you to make a swift decision to proceed with devolution of the Metro services within the Southeastern franchise. This is essential to allow TfL the necessary time and resource to design and implement an appropriate concession arrangement.

It will also be an important and eagerly awaited confirmation that the Government is serious about implementing the strategic partnership between your department and TfL.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Locke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Stephen Locke
Chair, London TravelWatch