

## **Submission from Rail Passengers Committee, Eastern England and London Transport Users Committee**

18 June 2004

Thank you for your letter of the 4<sup>th</sup> June.

London Transport Users Committee (LTUC) is the statutory body representing the users of most public transport in Greater London and the users of national rail services, inter alia, between London and Stevenage and Stansted Airport, Harold Wood, Upminster and Purfleet. The Rail Passengers Committee for Eastern England is the statutory body representing the interests of national rail passengers, inter alia, in those parts of East Anglia not covered by LTUC. This response is submitted on behalf of both Committees.

We recognise that the award of the Greater Anglia Rail Franchise to the National Express Group has resulted in a single operator providing all passenger rail services in East Anglia. We also recognise that there are some locations in East Anglia that are served by the National Express long-distance coach network, primarily, but not exclusively, radiating from London.

In practice, however, the impact of this concentration of services in the hands of a single company in some respects changes little from the situation prior to the award of the Greater Anglia franchise. West Anglia Great Northern (WAGN) – also a National Express Group company – previously ran services both from Kings Cross/Moorgate and Liverpool Street to Cambridge. Stansted Express, then part of the WAGN franchise, competed with National Express coaches for the London - Stansted Airport market following the latter's takeover of Cambridge Coach Services.

Two rail services are, however, now in the hands of a single operator where previously competition has existed. These two services are (a) between London and Southend (but not in respect of intermediate stations); and (b) between London and certain major stations, such as Chelmsford, Colchester and Ipswich, on the Great Eastern main line which had previously been served both by Anglia Railways and First Great Eastern.

We believe that for the passengers we represent, the most important issue is quality of service. It matters little who the operator is, so long as safeguards are in place to encourage improved quality and to penalise poor quality. The Strategic Rail Authority's (SRA) rail franchising process does just this. The SRA has powers to remove poor performing operators, thus providing the ultimate safeguard in this regard.

We believe that where National Express coach services operate between destinations served by National Express rail franchises, real competition exists in respect of price, speed and frequency. Coaches are generally less frequent, slower and cheaper than trains.

We would support undertakings being obtained from the National Express Group in respect of rail fares between London and Southend to retain the present relativities between the c2c and One routes with change only being permitted with the agreement if the SRA, after consultation with our two Committees.

We believe that service levels on the two routes to Southend are largely determined by demand from other stations along the lines and are anyway subject to SRA

specifications. There should be no need to put in place any undertakings on this matter.

We would be happy to elaborate on our response either in writing or at any hearing that might be arranged.

Yours sincerely

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