



# Proposals for the Great Anglia Direct Award

## Introduction

The Greater Anglia Direct Award follows a very short franchise, which was itself extended. By the date of commencement of the next full franchise in October 2016 a significant time will have elapsed under short-term arrangements. It is imperative that the Direct Award includes mechanisms to unlock much-needed investment, deliver real passenger benefits and provide firm foundations on which the next franchise can build. In short, the Direct Award must be a building block, not merely a stepping stone.

**The priorities which we believe the Direct Award should address are as follows:**

### 1. Improvements to the train fleet

Upgrading the rolling stock is a widely held aspiration and must be the top priority for the Direct Award to address. NPS scores considerably lower than the LSE sector average for many train factors provide clear evidence of low satisfaction with the trains on Greater Anglia.

The long-term future of the fleets obviously needs to be taken into account in any investment decisions but we would suggest that comprehensive refurbishment to achieve a genuine 'face-lift' will be necessary to deliver the levels of improvements required; deep cleaning alone is unlikely to achieve a satisfactory environment, although it remains desirable in its own right. Feedback indicates that the fleets most in need of attention are the 317s, 321s, and the 315s - should any of the latter remain after Crossrail commences and the transfers under devolution are in place.

In addition, with other elements of the fleet approaching the expected life expiry, the Direct Award should incorporate provisions that will facilitate planning for, and implementing, renewal of the fleet during the period to October 2016 and beyond. This critical activity cannot wait until a new franchise commences.

### 2. Improvements to train services

Frequency of service and speed of journey were high priorities for improvement when we conducted research with Greater Anglia passengers in 2010. Feedback indicates that these remain of importance.

#### 2.1 Journey time

We recommend that the Direct Award includes provision for resources to be allocated to a project to work with Network Rail on a programme of modest improvements to line speed, as well as a separate exercise seeing what could be eked out from a review of point-to-point timings and station dwell time. The objective should be to get the line speed as close as possible to the maximum speed of the trains running on it. For example:

- Norwich to Ely – long sections are 90mph for passenger trains – could that be raised to 100mph with modest changes to maintenance regimes?

- Ipswich to Lowestoft – the line speed is staggeringly low at points (55mph for long sections) – efforts should be made to raise this wherever possible.
- Ipswich to Peterborough – long sections are sub 100mph, the speed of the units used on it.

## **2.2 Frequency**

We have a number of proposals that we should like to see addressed early in the period of the Direct Award, if not before. We recognise the suggestions below may not be exhaustive and local groups may also have shared with Greater Anglia their ideas for specific improvements which we would also urge you to consider:

2.2.1 Ipswich to Peterborough is the only route on the Greater Anglia franchise that does not now have an hourly frequency. We suggest that it should be a strong priority to enhance this to hourly. We wonder whether a creative approach to a review of the existing diagrams and maintenance schedules might provide a low-cost way of achieving this if additional diesel units are unavailable or genuinely cannot be resourced.

2.2.2 Restoration of Westerfield stops in each direction, Monday to Saturday. We should like to see a remedy for the previous deletion of almost all the Westerfield stops in Ipswich to Lowestoft trains in the National Express plan inherited by Greater Anglia.

2.2.3 Ipswich to Felixstowe Sunday service to commence two hours earlier than at present in winter (that is, 0855 from Ipswich and 0925 from Felixstowe) and one hour earlier than at present in summer.

2.2.4 The first Ipswich to Peterborough and return train on winter Sundays to be earlier, as in the summer – that is, the 0755 from Ipswich and 0946 from Peterborough need to run all year round.

2.2.5 A resolution is required to the issues underpinning the nonsensical situation whereby the 2333 Liverpool Street to Chingford has to run non-stop, apart from a Walthamstow call, in order that the driver finishes his shift in time to comply with some archaic practice. It is the only train the whole day which does not stop at intermediate stations!

2.2.6 The service to be provided on the rural routes on Good Friday, Easter Monday, May Day, Whitsun and August bank holidays to be either the Saturday service or the Monday to Friday service, perhaps without very early trains.

## **2.3 Connections**

We should like to see established a “reasonable endeavours” commitment to review and, where possible, improve connections between Greater Anglia services and those of other operators (e.g. at Cambridge, Ely, Norwich and Peterborough). Without wishing to preclude other possibilities we would specifically highlight the break of connections with National Express introduced between Felixstowe to Ipswich trains and Ipswich to Peterborough trains. Abellio should implement approaches that will enable the Ipswich to Peterborough trains to revert back to xx00 (from the current xx58) so that they again connect.

### **3. Station improvements**

In general some stations need an upgrade to spruce them up – with more than just a lick of paint – and to make them more attractive and comfortable to use. Feedback indicates that New Market and Bury St Edmonds should be candidates for improvements.

One specific suggestion is for Whittlesea station, which needs to have street lighting installed between the public highway and the Ely-bound platform. Currently passengers get off the train onto a lit platform, but then have to navigate the approach road in darkness before reading the street-lit public highway. Half a dozen lampposts would solve this problem.

The Direct Award should encourage Greater Anglia to identify and commence development of proposals for more significant station schemes in preparation for delivery during the Direct Award term, where possible, or beyond.

#### **3.1 CIS renewal and provision**

We are unclear who is funding, or how far the CIS renewal going on at present will extend, but we'd emphasise the need to improve upon the TV-style displays at some of the 'rural routes' stations, installed in the late 1990s which are effectively life-expired. We'd also prioritise plugging the gaps in CIS provision where such displays never existed, as real time information at all stations should now be a given.

### **4. Charter**

The Direct Award should require a renewed emphasis on strategies to raise passenger awareness of their rights to claim under the delay-repay scheme and to make the claims process swift and simple.

We should also like to see two specific improvements to the Greater Anglia delay-repay charter.

4.1 A substantial improvement to the 'safety net' offered for commuters. The scheme introduced when the franchise was first won is inadequate as it doesn't deal effectively with frequent sub-30 minute delays.

4.2 We support the proposal originating with a local RUG. Season ticket holders who have to get to work are told "we're cancelling this one, the next one is in an hour" and yet they may not catch a bus from round the corner that will stop them being late for work. Therefore, we are seeking a new provision, primarily designed to help passengers using routes with a relatively low frequency train service where parallel (scheduled) bus services exist. We suggest wording along the following lines "If we cancel a train without providing replacement transport and the next train will be 60 minutes or more later, you may choose to catch a scheduled bus service rather than wait and we will reimburse the extra fare if within 28 days you send in your bus ticket, or other proof of purchase, and your ticket (or copy of it if it is a season ticket) for the train we cancelled". We envisage that passengers should be

able to choose whether to catch a bus and claim for a fare, or apply for delay-repay compensation.

## **5. Making buying a ticket easier**

Passenger Focus's research has identified a number of issues with both ticket vending machines (TVMs) and websites – much of which was reflected in Government's own Fares and Ticketing Review consultation earlier this year. While a short extension clearly does not provide a long enough period to fix all these problems it is important that momentum is not lost on such issues as:

- Printing any restrictions on passengers' tickets to remove confusion over validity
- Displaying outward and return ticket restrictions on TVMs prior to a passenger committing to purchase
- Making it impossible to buy an Advance ticket on the internet at a higher price than the 'walk up' fare available on the same train

It has also been suggested that more roaming retail staff should be provided at busy times at Cambridge station until completion of the major station works enables the planned new TVMs to be deployed.

The provision of TVMs on both platforms on unstaffed stations should also be considered so that passengers are not required to cross the railway to make a ticket purchase.

### **5.1 Smart ticketing**

Like improving and renewing the train fleet, progressing the roll out of smart ticketing products cannot wait for the Direct Award term to end. The provisions of the Direct Award should incorporate expediting ITSO and SEFT developments, as well as other smart ticketing initiatives. Technological evolution moves apace and Greater Anglia passengers should be provided with the opportunity to benefit from these advances now, not years down the line.

The increased knowledge and information about passengers and their journeys will also provide advantages to Great Anglia, including but not confined to, the ability to improve demand management through incentivising moves away from peak services on five days per week, and an enhanced ability to market additional travel opportunities on less well used services.

## **6. Ticketless travel**

Passenger Focus believes ticketless travel is an important issue and one that needs addressing. Passengers who avoid paying for their ticket are in effect being subsidised by the vast majority of fare-paying passengers. However, the revenue protection strategy must provide safeguards for those who make an innocent mistake and whose intention was never to defraud the system. We believe this requires:

- Clear consistent guidelines explaining when staff should show discretion in the enforcement of penalties. For example when passengers do not have their railcard with them
- Commitment not to go straight to any form of criminal prosecution unless they suspect (or have proof) that there was intent to defraud.
- Penalties that are proportionate to the actual loss suffered by the operator.

The industry is currently developing a code of practice for passengers who board without a valid ticket, we should like the Direct Award to require Abellio to make a commitment to the early adoption of this.

## **7. Transparency**

We wish to see far greater transparency of information that is relevant to passenger experience.

Punctuality (PPM) figures which are only produced for the train company as a whole can mean that performance on a problematic route may be masked by better performance elsewhere. A move to reporting on a more granular basis should be instigated promptly. We'd suggest by line of route at minimum but believe that there is a case to make this information available for individual trains.

Giving rail passengers access to performance figures relevant to their services will help them to hold the train company to account and to ask what is being done to improve services in return for the fares they pay. Good management should not feel threatened by this. Indeed the availability of accurate data may actually help them – a particularly bad journey can linger in the memory and distort passengers' perceptions. Accurate, relevant data can help challenge these negative perceptions and focus management attention on areas that need improving.

Hence, at the very least, we believe there is a case for providing performance data at a disaggregated route level in the period of the Direct Award.

There is also scope for greater transparency surrounding capacity/crowding. ORR has conducted research looking at the impact of publishing more information on train seat availability which found that passengers not only wanted more information but also acted upon it when planning their journeys. We advocate increasing the availability of information about the relative capacity of peak and shoulder-peak trains to enable those passengers who can adapt their travel patterns to be able to make informed choices.

### **7.1 Performance monitoring**

On a similar vein we think it important that train companies/the industry publishes right-time performance data (i.e. actual number of trains arriving at the scheduled time alongside the current measure with its five or 10 minute allowances).

Our research shows that punctuality is the main driver of overall passenger satisfaction. In order to better understand the relationship we took a more in depth look at the correlation between satisfaction with punctuality and actual performance.

The detailed results can be found in our individual franchise submissions but we found a clear picture of:

- Average lateness experienced by passengers being worse than that recorded for train services. This is because of the effect of cancellations and because many trains that are on time at their destination are late at intermediate stations. As PPM measures performance at the final station it is possible for passengers en-route to be late arriving at their station only for the 'empty' train to arrive on time – in other words the train is on time despite most of the passengers being late.
- Passenger satisfaction with punctuality reduces by between two and three percentage points with every minute of delay.
- Passengers' notice delay well before the technical threshold of delay. Commuters notice lateness after one minute rather than the five minutes allowed; while business and leisure users tend to change their level of satisfaction with punctuality after a delay of four to six minutes.

This shows that passengers do not view a train arriving up to 5 or 10 minutes after its scheduled time as being on-time. As punctuality is the main driver of overall passenger satisfaction it follows that greater adherence to a 'right-time' railway could help drive up overall satisfaction.

As a result we would like to see within the Direct Award agreement:

- A commitment to report the percentage of trains arriving punctually at key intermediate stations.
- A commitment to move towards a 'right-time' railway - possibly involving the reduction of the current 5 minutes allowance and/or publication of right-time performance.

## **7.2 Engagement**

Passenger Focus has recently published the findings of research into passenger understanding of the franchise process and their appetite for engagement with it.

It is clear from this work that passengers have unanswered desires to contribute their thoughts, both about priorities for franchise specifications and the performance of incumbents. There is also a desire for greater two-way communication about what each franchise promises – and what is actually delivered.

We applaud Abellio for proactively seeking out the views of stakeholders to inform the Direct Award discussions and we would like to see a meaningful development of this approach in any extension. This should include clearly publishing what will be delivered during the Direct Award term and setting up enhanced feedback mechanisms to canvass passenger views and respond and report on progress in meeting them.

We are working on ideas for the way passenger engagement can be effectively enhanced in the future and one element will include ensuring passengers will be aware that a new franchise is to be let. We recommend, therefore, that the Direct

Award requires Abellio to comply with whatever proposals emerge in this area from our current discussions with the DfT.

### **8. One final suggestion... Electrification of the branch from Marks Tey to Sudbury.**

This branch, only a relatively short distance long, is a diesel island in an otherwise electric railway. The unit has to run empty along the miles to and from Norwich and when failures occur they are difficult to recover, let alone find a replacement train. Although the Chappel viaduct may present some challenges to be overcome (in cost and heritage terms), electrification would allow capacity to be doubled (4 cars instead of 2) on the Sudbury line which suffers crowding in the peaks AND it would release a diesel unit for use more effectively somewhere else (potentially facilitating the Ipswich to Peterborough aspiration above). It is the sort of thing many long-standing railwaymen argue would “in a sane world be done by the OLE maintainers in their spare time”.

### **Conclusion**

There are many areas where the passenger experience on Greater Anglia can be enhanced. Some of these can be delivered swiftly and at relatively little, or no, cost. Other elements may require more substantial resourcing but this does not mean they can, or should, be shelved until a new franchise.

It is imperative that that the Direct Award includes mechanisms to unlock much-needed investment, deliver real passenger benefits and provide firm foundations on which the next franchise can build. Passengers must not be left to pay the price for delays in the franchising process.

### **For further information please contact:**

Sharon Hedges

E: [sharon.hedges@passengerfocus.org.uk](mailto:sharon.hedges@passengerfocus.org.uk)

T: 07918 626126