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Greater Anglia Franchise Consultation Manager
Department for Transport
5/26 Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DR

via post and email
greateranglia@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Sir

GREATER ANGLIA FRANCHISE CONSULTATION

Stop Stansted Expansion ('SSE') welcomes the opportunity to respond to the above consultation. We represent some 7,500 members and registered supporters including over 150 parish and town councils, residents' groups, national and local environmental groups and other organisations.

While the main focus of our activities is directed at Stansted Airport, one of the most critical local impacts of the airport is on the surface access networks which serve both the airport and the local communities around it. Rail services, particularly those meeting the needs of commuters between Cambridge, intermediate stations and London, are directly affected by the services provided for airport users, the great majority of whom will be infrequent users of the West Anglia route. One of SSE's key objectives is therefore to seek to ensure that any plans to address the needs of airport rail users do not adversely affect the service for local rail users or delay the implementation of much-needed improvements to local rail services.

We are concerned solely with the proposals for the West Anglia route and our comments focus on the proposed base specification in Section 9 of your consultation document ('CD') rather than on the specific questions listed in the CD. We should also preface our comments by expressing disappointment that your consultation does not give sufficient recognition to the fact that the franchise comprises two largely separate railways which were under separate management and control until the start of the present franchise, and are still in practice operated separately. We could have provided a more informed response if you had provided the key information about train loadings, service reliability and performance separately for the Great Eastern and West Anglia routes. With that caveat, our substantive comments on the proposed base specification are as follows.

We are astonished that you are suggesting (CD pages 38-39) that the class 317 units – which are now between 23 and 29 years old, are increasingly unreliable, do not comply with the PRM TSI and are amongst the oldest rolling stock still operating on London commuter services – should be considered fit for life extension for another 15 years. Modern commuter rolling stock has air conditioning, better acceleration and regenerative braking; it is PRM compliant and has toilets which do not discharge directly on to the track. We find it

hard to imagine that a cost effective life extension of the class 317s could incorporate all of these features, and we see no reason why our commuters should be expected to put up with sub-standard travelling conditions for another 15 years. Replacement of these units should therefore be one of the key priorities for the new franchisee and should be included in the base specification.

Our concerns in this area are reinforced by your proposal that the 30 x 4 car Class 379s which are currently on order should be deployed on the Stansted Express ('STEX') rather than being used to modernise commuter services. In response to our previous inquiries (Fol request F0006017) you explained that the business case for additional rolling stock was reviewed only at the whole franchise level and included the cascade of class 321 units to Great Eastern services. You were not able to explain why STEX services had been given priority for the new rolling stock or what the effect on the benefit to cost ratio ('BCR') would have been if they had been allocated to commuter services instead.

There has been a very significant change in market conditions since the business case was assessed. The number of airport passengers arriving at Stansted by train on an average weekday has fallen 25% since 2006 as a result of the decline in the airport's fortunes and the increasing popularity of coach travel amongst airport users. By comparison, the number of rail passengers handled by the local rail stations between Cambridge and Liverpool Street increased by 12% between 2005/06 and 2008/09. There is no reason to believe that these trends are likely to be reversed any time soon.

We therefore suggest that, whatever the original business case may have looked like, the priority now ought to be to deploy the new trains on commuter services rather than STEX services. In any event, unless you have data to the contrary which you have not disclosed, the fall in airport rail passenger numbers has removed the immediate pressure to lengthen STEX trains to 12 cars, which means that a third of the units on order could be used on commuter services under any scenario.

If demand requires the provision of 12 car trains, platforms at many of the stations along the route need to be lengthened, including stations currently served by STEX trains, and power supplies will also need to be strengthened. Although provision is made for this work in Network Rail's business plan for the control period to 2014, we have seen no sign of any preparations on the ground yet. The suggestion (CD page 31) that platform lengthening will have been completed during the first year of the franchise seems optimistic and adds weight to the argument that new rolling stock should be deployed on commuter trains rather than on extending STEX services to 12 cars.

One of the keys to improving reliability and providing a better match between supply and demand is to enhance the capacity of the West Anglia route infrastructure. We would expect this to be needed during the currency of the new franchise but it gets only a passing mention (CD page 34). This may be because the most recent proposals produced by the DfT fall far short of Network Rail's RUS proposals and do not appear to offer any realistic prospect of more frequent services on the route. One of the major bottlenecks on the route is the two track section between Liverpool Street and Bethnal Green and yet, astonishingly, the CD (page 12) describes the route as being four tracks as far as Hackney Downs.

Completion of Crossrail should release platform capacity at Liverpool Street but West Anglia services could only make use of this if some trains were diverted via Stratford with a grade separated junction to provide easy access to Liverpool Street on the Great Eastern lines. Such arrangements might justify continuing to operate Greater Anglia as a single franchise but we see no sign of such imagination in the CD.

Finally, in terms of capacity management, Tottenham Hale – particularly the interchange with the underground – does not have sufficient passenger circulation space to manage a significant increase in passenger numbers. This was recognised as far back as 2001 by the preparatory studies leading up to the 2003 Air Transport White Paper and it is therefore surprising that the CD contains no plans to deal with this problem; it is not even mentioned.

I am copying this letter to Passenger Focus, London TravelWatch and to Sir Alan Haselhurst and Mark Prisk.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter Sanders". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

Peter Sanders
Chairman