



# News Release

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## **NATIONAL EXPRESS THAMESLINK AND GREAT NORTHERN INQUIRY**

### **Statement of issues**

The Competition Commission (CC) has today published an issues statement as part of its inquiry into the anticipated acquisition by National Express Group plc (NEG) of the Thameslink and Great Northern (TGN) rail franchise.

The CC has been asked to consider whether the acquisition may be expected to result in a substantial lessening of competition in the supply of passenger transport services.

NEG currently operates the Gatwick Express, Greater Anglia, Midland Mainline and Silverlink train franchises as well as a network of coach services. NEG is one of five shortlisted bidders for the TGN franchise.

The inquiry group intends to concentrate principally on the effect of the merger on overlapping rail and coach services between London and:

- Luton, Luton Airport and Bedford
- Gatwick Airport

The issues statement follows the initial process of gathering information, views and evidence and identifies clearly for all interested parties the specific questions and areas the inquiry will be examining. This will form the basis for the hearings with NEG and other interested parties. The full issues statement is available at:

[www.competition-commission.org.uk/inquiries/ref2005/neg/pdf/issues\\_statement.pdf](http://www.competition-commission.org.uk/inquiries/ref2005/neg/pdf/issues_statement.pdf)

A map of rail services serving London and the South East including the routes in question is available at:

[www.nationalrail.co.uk/system/galleries/download/print\\_maps/LxSE\\_May\\_x05.pdf](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/system/galleries/download/print_maps/LxSE_May_x05.pdf)

If the Group considers that the merger may be expected to result in a substantial lessening of competition, it will consider whether and, if so, what remedies might be appropriate, issuing any remedies statement, should this be required, at about the time it publishes its provisional findings.

The issues statement should not be seen as implying that the Group has identified any competition concerns - the CC has yet to reach any conclusions on this inquiry. The purpose of making the statement of issues public is to inform all interested parties and give them an opportunity to raise any further points with the CC. The CC would like to hear from all interested parties, in writing, by 28 September 2005. To submit evidence, please write to:

Nigel Dorling  
Inquiry Secretary (National Express/Thameslink)  
Competition Commission  
Victoria House  
Southampton Row  
LONDON WC1B 4AD

or email: [nigel.dorling@competition-commission.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:nigel.dorling@competition-commission.gsi.gov.uk).

The CC will now continue to gather evidence in this inquiry and will publish its provisional findings according to the administrative timetable available on the CC web site.

#### **Notes for editors**

1. The acquisition of a rail franchise is treated as a merger under the Railways Act 1993.
2. The inquiry was referred to the CC by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) on 3 August 2005. The CC is required to publish its final report by 17 January 2006.
3. The Enterprise Act 2002 empowers the OFT to refer to the CC completed or proposed mergers for investigation and report which create or enhance a 25 per cent share of supply in the UK (or a substantial part thereof) or where the UK turnover associated with the enterprise being acquired is over £70 million.
4. The NEG/Thameslink Inquiry Group consists of four members: Diane Coyle (Group Chairman), Ivar Grey, Jeremy Peat and Peter Stoddart.
5. Enquiries should be directed to Rory Taylor or Francis Royle on 020 7271 0242 or [rory.taylor@competition-commission.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:rory.taylor@competition-commission.gsi.gov.uk) or [francis.royle@competition-commission.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:francis.royle@competition-commission.gsi.gov.uk)