

Response to Great Western Franchise Consultation

26 June 2014

Submitted by West of England region campaigners from Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FOSBR) and Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance (TfGB) (of which FOSBR is a member)

Our response to improvements achieved in recent years

We are delighted that several of the requests in our submission to the last Great Western Franchise consultation have been granted, notably the introduction of a new evening service on the Severn Beach line in Sept 2012 and improvements to the service to Parson Street and Bedminster in May 2014. These have come about through local authorities, DfT and the train operator working together, of which we would like to see more. We are pleased to note that other improvements are in the pipeline, notably the four-tracking of Filton Bank and the GRIP studies to enable the reopening of the Portishead line and Henbury Loop services, as well as electrification of the Great Western line.

However, there is still much to be done. We would ask that such improvements continue to be delivered in the new franchise. There needs to be a steady continual move toward a minimum of half-hourly services to all local stations, as promised in the WEP Joint Local Transport Plan 2006. We are glad that the Severn Beach line enhanced service “pump-priming” by Bristol City Council in May 2008 (at an introductory subsidy of £420,000 per annum, later renegotiated to £200,000) has now been taken into the DfT franchise as of October 2013, but are alarmed at the recent removal of stops from the service and train cancellations; we would like to see action to ensure that the Severn Beach line service does not deteriorate as a result of this “coming of age”.

FOSBR's (not TfGB's) position on the award of the franchise or concession

Unlike TfGB and many of the organisations affiliated to it, FOSBR has a position on the franchising system. The following opinion relates to FOSBR only and not to TfGB.

At FOSBR's AGM in January 2014, members passed a resolution calling on the government “to bring the Great Western Franchise back into public ownership when it runs out in two years' time with decisions made more locally as occurs in the other major English cities.” FOSBR is concerned at the inefficiency and fragmentation of the franchising system, the loss of revenue to the railway in profit and the lack of any dynamism or risk taking despite the profit motive.

While FOSBR wish to see a publicly owned railway, the nature of the services passengers wish to running on our local network remains the same regardless of the way the system is organised.

What TfGB, FOSBR and other affiliated groups wish to see is detailed below.

The following is intended to relate to the consultation as a whole. Further specific information is given (below) in relation to particular consultation questions.

1 Train services

1.1 MetroWest priced options and governance

We are pleased to note that Henbury Loop, Portishead and other elements of MetroWest Phase 1 and 2, and the possibility of local electrification, are listed as priced options. We expect WEP (or any replacement local body) to work with Network Rail, DfT and the franchisee to ensure these services are commissioned and run.

We would like to see a duty to co-operate written into the franchise, and in agreements between DfT/ central government and WEP (or any replacement local body) and Network Rail.

It is important that the new franchise is financed in such a way as to facilitate the introduction of new services during the franchise, avoiding the problems under previous cap-and-collar arrangements (where new services had to generate four or five times their costs to be viable).

We value good local governance and support devolution of commissioning and control, looking at the model of Merseyrail as an example of what we would like to see in the West of England.

1.2 Bedminster and Parson Street

1.2.1 Retention of improvements in May 2014 timetable

We would like to record our thanks to Bristol City Council and First Great Western for the improvements to the service to Bedminster and Parson Street in the May 2014 timetable.

As an absolute minimum we request these should be retained in the new franchise extension:

- the 05:12 ex-Taunton early bird train now stopping at 06:13 at Parson St and at 06:16 at Bedminster; and
- the northbound evening gap train (19:10 ex-Weston-super-Mare now stopping at 19:34 at Parson St and at 19:37 at Bedminster);

together with:

1.2.2 Further improvements to services to Bedminster and Parson Street

As well as the retention of the above services, we wish to see the following two further semi-fast trains which should also stop at Bedminster and Parson Street. WEP has already asked for these to be provided and we believe that these stops could be added with no further disruption to the service pattern:

- the 09:45 from Weston-super-Mare; and
- the 16:07 from Taunton.

Ultimately the goal in the Joint Local Transport Plan 2006 of a half-hour service should be attained for these stations during the five year course of the franchise.

The following additional services would be necessary (in both directions) to provide an adequate service at evenings and weekends: 7 more on Monday to Friday evenings, 8 more on Saturday evenings, and 2 more on Sunday evenings.

In theory, these changes should not cost any extra money, as the additional services to Bedminster and Parson Street could be provided by stopping existing trains which currently run through those stations non-stop. If, however, additional trains were required, it is believed that the extra cost would be in the region £21,500 p.a. (based on the recent Severn Beach Line subsidy per service).

There needs to be a balancing of northbound and southbound stopping trains. More direct trains run from south to north Bristol than in the opposite direction, where changes at Temple Meads are often required.

The timing of connections is currently poor, meaning that passengers who wish to travel from south to north Bristol to stations on the Severn Beach line have impossibly short connection times or (more often) face a long wait. For example, the 19:37 from Bedminster arrives at Bristol Temple Meads seven minutes after the Severn Beach line train leaves, so passengers must wait until 20:34. Although we recognise this situation will improve with the proposed cross-Bristol trains as part of the MetroWest project, we would like to see better connection times and more trains linking the south and north of Bristol before 2019.

We would also request that the current through service from London Paddington to Taunton should be retained and that this should continue to stop at the local stations between Bristol Temple Meads and Taunton, namely Nailsea and Backwell, Yatton, Worle and Weston-super-Mare. This could either be achieved by electrification through to Taunton or the provision of bimodal trains.

1.3 Severn Beach line services

We would like to see a series of changes to improve the service frequency over the next five years.

1.3.1 The restoration of services to St Andrew's Road and Sea Mills cut in May 2014 timetable in the next timetable (assumed to be May 2015)

We note that from Monday 19 May 2014, the trains arriving at Severn Beach at 11:52, 15:52 and 22:51 and departing Severn Beach at 09:56 and 13:56 no longer stop at St Andrews Road on request. Moreover, the 07:03 from Bristol Temple Meads no longer stops at Sea Mills.

We are unhappy that these stops have been withdrawn without consultation with passengers, particularly since there are increasing numbers of passengers using the train to access work along Severnside on a limited number of trains (since most do not go further than Avonmouth). Since this area is earmarked for considerable industrial development and some employers are already attempting to encourage travel to work by train, we ask that the request stops to St Andrews Road which have been withdrawn in these five weekday trains should be restored in the new timetable and that the service to Sea Mills should also be restored.

As the reliability of the Severn Beach line (97.5%) is already above the national average (92–96%) we do not see the necessity for cutting any services on this highly successful line, which has achieved a tripling of passenger numbers since the 2008 introduction of a second train subsidised by Bristol City Council and now taken into the franchise as of October 2013.

We find the operators' simultaneous claims that few passengers use these request stops whilst stating they will save time is disingenuous as if indeed the request stops are not being used there would be no time penalty.

1.3.2 The extension of some services from Avonmouth to Severn Beach to provide a peak commuter service to Severn Beach station hourly (instead of every two hours)

Trains should also be extended to Severn Beach, particularly in the evenings, to serve the expanding warehouses around St Andrews Road and demand at shift change times.

We request that the 08.03 from Temple Meads and either the 16.03 or 16.35 from Temple Meads run through to Severn Beach instead of turning back at Avonmouth. This would give an hourly peak service to Severn Beach as an interim to providing a half-hour service as envisaged in the Joint Local Transport Plan 2006.

We note that there have been numerous occasions when trains scheduled to run through to Severn Beach have been turned back because of signalling problems. We would request that the timetabling be adjusted to build in more contingency time (and avoid a just-in-time approach), without reduction in the service frequency.

1.3.3 Plugging the final large gaps in the evening timetable

There remains a significant gap in the evening timetable:

- 93 minutes (109 on Saturday) between the arrivals at Bristol Temple Meads at 20:34 (from Avonmouth) (20:26 from Severn Beach on Saturday) and 22:07 (22:09 on Saturday) (from Severn Beach).

The previous gap in evening services from Bristol Temple Meads to Avonmouth or Severn Beach was filled to create an approximately hourly service, but the timetable in the opposite direction remains irregular.

Passengers report this causes them significant problems due to the inability to make journeys at convenient times. One passenger recently reported having to extend (and pay for) extra childcare; others have reported having to use taxis.

A later last train from Temple Meads to Severn Beach (currently, the last train leaves at 22:16) would enable people to use the train to return home after an evening out in the city.

1.3.4 Half-hourly services on the Severn Beach line

In 2012, a half-hourly service between Bristol Temple Meads and Avonmouth between 06:00 and midnight was costed for Bristol City Council by officers at £90,000 p.a. Taking into account the effect of previous service improvements on passenger numbers, we do not believe that such additional costs should be met by the local authorities, since the operator should be able to cover most of their costs through additional revenue, particularly if the line is promoted more effectively.

Although such a half-hourly service is intended to be provided by MetroWest, this is not until Phase 1 is delivered in 2019. We believe this could and should be provided with immediate effect, subject to timetabling issues, and should therefore be authorised by DfT.

Passengers and campaigners believe that a regular clockface half-hourly service would enable more people to use the train and create a further modal shift from road transport, as has been seen since the service was increased in 2008. The Severn Beach line's service is less than many lines that have smaller numbers of users.

1.3.5 Direct services from Bristol Parkway (via Filton Abbey Wood) to Bath Spa

The daily direct services from Bristol Parkway to Bath Spa that avoid Bristol Temple Meads should stop at Stapleton Road and Lawrence Hill, providing stops at these interchange stations in central Bristol.

1.4 A review of the timetable in order to achieve these improvements, and to enable better connections to other suburban Bristol stations

Passengers would like to see an obligation for the franchisee to work with Network Rail to review the local timetable in order to achieve these improvements to services and better connections.

1.5 Regional services

1.5 1 Additional services

The franchisee should consider the following additional services:

- Bristol to Oxford.
- Additional services on busiest parts of Cardiff to Portsmouth route (without splitting it at Bristol, as previously suggested).
- More direct services from South Wales to Bristol. We would support SEWTA's proposal for an Ebbw Vale to Bristol Parkway service, via Newport.

1.5 2 Heart of Wessex Line

We support the Heart of Wessex Rail Partnership's proposals for hourly services from Bristol to Weymouth.

1.5 3 TransWilts line

We support retention of the current enhanced service.

1.6 Intercity services

We welcome the additional trains proposed between Bristol Temple Meads and London Paddington, and the increased number of trains that will connect Bristol Temple Meads and Bristol Parkway. These will enable better connections between intercity, regional and local services, faster services to London and more journey options.

We are concerned at the potential impact of the loss of one service per hour between Bristol Parkway and South Wales in the proposed intercity services. While passengers will be able to travel to South Wales by changing at Filton Abbey Wood or Bristol Temple Meads the service from here is already busy and is slower. Consideration needs to be given to ensuring that there are adequate services to make these journeys and that connection times are not problematic when changing trains at these stations.

We note that some local stations are served by intercity services in order to increase the number of trains stopping there at peak times when local services are insufficient due to lack of rolling stock. We would urge the franchisee to continue these valuable services as they provide good connectivity to the local residents to London and beyond.

The franchisee must ensure that electrification does not lead to a reduction in the number of direct trains between London Paddington and Weston-super-Mare and Taunton, as previously proposed. We support the current proposal of an hourly service on this route.

We note that bi-mode or electric IEP trains could be used to stop at local stations off-peak or to form additional services onto local stations. For example, a late evening London-Cheltenham train could form an additional late stopping service from Cheltenham to Bristol after it reaches its destination before it returns to the new depot at Stoke Gifford. Such services would maximise resources and provide extra local services, potentially adding extra earlier or later services.

2 Ticketing, fare collection and revenue protection

A comparison of passenger footfall and ticket sales in late 2012 showed that approximately £4,000 per day is being lost in the Bristol city region through inadequate revenue protection. We do not wish the reduced ticket revenue to be interpreted as lower use.

Together with CCTV, there should be a rolling programme to provide ticket machines at all local stations, and the franchisee must provide revenue protection staff who conduct regular inspections on stations. The priorities are the busiest stations: Redland, Montpelier, Oldfield Park, Stapleton Road and, in particular, Clifton Down. The latter needs re-development of facilities including a staffed ticket office. It is important to note that Clifton Down has more passengers than Keynsham, many of whom travel longer distances on the rail network.

We also want the franchisee to be obliged to maintain ticket offices at Weston-super-Mare and Bradford-on-Avon, and at peak times at Filton Abbey Wood.

We would like the franchisee to provide new portable ticket machines for the guards on the trains, as the machines currently used are often not functioning.

Ticket purchasing and fare collection should be made easier by establishing carnets, smart cards and season tickets (including for part-time workers) and enabling payment by direct debit and printing tickets at home. The present implementation of smart-card ticketing in Bristol buses should be integrated with local rail. We would like the franchisee to be obliged to explore different forms of ticketing. This should mean that fares can stay the same or be lowered in cases of inflated ticket pricing.

We would like fares to be reduced to promote sustainable travel and encourage modal shift from the private car.

3 Rolling stock and overcrowding

Great Western services suffer high levels of overcrowding in comparison to services elsewhere. The franchisee must reduce and move to eliminate overcrowding and must have the freedom to provide more carriages without having to gain DfT permission. The maximum load per train should be specified, including maximum times for which passengers should be expected to stand.

3.1 Appropriate rolling stock

There must be adequate rolling stock, of appropriate quality. There should be a move towards lighter and more fuel-efficient rolling stock during the course of the franchise, enabling faster acceleration between stations, more efficient running, and reduced energy consumption.

We would like to see rolling stock cascaded to Bristol from the electrification of Thames valley services.

In general, rolling stock changes should maximise the ability to carry 'conventional cycles' as well as folding cycles to make mixed-mode travel an effective commuting option.

3.2 Electrification

We welcome the listing of local electrification as a priced option, but would like to see this funded by DfT as part of a rolling programme of electrification of local and regional services.

We would like to see local electrification at the earliest opportunity, with work commencing at least within the life of the franchise. If this is done together with the current electrification programme it would be a third cheaper. As well as Filton Bank, we would like to see electrification from Bristol Temple Meads to Yate, Weston-super-Mare and Taunton, on the Severn Beach line and Henbury Loop.

As well as facilitating fast, reliable and efficient services, local electrification could also enable cost reductions and electric freight services. Passenger services could benefit from the cascade of current rolling stock when those on Thameslink services are replaced. The West of England Partnership have had indications from DfT that Network Rail's Route Asset Management Plan fund (RAMP) may be available to extend electrification. We would support this.

4 Station improvements

As a minimum, the franchisee should be obliged to provide adequate, safe and welcoming station facilities with good signage. Action must be taken to improved accessibility and the ability to interchange with other modes of transport. We would ask for a good level of policing on services late at night and in remote or inner-city areas.

To achieve this, partnership working is required with Severnside Community Rail Partnership, TravelWest, Network Rail, and First Great Western, as well as local stakeholders. As noted above, there should be a duty to cooperate.

4.1 Provision of adequate station facilities

Provision of waiting areas in many stations currently reflects passenger numbers in the mid-1990s and is wholly inadequate. Passenger numbers have more than doubled on all local routes and stations since then, and tripled on the Severn Beach line.

The waiting area should be able to accommodate at least 75% of passengers of passengers joining the heaviest loaded train of the day. This is needed at most local stations but is a particular problem at Yate, Clifton Down, Montpellier, Stapleton Road, Worle, Nailsea, and Oldfield Park.

Cycle provision should be increased at all stations, starting at those with greatest passenger numbers, such Redland, Montpellier, Oldfield Park, Stapleton Road, Clifton Down, Filton Abbey Wood and Temple Meads. Cycle lockers should be provided at more isolated stations such as Filton Abbey Wood and Stapleton Road.

4.2 Improvements to station environments

We note that participants in the recent Severnside Community Rail Partnership study talked of “hidden stations”. Access to some local stations is unwelcoming.

At Shirehampton, access is along a narrow, twisting alley between tall hedges and corrugated iron walls, which prevents users from seeing any dangers in front and behind (described by one local resident as a “mugger's paradise”); at Redland passengers have to walk through the former station yard which is labelled “private”.

Station entrances need to be attractive and well presented, encouraging use and not making users feel isolated or at risk of danger.

Community Rail Partnerships should be given more powers and additional funding to make stations more visible and to deal with such issues. The franchisee should be obliged to work with the Severnside and other Partnerships to ensure that access is taken to resolve poor station environments and facilities such as those noted above during the course of the franchise. Many of the actions needed are relatively cheap and straight-forward.

4.3 CCTV

We welcome the introduction of CCTV at many stations and would like to see this continue to be rolled out to Bedminster, Parson Street, Patchway, Yate, Weston Milton, Oldfield Park and Keynsham and to the remaining stations on the Severn Beach Line. We see this as important since it would enable further improvements to stations, particularly the installation of ticket machines.

4.4 Ticket offices

Severnside Community Rail Partnership's study found that many potential passengers are uncertain about how to buy a ticket. Many local stations could benefit from having retail units. We see the Merseyrail Mtogo shops that also serve as ticket sellers as a good model. The presence of retail outlets would also provide a sense of security to passengers. We would urge that the ticket offices at Weston-super-Mare and Bradford-on-Avon be safeguarded for their invaluable service to the local community and reassurance to travellers. We would also ask that the franchisee should consider opening a ticket office modelled on Mtogo shops at Clifton Down, in particular, as the footfall here is so high. In other locations we would like to see ticket machines to enable passengers to buy their tickets before travelling, which would reduce non-collection of fares.

The franchisee should be obliged to consult Community Rail Partnerships and other stakeholders on this issue.

4.5 Accessibility

Many stations suffer from poor accessibility for people with limited mobility and for children in buggies, notably Parson Street, Lawrence Hill, Stapleton Road (once four-tracking of Filton Bank is in place), Patchway, Nailsea and Backwell, Keynsham and Pilning.

As a minimum, the franchisee (and Community Rail Partnerships where they exist) should be required to conduct an accessibility audit of all local stations and produce an action

plan to resolve issues. There should be an expectation that all these stations should be accessible by the end of the five-year franchise.

The franchisee should be obliged to work with stakeholders and Community Rail Partnerships (where they exist) on this and other issues. The CRPs and the franchisee could be jointly responsible for ensuring accessibility of stations. CRPs should be better funded by the franchisee, central government and others to carry out this and other work in an expanded role.

Funding for improved accessibility should come from central government (Access for All and other funding streams), the franchisee, Network Rail and local authorities, and be specifically allocated for this purpose. Funding should not be removed by central government or others without the consent of local stakeholders. This should prevent the cancellation of work, as has happened recently at Nailsea and Backwell, where emergency work by Network Rail caused delays so that funding was unexpectedly withdrawn.

4.6 Signs and provision of information to facilitate journeys, modal integration and access at all local stations throughout the region:

There should be a programme of replacing defaced and damaged signs. The franchisee should be obliged to work with bus operators and the community to ensure each station is well signed from major and adjacent roads to all points of access.

We note that many Passenger Transport Executives have installed large signs outside stations on adjacent roads. We see this as an important way to publicise the presence of stations. The franchisee could work with local authorities to promote and sign-post bus-rail interchanges and new opportunities for travel.

Signs at stations should clearly guide passengers to nearby bus services and amenities. Signs at bus stops or train stations should say where passengers might travel to: for example, at Stapleton Road station, "alight here for buses to Fishponds and Staple Hill".

Train timetables should also be placed at the entrance to stations or on nearby roads to encourage passing trade. For example, timetables on the pavement on Lawrence Hill road bridge would be next to bus stops and would mean potential passengers would avoid walking down steps to read the timetable which is currently posted only on the station platform. Elsewhere, timetables could also be placed on the junction of Station Road and Gloucester Road, and at Cromwell Road, for Montpelier station; and on Whiteladies Road for Clifton Down station.

Station signage should be the joint responsibility of the franchisee together with strengthened Community Rail Partnerships, working with the local authority and (where appropriate) bus companies.

4.7 Bus–rail interchange

It is worth noting that links between west and east Bristol are poor, particularly between the north west and north east (including South Gloucestershire). We therefore ask for the rail and bus timetables to be synchronised across the MetroWest area and that the timetables of bus and rail are adequately advertised at the following stations:

4.7.1 Filton Abbey Wood

Henbury Loop trains could link with buses to east Bristol, particularly UWE and Emersons Green Science Park. We also ask that the buses currently passing close to Filton Abbey Wood station should call in to the station itself for easy access. The franchisee should proactively work with the local authorities and bus companies to link the station with nearby Filton Avenue.

4.7.2 Lawrence Hill

This station should be promoted as a link with Kingswood and east Bristol. We ask that the bus and rail timetables should be displayed at street level as well as on the station platform.

4.7.3 Stapleton Road

This station should be promoted as a link with Fishponds and north-east Bristol. Bus stops should be repositioned to be closer to the station, where rail replacement services currently stop.

4.7.4 Bristol Parkway

This station should be developed further as a bus-rail interchange, in view of the planned fourth platform.

4.7.5 Bristol Temple Meads

As part of the redevelopment of Temple Meads Enterprise Zone we would like to see buses (including BRT and local and country services through South Bristol) re-routed via Friary and Temple Back East. We would like to see an obligation on the franchisee, Network Rail and the local authority to work together on this and are concerned that there seems to be little co-ordination and a lack of integrated transport planning on this issue.

4.7.6 Bedminster and Parson Street:

Interchange with local bus services at these stations should be developed, especially in view of the recent improvements to the timetable. This should include remodelling of the Parson Street road junction to facilitate access as well as the provision of disabled access to Parson Street station (see below).

4.7. 7 Keynsham

Bus–rail interchange should be promoted, in view of the new BANES offices here and its strategic position between Bath and Bristol.

4.7.8 North Filton

The proposed station on the Henbury Loop has considerable potential for park and ride. The site is situated next to new developments at Filton Airfield and Cribbs Causeway, existing local industry and the Stroud and South Gloucestershire (SGS) Filton College campus. There are numerous existing local and regional buses that run along the neighbouring A38, and new local bus services are proposed to serve the new development. Concerns have been expressed about the space taken by a park and ride facility, but space may be saved by building upwards, as at Bristol Parkway.

4.7.9 Cam and Dursley; Yate; Highbridge and Burnham; Bridgwater; Yatton

These stations should also be promoted as bus-rail interchange stations and should be marked on bus route maps.

4.7.10 Other Park and Ride Schemes

There must be a requirement for the concession holder to work with local authorities on the development of the plans for a rail Park and Ride station at Portway on the Severn Beach line and any subsequently developed sites, and an obligation to stop trains there.

The franchisee should work with local authorities to carry out development work for a site at Bathampton, where current regional trains could pull into the existing siding, and study the potential for further sites at Flax Bourton (Long Ashton) and in North Bristol at Yate or Winterbourne.

4.8 New stations

In view of the numerous developments identified in the answer to question two, we would like to see the reopening of stations. This process should begin during the course of the franchise. New stations should include but not be limited to:

4.8.1 Horfield & Lockleaze and Ashley Hill stations on Filton Bank.

4.8.2 Henbury and North Filton stations on the Henbury Loop.

4.8.3 Portishead, Pill and Ashton Gate stations on the Portishead line.

4.8.4 Park and Ride stations: Portbury on the Severn Beach line, **Winterbourne** and **Flax Bourton** for Bristol Airport.

4.8.5 St Anne's Park station on the line to Bath.

4.8.6 Corsham, Chipping Sodbury, Charfield and Saltford in the Bristol Travel to Work Area.

4.8.7 We would also request that the reopening of **Chittening, Hallen and Charlton Halt** be considered in view of the considerable developments planned at Filton Airfield and Cribbs Causeway.

There must be an obligation to run trains on any new passenger lines and stop at any new stations completed during the term of the franchise.

5 Infrastructure

We support the reopening of the Henbury line as a loop not a spur, and the necessary infrastructure at Avonmouth to enable the smooth running of passenger and freight services. We request that as part of the Henbury Loop plans that the single track sections of the Severn Beach line be redoubled as concerns about reliability and punctuality have resulted in the cutting of services to St Andrews Road and Sea Mills and would have a detrimental effect on the viability of the Henbury Loop service.

We would like to see a review of the resilience of existing infrastructure and the needs of the railway in view of climate change, electrification, the seven-day railway, expansion of ports and increasing passenger numbers. This should include diversionary routes, such as the Henbury Loop, which is also a significant freight line, and options for new routes to Devon and Cornwall to plan for further closures at Dawlish.

We believe that central government should be funding the reopening of the Henbury Loop to passengers, in view of its importance as a freight line and diversionary route as an alternative to Filton Bank during engineering works. This should occur sooner than the delivery date for MetroWest Phase 2 of 2021 onwards, which local authorities are planning.

6 Governance

We ask for a democratically controlled local transport body, modelled on Merseytravel.

7 Tram trains – future proofing

If the DfT's electrification study of local services is approved, we would like to see tram trains serve local routes, providing improved reliability and performance.

It is vital to ensure that provision is made to enable connections with any future street tram running at Bristol Temple Meads and Bedminster stations.

Please also consider the following responses to the consultation questions, in addition to the comments above:

Specific responses to DfT consultation questions

- 1. Respondents are encouraged to consider whether any additional objectives should be reflected in the franchise specification for the 5 year period from September 2015**

We give qualified support to the objectives proposed by DfT for this franchise extension. We are pleased with the emphasis on improving the passenger experience and reliability, increasing capacity and the links between provision of rail services and economic growth. We particularly welcome the emphasis on working with Community Rail Partnerships and local stakeholders, and the recognition that capacity is “the main challenge to be addressed” for local services.

We see the need to cater for local demand (both latent and existing) and to encourage modal shift to rail as further key objectives, which are implied in the consultation document.

Although we welcome the inclusion of the Henbury Loop, Portishead and other elements of MetroWest Phase 1 and 2, and the possibility of local electrification as priced options, we are concerned at the lack of any specific service objectives, particularly specific service improvements.

As noted above, objectives for the Greater Bristol Travel to Work Area should include an (at least) 30-minute frequency of specifically marketed ‘MetroWest’ services within the city region, extending at least to Severn Tunnel Junction, Yate, Chippenham, Frome, Westbury, Weston-super-Mare, and Avonmouth. The service should be half-hourly from 0600 to 2400, Monday to Saturday. Services should be at least hourly on Sundays and preferably half-hourly. Associated with this, there should be new stations and adequate rolling stock, as identified above.

Nothing in the franchise should obstruct these objectives, and everything should facilitate it.

- 2. Respondents are encouraged to consider and identify any specific local factors that they believe might influence the future level of passenger demand, which should be reflected in the specification for the new franchise.**

– Suppressed Demand released by Greater Bristol Metro services:

Network Rail predicted that passenger numbers in the Greater Bristol area would rise by 41% in the ten years from 2009. Despite the recession, it appears that this figure has already been exceeded even on the existing inadequate services. Travel Watch South West estimates that there will be a capacity gap of approximately one third based on Network Rail's current predictions.

New rail services are required to meet existing and suppressed demand. If new services run, the demand is there and they will be used. Bristol City Council's investment in the Severn Beach line has produced the second highest growth of any branch line in the country – an increase of 90% between 2007/8 and 2010/11. Passenger numbers on the Severn Beach line have now reached more than one million per annum, three times the ridership at the introduction of the enhanced service in 2008. This shows the level of

suppressed demand. Large passenger increases are to be expected over the franchise period and should be planned for.

– Road congestion in the Greater Bristol area:

It has been estimated by the West of England Partnership that the economic costs of road congestion were £350 million in 2005, rising to £600 million in 2020 if significant action is not taken. Rail journeys are considerably quicker than similar journeys by road and the carbon footprint is much smaller by comparison.

– Economic and residential developments:

As the West of England Partnership notes, many residential and economic developments are planned that will increase the demand and need for greater rail capacity. Many of these will be adjacent to existing railway lines.

These include:

- North Yate.
- The Cribbs Patchway New Neighbourhood Scheme (CPNN) in Charlton Hayes and Filton airfield (next to the Henbury Loop station sites of North Filton and Henbury).
- Cheswick, the new Bristol Rovers stadium, and the expansion of the University of the West of England and Ministry of Defence at Filton Abbey Wood.
- Harry Stoke near Bristol Parkway.
- The Avonmouth and Severnside enterprise area adjacent to the Severn Beach line and Henbury Loop.
- The new Southmead Hospital (and its proximity to a potential Horfield and Lockleaze station at the Constable Road/gasworks site or at Bonnington Walk).
- Bath enterprise area.
- Weston-super-Mare enterprise area.
- Filton enterprise area.
- Bristol Temple Meads enterprise area.

The development of Filton airfield alone will involve building 5,700 homes, 50 hectares of employment land, and 35,000 square metres of retail space, next to the Henbury Loop.

We have serious concerns that, in waiting for developer contributions to fund rail improvements, particularly work on the Henbury Loop, new residents will become used to travelling by private car and those concerned with travel planning will then have to work hard to change existing behaviour. To avoid this, we want to see immediate funding of rail improvements, particularly the Henbury Loop, to enable work to start before the development is complete and therefore to provide prospective residents with positive transport choices from the start. If not funded by central government, this could be in the form of a loan from central to local government or by using the expected increase in council tax receipts (“the New Homes Bonus”).

– Existing capacity gap:

Travel Watch South West estimates that there will be a capacity gap of approximately one third based on Network Rail's current predictions. This will make it difficult for local authorities to plan for sustainable future economic and population growth.

- Bristol as a Cycling City:

We would like to see increased and secure bicycle parking at all stations. All trains should have sufficient provision for the carriage of cycles.

– Need for Integrated Ticketing:

As is the case with ITA authorities elsewhere, the Greater Bristol area needs a fully interchangeable ticketing system enabling transfer between rail, bus and ferry on one ticket.

- 3. Respondents are encouraged to highlight interfaces with any other schemes that are likely to be delivered during the next five years, which the operator may need to consider.**

As well as the main body of our response, see also answer to question 2.

As part of the redevelopment of Temple Meads Enterprise Zone, we would like to see buses (including BRT and local and country services through south Bristol) re-routed via Friary and Temple Back East. We would like to see an obligation on the franchisee, Network Rail and the local authority to work together on this and are concerned that there seems to be little coordination and a lack of integrated transport planning on this issue.

It is also vital to ensure that provision is made to enable connections with any future street tram running at Bristol Temple Meads.

Electrification of the Great Western main line provides the opportunity to electrify other local lines (to Weston-super-Mare/Taunton, to Yate, the Severn Beach line, the Henbury Loop and the Portishead line), to enable electric local services. Should local electrification be carried out, the franchisee should be able to obtain appropriate and additional rolling stock without the need for authorisation from DfT.

- 4. Respondents are invited to identify any changes or reorganisation to the routes served by the Great Western franchise that they would recommend; and to explain their rationale**

See also the main body of our response.

With electrification and in view of the proposed reduction in the number of Inter-city trains linking South Wales and Bristol there may be a case for extra services using electric traction. Additionally a rolling programme of electrification would enable new electric services to a variety of destinations.

- 5. Respondents who wish to promote service changes should clearly identify these in their response to this consultation, as well as any supporting business case or value for money (VfM) analysis.**

See also the main body of our response.

While we agree with the need to have value for money, we have serious concerns about the use of narrow and over-simplified numerical measures such as Cost-Benefit Ratios to guide investment. “Value for money” must incorporate long-term benefit for society and the environment. Such benefit – ranging from human well-being, to network contingency

robustness, to climate change mitigation – is wide-ranging, and so cannot be reduced to a mathematical formula or single figure. We believe that the variety of positive outcomes that would result means further investment in the local rail network is beneficial.

6. Respondents are encouraged to bring to our attention research, evidence or publications which they believe should be considered in the development of the franchise specification.

- a) Severnside Community Rail Partnership's annual reports and passenger growth figures for 2014.
- b) Rail documents and research from the previous South West Regional Development Agency and South West Regional Assembly.
- c) Severnside Community Rail Partnership Progress Report 2012.
- d) West of England Annual Rail Survey Report 2011.
- e) TravelWatch South West 'Greater Western, Lesser Western' report September 2011.
- f) The previous Avon County Council Rapid Transit Plans.
- g) Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance document – "Growing Bristol's Railways".
- h) Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways previous submission to the franchise consultation, 2012.
- i) Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance's previous submission to the franchise consultation, 2012.
- j) Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways leaflet 'Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FOSBR)'s suggestions for the new Greater Western franchise' November 2011.
- k) Network Rail Route Utilisation Strategy for Great Western region.
- l) Network Rail Route Regional Urban Market Study 2013.
- m) Network Rail Route Long Distance Market Study 2013.

7. Respondents are invited to propose any changes to the current service pattern which they feel should be considered and to explain their rationale, for example by identifying specific local factors which might influence the future level of passenger demand which they consider should be reflected in a revised specification.

See the main body of our response above, in Section 1

8. Respondents are invited to say whether they value a faster headline journey time, or more intermediate stops, on a particular journey that they make (and to identify that journey).

See the main body of our response above. In general we support an improved local service with a mix of intercity, semi-fast and local trains, but not at the expense of local services.

We wish to express our opposition to the loss of stops at St Andrews Road and Sea Mills on the Severn Beach line and our support for their reinstatement. We note that cutting these stops has had no impact on journey times.

We would draw a distinction between running new fast services with stops omitted (which we could potentially support on regular services such as Cardiff to Bristol) and the removal of stops, particularly when services are insufficiently regular, which we cannot support.

9. Should any elements of the indicative modelled intercity service pattern be mandated, and can it be improved? What should the priority be for intercity services where IEP trains are not planned to operate?

We continue to maintain that local services should be provided and not be sacrificed for gains in the intercity service.

We want to see the continuation of the current number of direct train services from London Paddington to Weston-super-Mare and Taunton, which provide important through links between Weston-super-Mare and Bath, as well as intermediate stations.

10. What do you feel the Great Western operator's priorities on the suburban network should be once it is electrified in 2016 e.g. for additional higher capacity, fast commuter services, or improved journey times?

We see no reason why these aspirations should be mutually exclusive and certainly we believe there is no reason to reduce the number of stops on the suburban network, as current journey times by rail are far superior to those by car or bus, owing to the current gridlock experienced in Greater Bristol at peak commuter times..

11. After the electrification to Newbury, expected in 2016, would passengers' needs be best served by a diesel service from Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury to Newbury connecting into a fast service to London Paddington, or a diesel stopping service from Bedwyn to Reading connecting to a fast service from Reading to London Paddington, or other options? The former would give faster journey times to London but add a change at Newbury for passengers to Reading.

Bimodal trains (as for the London Paddington to Taunton service) would be preferable to a need to change trains.

12. Respondents are invited to suggest ways in which Community Rail Partnerships could deliver more of the beneficial outcomes for passengers achieved so far.

Community Rail Partnerships should be given more powers and additional funding to publicise services and make further environmental improvements to stations. There should also be an obligation on the franchisee to consult with CRPs on timetable changes and to allow CRPs to make representations about service improvements. CRPs should also be obliged to meet with passengers and have passengers represented on their boards.

See section 4 above, in particular 4.2, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6.

13. While maintaining end-to-end service frequency, could the needs of passengers be better met by providing the operator with some flexibility over calling patterns on branch lines?

We think the current calling pattern on branch lines should be specified as a minimum requirement, with the operator having flexibility to introduce further services in consultation with local stakeholders.

14. Respondents are asked to suggest what mitigating actions and steps the GW operator should be expected to take to meet the needs of its passengers both during the planned disruption to the GW franchise as a result of planned upgrade works and when 'force majeure' events, such as extreme weather, impact the network.

There should be an obligation on the franchisee to consult with passengers, Community Rail Partnerships and other stakeholders on timetable changes and planned disruption. See also section 5 of the main body of our response.

15. Where the provision of temporary, alternative service is unavoidable, respondents are invited to suggest what alternative provisions they would prefer the GW operator to put in place.

For long distance journeys, train services should be diverted via alternative routes rather than being partially replaced by buses. The franchisee should also arrange for tickets to be valid with other train operators. For local services, buses and/or taxis should be provided. Limited stops introduced on diverted long distance trains could supplement some displaced heavily loaded local stops.

16. Respondents are encouraged to consider what steps the GW operator should be expected to take when reacting to changes in passenger demand, and what targets for capacity should be set.

All targets for capacity and passenger growth have been exceeded in recent years and the recent trends should be expected to continue as urban traffic congestion worsens and passenger numbers increase.

Initially the franchisee must reduce and move to eliminate overcrowding. The franchisee should negotiate with local authorities within the area and plan to increase capacity within the Greater Bristol area. Additional rolling stock must be specified in the franchise and the franchisee must have the power to obtain this.

Targets for growth should be set in line with Travel Watch South West's estimate that there will be a capacity gap of approximately one third based on Network Rail's current predictions.

Rolling stock from Thameslink or north west England services should be cascaded to Greater Bristol, and any new rolling stock orders should provide a higher capacity than initially required.

The franchisee must also have the freedom to provide service improvements without seeking DfT permission and without financial penalty (as has happened previously under the cap-and-collar arrangements).

17. Respondents are invited to highlight if there are specific stations or services where they feel particular attention should be paid to reliability or punctuality.

There are persistent, albeit usually minor, problems with punctuality on services from Cardiff to Taunton and from Taunton and Weston-super-Mare to Yate and Gloucester. These may be due to capacity constraints in and around the Severn Tunnel, Filton Bank, Gloucester and Cheltenham, from Worle Junction to Weston, and south of Temple Meads

station. We welcome the area resignalling and quadrupling of Filton Bank, and would like to see work undertaken to improve capacity in these other areas as a priority.

18. Are there any areas of the GW franchise where you feel cost savings could be made?

See the main body of our response above.

Electrification with newer and more efficient rolling stock would result in lower running costs. The franchise's trains are already by far the oldest main line fleet in the country, as noted by TravelWatch SouthWest.

Revenue protection is a major problem, particularly on the Severn Beach line. Investment in more revenue protection staff and ticket machines, together with new forms of ticketing, including carnets, and more regular services would make travel more convenient, leading to increased passenger numbers and economies of scale.

19. Respondents are encouraged to consider which locations merit consideration for future improvement under these schemes.

See the main body of our response above: Section 1 for service improvements and Section 4 for station improvements.

20. Respondents are encouraged to consider how best to communicate information with passengers across the franchise and how best to keep passengers informed during times of disruption.

We would like to see CCTV and information points rolled out to local stations in the Bristol Travel to work region. This would enable further improvements to stations, particularly the installation of ticket machines.

21. Rail Executive is considering what the appropriate approach for monitoring and improving service quality in the new franchise would be. Respondents are invited to say what matters most to them (for example, cleanliness of trains and stations, or the helpfulness of staff) in terms of the service quality they receive.

We do not consider that these are mutually exclusive alternatives. We would like the Rail Executive to consider that a variety of factors influence perceptions of quality, including service frequency, welcoming station environments and ticket price.

22. Please indicate if there are any additional areas that you think Rail Executive should consider consulting on and that have not already been addressed during stakeholder engagement.

We hope we have been comprehensive in our response in the main body of this text!

Drafted by: Rob Dixon, Chair of TfGB Rail Group and FOSBR member
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