

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee

Cabinet

Date of Committee

13th July 2006

Report Title

Consultation on the 'New Cross Country' and 'West Midlands' Rail Franchises

Summary

The Department for Transport has published the consultation on the 'New Cross Country' and 'West Midlands' rail franchises. The consultation sets out the proposed time-table, route and service specifications for the two franchises that future short-listed bidders will be asked to price. It is recommended that Cabinet notes the contents of the report and approves the proposed response of the County Council.

For further information please contact

Daniel Caldecote
Transport Planning Unit
Tel. 01926 735665
danielcaldecote@warwickshire.gov.uk

Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework?

Yes/No

Background Papers

None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-

Details to be specified

Other Committees

.....

Local Member(s)

(With brief comments, if appropriate)

.....

Other Elected Members

Councillor K Browne
Councillor Mrs E Goode } for information
Councillor Mrs J Lea }

Cabinet Member

(Reports to The Cabinet, to be cleared with appropriate Cabinet Member)

Councillor M Heatley

Chief Executive

.....

- Legal I Marriott – agreed.
- Finance
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION **YES/NO** *(If 'No' complete Suggested Next Steps)*

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS :

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Cabinet - 13th July 2006

**Consultation on the 'New Cross Country' and
'West Midlands' Rail Franchises**

**Report of the Strategic Director for
Environment and Economy**

Recommendation

That Cabinet approves the proposed response to the Department for Transport's consultation on the 'New Cross Country' and 'West Midlands' rail franchises.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In June 2006 the Department for Transport (DfT) commenced consultation on the 'New Cross Country' and 'West Midlands' rail franchises.
- 1.2 In the Autumn of 2005 the Secretary of State announced the termination of the current Cross Country, Silverlink County, Central Trains and Midland Mainline franchises in November 2007. Three new franchises will replace the current franchises, namely:-
 - (i) A 'New Cross Country' franchise
 - (ii) A new 'West Midlands' franchise
 - (iii) A new 'East Midlands' franchise
- 1.3 The 'New Cross Country' franchise is due to commence on 11th November 2007. It combines the current Cross Country franchise with parts of the current Central Trains franchise, including services from Cardiff to Nottingham, Birmingham to Nottingham and Birmingham to Stansted Airport. The franchise will be for an 8 year and 4 month term which DfT will be able to terminate after 6 years should certain performance criteria not be met.
- 1.4 The new 'West Midlands' franchise is due to commence on 11th November 2007. It will combine the current Silverlink County and Central Trains franchises. Expressions of Interest are currently being sought to run the franchise, and short listed applicants will receive the Invitation to Tender in October 2006. The franchise will be for a 7 year and 10 month term which the DfT will be able to terminate after 6 years should certain performance criteria not be met.

- 1.5 The deadline for consultation responses is 7th August 2006.
- 1.6 Copies of the following documents will be made available in each of the Party Group rooms:-
- (i) The 'New Cross Country Franchise Consultation Document'; and
 - (ii) The 'West Midlands Franchise Consultation Document'.

Copies can be made available to Members on request.

- 1.7 The 'New Cross Country Franchise Consultation Document' can be found at www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_railways/documents/page/dft_railways_611834.pdf.
- 1.8 The 'West Midlands Franchise Consultation Document' can be found at www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_railways/documents/page/dft_railways_611835.pdf.

2. Implications for Warwickshire

- 2.1 It is recommended that the County Council respond to the consultation on the West Midlands and Cross Country franchises as the franchise documents set out future route requirements and basic service patterns for stations and services within Warwickshire as well as including provision for Kenilworth station as a third party scheme.
- 2.2 As far as local services in Warwickshire are concerned, the service levels and patterns in the June 2006 timetable are, broadly, considered appropriate to current demand and therefore the 'base' case in the franchise documents is the June 2006 timetable. This is better than was expected.
- 2.3 The new 'East Midlands' franchise is also due to commence on 11th November 2007. This new franchise will contain the Leicester – Nottingham section of the original Central Trains Birmingham – Nottingham service. The splitting of this service represents a reduced quality in service from Coleshill, Nuneaton and Bedworth to the East Midlands.

3. Proposed Response

- 3.1 It is proposed, subject to the approval of the Cabinet, that a consultation response in the form of the draft attached as **Appendix A** be made to the DfT.
- 3.2 In summary, the County Council's response to the DfT:-
- (i) Endorses the approach of the DfT in both franchises with regard to:-
 - (a) Increasing the accessibility of train services

- (b) Ensuring franchise specification fits into a context of a national rail network serving national and local society
 - (c) Anticipating future growth and demand
 - (d) Seeking to align franchise specifications with local stakeholder aspirations, including local transportation authorities
 - (e) Basing the 'base case' on the June 2006 timetable
- (ii) Welcomes the requirement for franchise operators to engage with third parties outside the rail industry.
 - (iii) Welcomes the inclusion of Kenilworth station as a 'Third Party Promoted Scheme'.
 - (iv) Highlights that Cross Country does provide the only 'local' service on certain sections of line, in particular, Cross Country is the only operator of the hourly service between Leamington Spa and Coventry.
 - (v) Requests clarification on the status of Coleshill as a call for trains on the Birmingham – Stansted Airport service.
 - (vi) Supports the introduction of longer trains and additional rolling stock to cope with increasing demand on Cross Country services.
 - (vii) Expresses concern that fare increases could be used to manage demand at peak periods, particularly into Birmingham.
 - (viii) Welcomes the proposal to introduce an hourly, semi-fast, service between Crewe and London Euston via the Trent Valley.
 - (ix) Expresses disappointment that a second train per hour from Birmingham to Stratford-on-Avon has not been included in the base case.
 - (x) Notes the position on service provision at Polesworth and Atherstone.
 - (xi) Notes the future designation of the Coventry – Nuneaton service as a 'Community Rail Service' but would welcome an explanation from the DfT of the implications of this designation.
 - (xii) Welcomes the re-introduction of a second train per hour between Northampton and Birmingham which restores the half hourly frequency rail service between Rugby and Coventry.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 The DfT's approach has resulted in a franchise specification which offers benefits to rail passengers in Warwickshire. The Cabinet is invited to respond positively in the form of the draft response appended to the report.

JOHN DEEGAN
Strategic Director for Environment and Economy
Shire Hall
Warwick

28th June 2006

Cabinet – 19th June 2006

**Consultation on the ‘New Cross Country’ and
‘West Midlands’ Rail Franchises**

Draft Consultation Response

The County Council appreciates the opportunity to comment on the ‘New Cross Country’ and ‘West Midlands’ rail franchises. The County Council has made substantial investment in providing improved rail facilities and continues to place a high priority on rail in delivering its transport policy.

The overall trend in the numbers of rail passengers in Warwickshire is one of sustained growth with rail travel becoming increasingly important. Commuting and business travel to the West Midlands Conurbation and Coventry form a substantial element of rail travel in the County for people from a wide range of socio-economic groups. In some communities in Warwickshire, trains provide essential ‘socially necessary services’ as rail is the only form of regular public transport. There is also significant use of rail for commuting and business travel to London and the South East. Rail journeys for retail, leisure and social activities are also growing.

Accordingly the County Council’s observations to the proposed franchises are as follows:

The Franchises

The County Council endorses the approach of the DfT in both franchises with regard to:-

- (i) Increasing the accessibility of train services.
- (ii) Ensuring franchise specification fits into a context of a national rail network serving national and local society.
- (iii) Anticipating future growth and demand.
- (iv) Seeking to align franchise specifications with local stakeholder aspirations, including local transportation authorities.
- (v) Basing the ‘base case’ on the June 2006 timetable.

‘New Cross Country’ Franchise

- (i) The County Council welcomes the requirement for franchise operators to engage with third parties outside the rail industry. The County Council is

currently finalising a 'Warwickshire Quality Rail Partnership' for station improvements which will formalise working with local Train Operating Companies (TOCs) and Network Rail. It is envisaged that future franchise operators of the 'New Cross Country' franchise would be invited to join the Partnership.

- (ii) The County Council is pleased at the inclusion of Kenilworth station in section 9 – 'Third Party Promoted Schemes'. Increasing accessibility by sustainable modes of transport, particularly through new railway stations and expansion of the network and associated services, is a priority for the County Council.
- (iii) Although a key characteristic of Cross Country services is the provision of high quality 'inter-city' type services it is worth highlighting that Cross Country does provide the only 'local' service on certain sections of line. In particular, Cross Country is the only operator of the hourly service between Leamington Spa and Coventry.
- (iv) The County Council is concerned that Coleshill Parkway station is absent from the map in Appendix 1, which shows the map of the 'New Cross Country' franchise area. The County Council would like clarification on the status of this station as a call for trains on the Birmingham – Stansted Airport service. The County Council appreciates that, due to timetabling constraints, it has not been possible, so far, to provide a call at Coleshill Parkway every 30 minutes. However, it was understood that an objective had been agreed with the DfT that this level of service would be provided following a review of the timetables, as part of the re-franchising process.
- (v) The County Council supports the introduction of longer trains and additional rolling stock to cope with increasing demand on Cross Country services.
- (vi) The County Council is disappointed that Warwick Parkway station does not appear to be an additional call on the 1 train per hour (tph) service between Leamington and Birmingham New Street, avoiding Coventry.

'West Midlands' Franchise

- (i) The County Council welcomes the requirement for franchise operators to engage with third parties outside the rail industry. The County Council is currently finalising a 'Warwickshire Quality Rail Partnership' for station improvements which will formalise working with local TOCs and Network Rail. It is envisaged that future franchise operators of the 'West Midlands' franchise would be invited to join the Partnership.
- (ii) The County Council is concerned that fare increases could be used to manage demand at peak periods, particularly into Birmingham. Peak travel is a derived demand for many passengers who often have no option for traveling at other times. Such increases could deter passengers from using rail services and create adverse impacts on the

road network. The County Council would support the introduction of longer trains and additional rolling stock, where appropriate.

- (iii) The County Council welcomes the proposal to introduce an hourly, semi-fast, service between Crewe and London Euston via the Trent Valley. This will increase links from Polesworth, Atherstone and Nuneaton to a wide range of destinations and give a welcome boost to the local economy.
- (iv) The County Council is disappointed that a second train per hour from Birmingham to Stratford-on-Avon has not been included in the base case. This proposal was discussed in the West Midlands Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS) and the County Council urges the DfT to reconsider adding this into the base case.
- (v) The County Council notes the position on service provision at Polesworth and Atherstone and welcomes the lack of reference to any formal closure procedures in respect of Polesworth until further discussions have taken place.
- (vi) The County Council notes the future designation of the Coventry – Nuneaton service as a ‘Community Rail Service’ which would exclude designating the ‘line’ due to the high levels of freight traffic. The County Council would welcome an explanation from the DfT of the implications of this designation. The understanding was that a key outcome of ‘Community Rail’ partnerships is that the level of infrastructure maintenance is kept appropriate to its use. Therefore, if the designation is applied to the service only, what does this mean in real terms?
- (vii) The County Council is very concerned on the splitting of Birmingham – Nottingham services into a Birmingham to Leicester service in the ‘West Midlands’ franchise and a Leicester – Nottingham service in the new ‘East Midlands’ franchise. This represents a reduced quality in service from Coleshill, Nuneaton and Bedworth to the East Midlands.
- (viii) The County Council is concerned about the decision not to include new stations which appeared in the West Midlands RUS and which may be currently more feasible than those already included. The County Council, as set out in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2006, believes that proposed stations at Bermuda, Hawkesbury, Kingsbury and Stratford Parkway should be included in addition to Arley and Galley Common.
- (ix) The County Council welcomes the re-introduction of a second train per hour between Northampton and Birmingham which restores the half hourly frequency rail service between Rugby and Coventry.