

New Cross Country Franchise Consultation Document June 2006

Response from TravelWatch East Midlands

This response comments only on those aspects of the draft franchise specification which will affect passengers travelling from and to the East Midlands.

SECTION 5. PROPOSED BASE CASE SPECIFICATION

Demand Management

The requirement to use modern demand management tools to spread loadings across trains presents a risk that as a consequence there would be more restrictions on protected, walk-on fares. TravelWatch wishes to see continued availability of these fares without unreasonable restrictions on their use.

Service pattern

TravelWatch welcomes retention of twice-hourly long distance services via Birmingham-Derby-Sheffield.

Plymouth-Edinburgh via Leeds

We would like to see some stops by these trains at Chesterfield, to maintain this station's direct service from the West of England. We suggest also that some trains should run from and to Paignton instead of Plymouth, to maintain the long-established through service between Paignton, Torquay and the East Midlands.

There should be a requirement on the franchisee to continue to run additional trains from and to Newquay and Paignton to meet demand for travel on summer Saturdays

Reading-Newcastle via Doncaster

We would like some trains to run to and from Bournemouth.

We also wish to see this service operate via Coventry (as suggested in the West Midlands Route Utilisation Study), to provide direct services between Birmingham International, Derby, Chesterfield and Sheffield.

We are surprised that twice-hourly Cross Country services at close intervals are to be maintained between York and Newcastle. **Terminating the Reading-Newcastle service at York would free rolling stock for use on service extensions elsewhere. We would like to see this service run to an alternative destination in the North East, such as Hull, Scarborough or Middlesbrough.** (A service to Hull would replace the present hourly fast train from Sheffield to Hull, freeing trains for use on the new Nottingham-Leeds service proposed in the draft specification for the East Midlands franchise).

Cardiff / Birmingham-Nottingham

We welcome retention of the present level of services. We wish to see a decrease in journey time for Cardiff-Nottingham trains between Birmingham and Nottingham through transfer of stops to other services. These trains should operate at even service intervals with Birmingham-Nottingham trains, to provide a half-hourly service between Birmingham and Nottingham. The franchisee should provide a consistent catering service on this route.

We wish to see a commitment by the franchisee to serving local stations and provision of adequate capacity for peak loadings. Convenient connections to and from Lincoln should be provided at Nottingham.

Stansted Airport / Cambridge-Birmingham

We welcome retention of the present level of service. The trains should operate at even service intervals with Birmingham-Leicester trains (operated by the new West Midlands franchise), to provide a half-hourly service between Birmingham and Leicester.

The current service is inadequate for passengers using Stansted Airport. We wish to see earlier and later trains than at present, east of Leicester at least, to accommodate airline passengers. The franchisee should also be required to provide adequate seating capacity, by running more three-car trains (the maximum length that can be accommodated at Stansted Airport) and additional services at times of peak demand.

Should demand on this route continue to grow, then consideration should be given to running a second train each hour between Birmingham and Stansted Airport. This would also cater for growth in passengers from the new station at Coleshill Parkway by increasing the frequency between Birmingham and Leicester to three trains per hour.

The franchisee should provide a consistent catering service on this route.

Other comments

Two principal inter-regional routes from the East Midlands: Nottingham-Birmingham and Leicester-Birmingham will be managed by the Cross Country franchise and the West Midlands franchise rather than the East Midlands franchise. The franchisee for Cross Country should be required to cooperate with the operator of the West Midlands franchise, and the operator of the East Midlands franchise, in the interests of securing an integrated rail service for passengers.

Stephen Abbott
Honorary Secretary
TracelWatch East Midlands
2 August 2006