

Great Western Rail Franchise Consultation response by:

Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance.

We are not in favour of splitting the franchise. This would risk creating a two tier railway, favouring services into Wales and Bristol and separating Devon and Cornwall which is already lacking in infrastructure investment. We would like to remind the Department for Transport that plans for splitting the franchise have little to no support within the region and we believe that it would not create the benefits that the department outlined in the consultation document. It should also be noted that previous franchises were amalgamated to form the present one in order to promote efficiency and integration. On balance this has been successful to a degree. We see no reason that this should be changed back.

We notice that while the Great Western Main Line between London and Swindon and the South Wales Main Line between Swindon and Cardiff is to be electrified, no regional or local routes are to receive any increased benefit in the South West Region because of the curtailment of the electrification.

We note too that as a result of failure (by either Network Rail or the Local Authority) to invest a modest amount in a raised footbridge to accommodate electrification, any prospect of promoting Pilning is being lost. This station could offer residents of surrounding villages, many of which have a sporadic bus service, with the chance to travel to Bristol. There is also the possibility of a rail Park & Ride service there, for commuters into Bristol, and to Newport and Cardiff.

We are disappointed with the electrification between Chippenham and Bristol Temple Meads, along with Bristol Temple Meads to Bristol Parkway being shelved. While the Department for Transport believes that the new Hitachi Class 800 bi-mode units would cut emissions by operating under the wires between Paddington and Newbury and Paddington to Wotton Bassett Junction, these units are heavy because of the nature of the equipment fitted to the units. Therefore, we believe that electrification remains as the best way to cut carbon emissions from the route, along with spot electrification at key points including hills where emissions will be higher.

We note that this was probably decided by the use of Benefit-Cost Ratio, which we believe to be a totally not fit for purpose and prejudicial way of deciding which areas of the country need investment. We would like the department to start to look at projects that will benefit the social and environmental needs of the region rather than using a funding formula which is always biased against public transport. Furthermore to the issue of funding being awarded, we propose that regional and local services are devolved into Integrated Transport Au-

thorities, similar to the West Midlands ITA and the oversight that they have with regional and local services in the West Midlands area. This would allow regions to have a stronger case for being awarded funding and would allow better use of transport funding to be used for projects in an ITA area. For passengers, the benefits of an ITA include integrated transport in the defined area and allow interoperability with bus services, which many rail passengers move onto to get to their final destination. This will make the introduction of Smart Card technology easier to implement by rolling out region and city based smart cards rather than having stand alone company wide ones as is the case at the moment. The ITSO format should allow cross compatibility with different transport operators and modes if implemented via a Integrated Transport Authority.

We would support the establishment of a West of England ITA, which could cover the area of the West of England Combined Authority as well as North Somerset, with other local authorities such as Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire being given the option of joining the ITA.

We further believe that transport modes should also be fully integrated, with key bus routes linking up with key rail services at rail stations with well located bus stops and passengers aware of where to catch bus routes from the railway stations. Real time info displays for buses should be present on platforms, and rail departure updates available at bus stops or even on approaching buses. This technology is available. This should be done in conjunction with integrated ticketing to ensure a seamless journey from rail to bus.

In addition to the suggestions above, we have a number of suggestions about schemes that have already been costed by either local authorities or the Department for Transport that we would like to see proposed. These are:

- The completion of the MetroWest rail proposal, including the adoption of the full Henbury Loop and the re-opening of the line to Portishead, we would like to see both lines electrified and at minimum have a half hourly service.
- Integrated interurban and regional bus and train timetables to allow for journeys to communities without a rail link to have through ticketing, places such as Wells and Devizes

- Stations at locations such as Ashley Hill, Charfield and the

Portway Park and Ride site.

We also fully endorse the submission by Friends of Bristol Suburban Railways, one of our associated organizations, with more specialist rail observations.

Martin Garrett

on behalf of

Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance

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