

<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Head of Economic Development</b>
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<b>Portfolio Leader:</b>	<b>Economic Development &amp; Planning</b>
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Report Track:</b>	<b>Cabinet: 24/03/16</b>

**CABINET****24 MARCH 2016****DfT/WMR CONSULTATION – WEST MIDLANDS RAIL FRANCHISE, DEC 2015  
AND CHASE LINE ‘GATEWAY’ STATIONS UPGRADE****1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To endorse the action of the Portfolio Leader, in consultation with the Head of Economic Development, in responding to the Department for Transport Rail Executive, on the DfT/WMR Consultation – West Midlands Rail Franchise, December 2015.
- 1.2 To approve the Council’s strategy for the future development of Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley Town station ‘Gateways’ within the District.

**2 Recommendations**

That:

- 2.1 Cabinet endorse the action of the Economic Development & Planning Portfolio Leader, in conjunction with the Head of Economic Development, in responding to the DfT Rail Executive, on the DfT/WMR Consultation – West Midlands Rail Franchise, December 2015, by 22 March 2015.
- 2.2 A further report be submitted to Cabinet, in the event that the DfT do not approve Centro’s request to assume funding responsibility for the incremental services under the current funding partnership with Centro and Staffordshire County Council.
- 2.3 Centro/West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority (WMITA), West Midlands Rail (WMR), Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP), Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP), Staffordshire County Council and franchise bidders, be asked to support the Council’s aspirations for the West Midlands rail franchise detailed in this report.

- 2.4 Cabinet approve the proposed 'Gateway' station strategy to secure additional infrastructure and improved facilities at Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley Town stations, as detailed in this report.

### **3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendation**

#### West Midlands Rail Franchise

- 3.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) working in partnership with West Midlands Rail, are seeking comments on rail services, station and supporting services running in the West Midlands franchise area and are currently considering what the next West Midlands franchise operator should deliver.
- 3.2 The views of the public and stakeholders on rail services and stations, for the next West Midlands rail franchise are now being sought on all services currently operated by London Midland under the existing franchise agreement. It includes the 'Chase Line', Birmingham-Walsall-Cannock-Hednesford-Rugeley services (jointly specified by the DfT/WMR) as well as Crewe-Rugeley Trent Valley-Euston, via the West Coast Main Line (specified by the DfT).
- 3.3 WMR represents the region's metropolitan, shire and unitary authorities, and plans to gain greater influence and control over local rail services from 2017, leading to the creation of a fully devolved West Midlands Rail Contract. It is a partnership of fourteen Metropolitan District, Shire and Unitary local transport authorities, including Staffordshire County Council (Chair), that cover the proposed area of the devolved rail services and will have a greater role in the specification, management and delivery of local rail services in collaboration with the DfT. It is a limited company, with a board of directors made up of the leaders or cabinet members of the local transport authorities involved. Representatives from the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) also attend meetings of the board.
- 3.4 WMR will also work alongside the new West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) on a wider local devolution package agreed by the West Midlands' Local Authorities and Government in November 2015. This package includes a growth deal with an £8 billion, ten year investment plan to drive economic growth and improve local transport.
- 3.5 Rail passenger numbers in the West Midlands have more than doubled from 37 million in 2005/06 to over 78 million in 2013/14, the highest rail growth of any region in the UK. This growth is expected to continue.
- 3.6 The GBSLEP Strategic Economic Plan 2014, includes an £8.4m Chase Line Electrification Package, including linespeed improvement, Gateway station upgrades and improved services. The Chase Line is a strategic priority for the District, and the Council wish to promote upgrades to Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley Town as 'Gateway' stations through LEP, National Station Improvement Programme (NSIP) and Access for All and other funding streams. A partnership approach is needed, the franchise offering such an opportunity to develop this strategy further. The Council has been funding the Chase Line services, in

partnership with Centro and Staffordshire County Council since 1997 to 2007 and from 2010 to the present time.

#### Station Gateways

- 3.7 The upgrade of Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley Town stations is included in the GBSLEP Strategic Economic Plan, Programme 2, 2014, as part of the Chase Line Electrification Package.
- 3.8 The package includes three elements based on completion of the current £76m Walsall-Rugeley electrification scheme, in December 2017, namely, i) the linespeed upgrade (now fully funded), ii) station Gateways and iii) restoration of half-hourly off peak services.
- 3.9 Cannock station in particular is a priority following the resolution to grant planning permission for the £110m, Mill Green Retail Outlet Village in December 2015. The Council therefore wishes to promote this scheme as a partnership with transport stakeholders through a LEP Growth Deal bid or other funding sources that arise.

### **4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 This report will contribute specifically to 'Better Jobs and Skills', 'Cleaner and Safer Environments' and 'Better Health Outcomes' through fostering sustainable transport, potentially reducing road traffic and providing better accessibility for residents to employment, leisure and cultural activities.

### **5 Report Detail**

#### West Midlands Rail Franchise

- 5.1 The West Midlands franchise is currently operated by London Midland, jointly owned by Go-Ahead Group and Keolis. It was awarded in 2007 and originally due to expire in September 2015, extended to March 2016, and more recently to October 2017. The new franchise will run for 7-9 years from expiry of the existing franchise.
- 5.2 The DfT recognise that the punctuality and reliability of London Midland services has been mixed over the past eight years and is a key issue for passengers and a driver of demand.
- 5.3 London Midland currently achieves a Moving Annual Average (MAA) 87.7% Public Performance Measure (PPM), which is below the national average of 89.5%. There is a national target to reach 92.5% by March 2019. However, customer satisfaction, in spring 2015 with existing London Midland services was 84%, 4% higher than the national average.
- 5.4 The punctuality and reliability of train operators is assessed against the PPM which shows the percentage of trains arriving at their destination within five minutes of the timetabled time.

- 5.5 Over 65.3 million journeys were made on West Midlands franchise services from April 2014 to March 2015. Usage has grown by an average of 4.5% a year over the past five years and this growth is expected to continue.
- 5.6 The process has now started to select a rail company to operate and develop these services and stations after the London Midland franchise finishes.
- 5.7 A detailed response to the consultation is set out in Appendix 1, setting out the Council's aspirations for improvements to stations and services over the next 7-9 year franchise. Particular issues raised are overcrowding, the need for longer trains, more frequent services including restoration of a two train per hour off-peak service and improved fare collection. Attention is also drawn to Q12 and the suggestion raised that the Centro extended season ticket area beyond the conurbation boundary which includes the Chase Line services to Rugeley, represented an anomaly resulting in passengers on other lines being treated unfairly.

### Station Gateways

- 5.8 Rail stations act as a gateway to the District and give first impressions of an area. They need to be the focal point of civic pride and present an attractive, safe, secure environment. Improving rail stations will attract additional passengers and thereby assist the case for improved rail services. Investment in the Chase Line is essential to drive job creation and economic growth as well as connecting into the benefits of HS2. The Chase Line has poor station provision with no manned stations even though passenger numbers are greater than some manned stations in the conurbation.
- 5.9 A Station Gateway working group was established in 2015 and meetings have already been held with key stakeholders including London Midland, Centro/ITA, Staffordshire County Council and Network Rail.
- 5.10 Cannock station is the main priority having the highest patronage of 250,000 passengers per annum; its location on the edge of the town centre, proximity to the £110m Mill Green Designer Outlet Village (DOV) and employment regeneration sites. The Mill Green Retail Village is forecast to generate 3-4m visitors a year. The draft legal agreement will provide £90,000 to upgrade facilities at the station. The Council is also pursuing a funding opportunity that has recently arisen through the West Midlands Combined Authority, and an outline scheme for £5m station upgrades, submitted to the WMCA.
- 5.11 In summary:-

### Cannock

- Larger platform shelter(s) and retail unit – community hub uses.
- Completion of NSIP outstanding works including car park fencing, signage, CCTV, hard and soft landscaping.
- Access improvements from Cannock Town Centre and car park.
- Pedestrian route upgrades to Cannock Town Centre and Mill Green DOV.
- Improved disabled access.
- Improved passenger information systems.

### Hednesford

- Larger shelter and retail unit – community hub uses.
- Anglesey Street car park extension, fencing, landscaping and CCTV coverage.
- Improved disabled access.
- Completion of NSIP outstanding works.
- Improved passenger information systems.

### Rugeley Town

- Disabled access ramps to existing footbridge.
- CCTV to existing Wharf Road station car park;
- New footpath link from northbound platform to Horsefair.
- Remodelling of car park, fencing, landscaping and CCTV.
- Completion of outstanding NSIP works.
- Improved passenger information systems.

### Rugeley Trent Valley

- While Rugeley Trent Valley lies within Lichfield District, it is used by residents from Cannock Chase District and is therefore of importance, particularly for direct London and Stafford services.
- The lack of parking needs to be addressed by the new franchisee together with a safer means of exit, currently located on a blind bend.
- Disabled access provision needs to be provided between all three platforms.

<b>6 Implications</b>
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#### **6.1 Financial**

- 6.1.1 There are no direct financial implications for the Council as a result of this report. The Council's existing financial commitment, to provide revenue funding in partnership with Centro and Staffordshire County Council for the incremental Chase Line services, is due to end in March 2016. The Council's contribution for 2015-16 was £12,597.34 which was funded from the £9,750 approved budget, with the remainder being funded from the Rail Revenue Support Reserve.
- 6.1.2 The Council is still awaiting final confirmation from the DfT that they will assume funding for these services from April 2016 onwards. The existing budget has been retained in the draft budgets for 2016-17 to 2018-19 until this confirmation has been received. Additionally, there is currently a balance of £20k held in the Rail Revenue Support Reserve which is as yet uncommitted.
- 6.1.3 As referred to in paragraph 3.7, "Cannock, Hednesford & Rugeley railway stations have been included in the GBSLEP Strategic Economic Plan, Programme 2, 2014". No further information is currently known, however once details are available a report will be submitted requesting inclusion, and approval to spend, in the Council's approved Capital Programme.

6.1.4 Future reports will be submitted for consideration once a response from the DfT has been received and the level of financial support, if any, from this Council for future years is known. These reports will contain detailed financial implications as and where appropriate.

**6.2 Legal**

There are no legal implications arising from the report.

**6.3 Human Resources**

There are no human resources implications in the report.

**6.4 Section 17 (Crime Prevention)**

There are no crime preventions in the report.

**6.5 Human Rights Act**

There are no Human Rights Act implications in the report.

**6.6 Data Protection**

There are no Data Protection implications in the report.

**6.7 Risk Management**

Failure to respond to the consultation would deny the Council the opportunity to influence Government transport policy.

**6.8 Equality & Diversity**

There are no equality & diversity implications in the report.

**6.9 Best Value**

There are no best value implications in the report.

**7 Appendices to the Report**

Appendix 1

Response to Consultation Questions.

**Previous Consideration**

None.

**Background Papers**

Consultation – West Midlands Rail Franchise, DfT/WMR, December 2015

## Consultation Questions

### Question area A – responsive to passengers' needs and aspirations

Questions in this area are focussed on providing a railway for all that gives passengers what they want and need and attracts people to the rail network.

*Q1: Thinking of the journeys you make by train, or journeys you could make by train but where you decide to use an alternative transport mode instead:*

- what specific changes could be made to make the railway easier and more attractive to use for all; and*
- why do you think these changes would help?*

*Please provide your reasons why and details of the journeys you refer to where possible.*

#### **CCDC COMMENT –**

- **Disabled access at Rugeley Town station is unsatisfactory. Anyone arriving by train from the Birmingham direction, even if assisted, has a very long route from platform 1 via Sandy Lane, Horsefair and Wharf Road to reach the station car park. The footbridge was designed in 1997, to allow disabled ramps to be fitted at a later date. Such provision is required.**
- **Similarly, there is no disabled access between platforms at Rugeley Trent Valley station, preventing any wheelchair access for passengers connecting between Chase Line and Crewe-Euston services. Ramps or Lifts need to be provided.**

*Q2a: Do you use your nearest railway station?*

*If you do not please let us know the reasons why.*

*Q2b: Thinking of your train journeys as a whole, how could we improve your experience of:*

- Finding information and planning your journey*
- Accessing your railway station in an environmentally friendly way such as by walking, cycling, tram or bus*
- Accessing your railway station by private car (including car parking and drop off areas)?*

*Please let us know the reasons why.*

*If you are aware of any examples of particularly good or particularly poor connections between transport modes at stations, either within the franchise area or more widely please let us know including reasons why these are particularly good or poor.*

#### **CCDC COMMENT –**

- **The station car parks at Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley Town are owned and managed by Cannock Chase Council. The Council would welcome discussions with the bidders and WMR on suggestions for**

improving these facilities.

- Hednesford station car park (Anglesey Street) is at full capacity. Scope exists to extend this. CCTV coverage is required at Hednesford and Rugeley Town station car parks.
- Bus/rail interchange outside Cannock station is poor and the station layout needs improving to meet additional demand.
- Information – need for Trent Valley timetable display cases to be provided at Rugeley Town station.
- Parking at Rugeley Trent Valley station (Lichfield District) is inadequate and the franchisee needs to work with Network Rail, WMR and Staffordshire CC to deliver increased capacity, which London Midland has not resolved. Rugeley TV is now busier than the Town station and additional provision is required. In addition, the station access is located on a blind bend and the franchisee and highway authority need to provide a safer means of exit as part of an overall parking and access package.

*Q3: Please list, in priority order, the facilities you would like improved or introduced at the station(s) you use or could use?*

*For each point that you raise, please provide the name of the station(s) that you are referring to and why you think these improvements are needed.*

**CCDC COMMENT –**

- **The GBSLEP Strategic Economic Plan, 2014, includes a £8.4m Chase Line Electrification Package, including linespeed improvement, Gateway station upgrades and improved services. The Chase Line is a strategic priority for the District and the Council wish to promote upgrades to Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley Town as ‘Gateway’ stations through LEP, NSIP and Access for All and other funding streams. A partnership approach was needed, the new franchise offering such an opportunity.**
- **Cannock Station - The recently approved 26,505 sq m, £110m, Mill Green Designer Outlet Village, providing 130 designer outlet stores and new restaurants in close proximity of Cannock station, will generate additional rail passengers. The Council would welcome a dialogue with franchise bidders and WMR on opportunities to maximize passenger growth, improved station facilities, bus interchange and marketing in conjunction with the Mill Green developer. A larger waiting structure is required on the southbound platform that could potentially accommodate a small café, or other retail unit, and offer a step change in the quality of waiting accommodation, in a heated, secure environment. S106 funding will be available towards such a partnership.**
- **Hednesford station – Waiting facilities need to be improved. Preliminary discussions with community groups have indicated strong interest in forming a partnership to deliver such facilities and using underutilised land within Network Rail’s ownership adjacent the southbound platform, which could potentially provide a community hub building. Discussions with franchise bidders and WMR on achieving this would be welcome.**
- **Completion of outstanding 2010 NSIP works at Cannock, Hednesford and**

**Rugeley Town stations need to be pursued (1.2m cp fencing/ signage/cycle storage/height barrier/ surface car park patching/ lighting columns illumination/improved lighting along connecting footpath, cctv coverage).**

- **Ticket machines are needed on northbound platforms at Cannock, Hednesford and Rugeley Town stations, in view of the walking distance between the southbound platforms that do have ticket machines.**
- **Tickets machines need to be upgraded to sell a wider range of tickets, including the 'N' season tickets to the conurbation.**
- **A new footpath link between Rugeley Town northbound platform and Horsefair is desirable to improve connectivity with the town centre and station. Staffordshire County Council carried out feasibility work as part of a recent 'shared space' scheme in Horsefair.**

*Q4: Thinking of the train journeys you make, how important are the following on board passenger facilities to you on short distance and long distance train services (1= very important; 15 = not important).*

*If you do not make one of these kinds of journeys please leave blank.*

<i>Facility on board train</i>	<i>Importance on short distance train services (1-40 minutes)</i>	<i>Importance on long distance train services (over 40 minutes)</i>
Luggage space	3	
Cycle storage	7	
Audio passenger information e.g. announcements	3	
Visual passenger information e.g. next stop information	1	
First class areas		
Catering		
Tables		
Seat trays		
Staff presence	1	
Plug sockets		
USB sockets to charge USB devices		
Pushchair/wheelchair space		
Baby changing facilities		
Suitable toilets	2	
Free Wi-Fi		

*Where possible, please explain why*

*Please also identify any other on board passenger facilities not listed above that you deem very important and you think should be improved or introduced. This can include any comments you have about the presentation or cleanliness of your train.*

*Please note capacity and seat availability is covered in the next section.*

*Q5: We are looking carefully to see what opportunities there are to either extend or provide additional trains to deliver more space/standard class seating for passengers to help reduce overcrowding.*

*If we cannot create all the additional capacity we need in this way, how do you think we could enable more people to travel and improve the railway's ability to cater for passenger growth (e.g. altering carriages, removing/reducing on board facilities or introducing innovative solutions)?*

*Where possible, please provide reasons for your answer.*

**CCDC COMMENT –**

- **Excessive overcrowding and use of inadequate two-coach trains is an issue now and on the Chase Line will not be addressed until electrification in December 2017. Even then there is a need to plan ahead for 4-8 coach trains as the norm and the associated infrastructure that will be required to deal with this, such as platform lengthening, subject to confirmation of future electric rolling stock.**
- **Overcrowding is also a function of service frequency and there is a need to restore at least a two-train per hour off-peak frequency on the Chase line, which hopefully, electrification and the linespeed upgrade, will facilitate.**
- **Innovative solutions. The franchisee should work with the Mill Green Designer Outlet Village, to offer off-peak discount tickets to take up capacity on off-peak trains, having validity over the whole franchise area.**

*Q6: Thinking about stations served by the West Midlands franchise, are there any particular locations where you feel that connections between rail services could be improved?*

*If relevant please provide specific details about the services, times and locations where train times are not coordinated as well as they could be.*

*Please also provide information on any other factors at stations or on trains that would make changing between services easier and more attractive for you, including your reasons where possible.*

**CCDC COMMENT –**

- **Connections at Rugeley Trent Valley between Chase Line and Trent Valley services to Stafford and London are woefully inadequate and operate under an unsatisfactory derogation, following the withdrawal of through Birmingham-Stafford services in December 2010. Consideration should be given on completion of Chase Line electrification, of restoring through Chase Line services to Stafford and potentially Stoke, absorbing the Stafford-Stoke services subject of discussion in Question 9.**

## Question area B – services that cater for competitive growing economies.

This question area seeks views on how we can provide improved, dependable services that connect people with employment, retail, education, tourism and leisure and support the significant and emerging growth across the franchise area.

*Q7: In order to make improvements to the network, we would like your views on how specific train services could be changed to better meet demand with a focus on the following areas:*

*••Where demand merits it, increasing service frequency:-In the peak and/or off peak period*

*-During evenings, Saturdays and Sundays*

*-In the early morning (i.e. before the peak period)*

*-Over the Christmas and New Year period*

*••Where demand is low and resources/funding could be better used in areas that need it more, decreasing service frequency:-In the peak and/or off peak period*

*-During evenings, Saturdays and Sundays*

*-In the early morning (i.e. before the peak period)*

*-Over the Christmas and New Year period*

*••Increasing or decreasing service levels on a seasonal basis to better match travel patterns during these times*

*••Reducing the number of stops at stations used by few people to provide quicker services for through passengers*

*••Increasing the number of stops at stations where demand is higher than the current train frequency merits*

*••Adjusting the times of first and/or last services where this better meets today's travel patterns*

*••Introducing new routes or services and providing new links to stations including those not currently served by the franchise e.g. to other regions*

*••Reopening railway lines currently not used by passenger services*

*Considering the areas set out above are you aware of any opportunities to improve, reduce or change rail services to make better use of resource and meet the needs of existing and prospective passengers?*

*Please provide reasons and evidence to support your views where possible.*

### **CCDC COMMENT –**

- **GBSLEP has a target by rail access from the outer edge of the LEP boundary to Birmingham City Centre of 45 minutes. Many towns within the LEP area including Rugeley exceed this target. Rugeley to Birmingham can take 64 minutes and Cannock-Birmingham 47 minutes. There is a need to accelerate services and reduce journey time, particularly south of Walsall. The rerouting of northbound services via Soho as opposed to**

Aston has in fact slowed down services. It is important that the time savings provided by electrification and the linespeed upgrade are capitalised. Aspirations by Centro to include Perry Barr as an additional stop on all Chase Line services, are therefore opposed, as this would add another 4 minutes into the journey time.

- Overcrowding on peak time services is becoming worse, exacerbated through the use of two carriage trains. Severe overcrowding issues are occurring at Rugeley Town on the first southbound services, due to seasonal employees from Amazon, Rugeley, filling trains up before they reach Cannock and regular commuters being unable to get a seat. Strengthening of services to meet demand will be required to resolve these conflicts between daily commuters and seasonal workers.
- The last weekday train from Birmingham at 23.18 currently terminates at Hednesford. Extension of this service to Rugeley should be provided, even if this results in a slightly earlier departure to overcome any conflict with engineering possession times.
- **New Services** - On completion of Chase Line electrification, restoration of through Chase Line services to Stafford and potentially Stoke, absorbing the Stafford-Stoke services subject of discussion in Question 9, should be considered.

*Q8: Some services between stations operate with irregular gaps between trains.*

*In these situations, it may be possible to make changes to the service pattern in order to operate a service with a more evenly spaced timetable. More information on the passenger advantages and disadvantages of this are available on page 38.*

*Considering this information, and assuming the same amount of seats would be provided per hour, in principle would you prefer either:*

- *A service that operates to an evenly spaced timetable so that gaps between trains are regular (with potentially fewer trains/longer journey times); or*
- *A service that operates at irregular times with more trains per hour, however there may be a mixture of long and small gaps between services at some stations.*

*Please explain your reasons. If you are aware of any routes or locations where you feel that a more evenly spaced timetable can or should be operated please provide details.*

**CCDC COMMENT –**

- **Some peak Chase Line services currently operate to an all stations pattern south of Walsall to Birmingham, with resultant slow, end to end journey times. Ideally, these services should be accelerated to reflect the off-peak semi-fast stopping pattern, connecting at Walsall with stopping services to Birmingham.**

*Q9: Considering the information outlined above, which of these options would you prefer and why?*

- *Maintaining the current direct London Midland service from London Euston to Crewe via Stoke-on-Trent; or*

••Operating the current Euston to Crewe service directly from Stafford to Crewe, and providing an alternative service for stations between Stafford, Stoke-on-Trent and Crewe which would provide new links to destinations south of Stafford.

Where possible please provide your reasons. If you have a priority for which new destinations an alternative service between Stafford, Stoke-on-Trent and Crewe should serve please let us know here.

**CCDC COMMENT –**

- **On completion of Chase Line electrification, restoration of through Chase Line services to Stafford and potentially Stoke, absorbing the Stafford-Stoke local services in should be considered.**
- **Existing Crewe-Stafford-Rugeley Trent Valley-London Euston services must be retained and subject to further improvements.**

Q10: During railway disruption what information would you like to know, and when and how would you like to receive it during:

- Known disruption such as engineering works
- Unplanned disruption such as signalling issues?

Please provide your reasons and examples of where this works well either by the existing train company or elsewhere on the wider rail/public transport network.

**CCDC COMMENT –**

- **On occasion, late running Birmingham-Rugeley services are terminated short at Hednesford. This causes considerable inconvenience for passengers, particularly as the existing off-peak frequency is only hourly. Passengers are forced to wait for a following train, use a taxi or bus to complete their journey. Passengers from Rugeley, can be left with a one hour wait for the following train. This practice should be ended in the future franchise.**

Q11: In what ways can the franchise operator provide better services, ticketing and information for passengers to serve major events?

Please provide details of any specific events, the reasons why services need improving and any examples of best practice you are aware of.

**CCDC COMMENT –**

**The opening of the recently approved 26,505 sq m, £110m, Mill Green Designer Outlet Village, providing 130 designer outlet stores and new restaurants in close proximity of Cannock station, may generate a significant increase in rail passengers, and warrant ticketing offers over the franchise area.**

**Question area C – making sure you feel valued and safe**

This area looks into how the railway is operated and managed to provide improved customer satisfaction and performance. Ensuring customers and stakeholders have the opportunity to be involved and input into how their railway is operated and responding to customers' expectations for improved security and information.

*Q12a: What are your views on the value for money you receive for your train journeys in the franchise area when compared to other transport choices available to you?*

*Q12b: Does the range of ticket types available meet your needs or are there specific examples of new types of fare that you would like to see introduced?*

*Where possible please give the reasons for your answer.*

**CCDC COMMENT –**

- **Object to the implication that the cheaper fares offered on the Chase Line from Rugeley to Birmingham through the previous Centro designation, is an anomaly resulting in passengers on other lines being treated unfairly. If anything, this should be highlighted as an example of good practice, reflecting the journey to work area and LEP geography that recognises the transport linkages to Birmingham City Centre.**

*Q13: We want to make it easier for passengers to pay for their journey and reduce the number of people travelling without tickets. Some of the potential options to help achieve this, subject to affordability and deliverability, could include:*

*a) Providing suitable, working ticket machines at more/all stations, including unstaffed stations, to ensure that passengers always have the ability to purchase a ticket before they travel, including when booking offices are closed;*

*b) Promoting and developing new and innovative options for how people pay for their journey, such as the wider roll out of smart ticketing (where journeys are paid for with an electronic card), bank card or mobile phone payments and working with other retailers to sell tickets;*

*c) Removing the Permit to Travel machines, encouraging passengers to use the ticket machines at stations to ensure they have a valid ticket to travel;*

*d) Promoting and looking at options to increase the range of services available from the booking office - for example some areas such as Merseyside use rail station ticket offices to provide attraction tickets and tourist information at key locations;*

*e) Undertaking a review of ticket office opening hours so that they offer a consistent and easy-to-use option for passengers;*

*f) Further roll out of ticket barriers;*

*g) Ensuring that ticket barriers, where provided, are in use consistently;*

*h) Looking at options to provide better visibility of staff and ticket checking on-train, in particular to ensure that passengers undertaking intermediate journeys away from major stations are likely to have their ticket checked; and*

*i) Continuing and developing arrangements to prevent and deter ticketless travel to ensure that passengers are strongly encouraged to purchase a ticket, with staff available to support the process.*

*Considering the options above and any other ideas you may have, in order of importance please list what you think are the priorities for the new operator to focus on to:*

*a) ensure it is as easy as possible to pay for your journey; and*

*b) deter people from travelling without a valid ticket?*

*Please provide your reasons and state if you are aware of any specific locations*

*where it is difficult to buy tickets or where people travel without a valid ticket.*

**CCDC COMMENT –**

- **Fare Collection - Section 1.8 of the document points out that “the West Midlands franchise requires significant subsidy through taxpayers’ money - the second highest amount of any franchise in England.” Next to overcrowding, the biggest concern on Chase Line services is fare collection. As a company, London Midland has failed to exercise control over their train conductors on this matter and fare collection remains a voluntary duty. This is particularly important as all stations are unmanned and there are no ticket machines on northbound platforms. Failure to collect fares not only loses revenue but also results in misleading passenger numbers, and used to justify investment priorities. Ideally, ticket gates need to be provided at Walsall station and staffed at peak times. The latter is important as ticket gates have been installed at busy stations like Five Ways yet are unstaffed. Similarly, staffing of tickets gates at large stations like Birmingham Snow Hill has not been consistent.**
- **Ticket machines need to be provided on northbound Chase Line stations, which currently do not have them installed.**
- **Ticket office hours have already been reviewed by existing franchisee, resulting in the closure or reduction in booking opening hours. Further reviews of opening hours should not be used by the subsequent franchisee for further cutbacks at a time of increasing passenger growth. Some Chase Line stations are already busier than staffed station within the Metropolitan area, yet options for additional ticket offices, are not being considered in this consultation.**
- **Driver door operation should be considered as in other franchises, leaving conductors to concentrate, exclusively on fare collection.**
- **Home computer ticket printing should be provided.**

*Q14: What could be done to improve security to make your train journey better and encourage more people to use rail services?*

*This could include on the way to or at the station or on board the train.*

*Where possible please provide specific details and your reasons why.*

**CCDC COMMENT –**

- **Increased visibility of train conductors would be a major improvement, which reflects the early point that the existing franchisee has not demonstrated effective control over staff.**
- **Need for increased presence of British Transport Police on trains. Chase Line passengers are unlikely to see BTP officers other than at Birmingham New Street station.**

*Q15: What represents good service for you on your rail journey and what could be improved or introduced to make you feel more valued as a customer and encourage you to recommend the railway to others?*

*Please state whether you are referring to long or short distance services and give reasons including any relevant examples of outstanding customer service experiences, related or unrelated to passenger rail services.*

**CCDC COMMENT –**

- **Improved passenger experience on trains can only be improved, if visibility of staff is increased. This reflects earlier points regarding effective future management control over staff.**

*Q16: How could the provision of information on rail services be improved and what additional information would be of use to you when planning or making your journey e.g. seat availability, journey times, and connection information?*

*Where possible please provide reasons for your answers.*

**CCDC COMMENT –**

- **All rolling stock should be equipped with visual and automated train announcements, similar to that in the Class 172 units.**

*Q17: Should the railway have its own identity representing the areas it serves rather than the train company that operates the services e.g. a specific brand on services that run within West Midlands area?*

*Please give us a reason for your response to help us understand your view.*

**CCDC COMMENT –**

- **Passenger priorities are reliability, punctuality, ticket price and security. Branding is unlikely to influence a passenger's journey choice. The existing 'London Midland City' branding is confusing when 'London' is used in a brand that is meant to reflect Birmingham focused services.**

**Question area D – a consideration, sustainable railway**

We want to make sure we provide a railway that makes the most of and builds on what we've got in the areas that need it most and where services are delivered in a way which is efficient, effective and consideration of the environment and society. This section aims to collect your views on how we can best achieve this.

*Q18: How could communities, businesses and/or other organisations within the public, private and voluntary sectors be encouraged to play an active part in the running of the railway stations or services in their area?*

**CCDC COMMENT –**

- **The new franchisee should be required to appoint a Partnership Development Manager for the duration of the franchise. London Midland had such a position at the start of the franchise, but axed this position part way through the franchise.**

*Q19: Based on your experience or knowledge of the railway, how do you think train services, railway stations and supporting services should be delivered so that they consider and support the environment, equality and the communities/areas they operate within?*

**CCDC COMMENT –**

- **The laudable aim of bidders being required to outline how they can support economic growth and work with local communities to listen to passengers, residents and businesses is supported. However, this can only be delivered through specific staff being tasked with community engagement. Bidders should be required to ensure that this function is delivered for the length of the franchise.**

*Q20: If there are any additional areas that you think it is important for us to consider that have not already been addressed in this consultation please explain them here.*

**CCDC COMMENT -**

- **The recognition of the need to improve the capacity, capability and reliability of the rail network is fully supported. 30% of all am peak journeys into Birmingham City Centre are now made by rail and this trend needs to be encouraged, if not accelerated, including reducing the costs of rail travel. In the Cannock Chase District, there is an urgent need for funding to deliver the Chase Line, Walsall-Rugeley linespeed improvement, restoration of a half-hourly off-peak service, new inter-urban services and continued investment in station facilities, particularly after electrification in December 2017.**
- **Other – Appendix A: Franchise map is incorrect. A daily evening service from Euston to Crewe operates direct from Rugeley Trent Valley to Stoke on Trent via Hixon avoiding Stafford. This route is not shown on the map.**
- **Appendix F: Albrighton is within Shropshire Council. Bridgnorth Council no longer exists.**