

East Midlands Rail Franchise
Consultation Co-ordinator
Zone 2/21
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

10th October 2017

Dear Sir / Madam,

East Midlands Rail Franchise – Sheffield City Council response

I have pleasure in submitting this response to the East Midlands Rail Franchise consultation on behalf of Sheffield City Council.

This response sets out our comments on the questions posed in the consultation form, but for convenience we have transposed them into a separate document.

I have also included as an appendix ten key issues for the new franchise that have been agreed jointly by ourselves together with Sheffield City Region Combined Authority and Local Enterprise Partnership, South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive, and Sheffield Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This has been submitted formally under separate cover.

This response from Sheffield City Council emphasises the importance of the East Midlands Rail Franchise to Sheffield. The Midland Mainline provides the key inter-city link between Sheffield and London as well as with the East Midlands.

The inter-regional service between Liverpool and Norwich links Sheffield to the major cities of Liverpool, Manchester and Nottingham, and provides a key link to East Anglia. It is vital that the Invitation to Tender and franchise specification recognise that the franchise extends beyond the East Midlands.

I look forward to continued constructive engagement with the Department for Transport and the new franchise operator to enhance the rail and station offer from the East Midlands franchise for Sheffield. We would also, of course, welcome some additional 'quick win' enhancements as part of the current extended direct award.

Yours faithfully,

Councillor Jack Scott
Cabinet Member for Transport, Sheffield City Council

Sheffield City Council response to the Department for Transport Consultation on the re-tendering of the East Midlands Rail Franchise

Introduction: common view

The City Council has discussed this consultation with Sheffield City Region (SCR), South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTTE) and Sheffield Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and we have collectively identified a common view on many of the issues. As a result, we have agreed 10 key areas and these have been submitted separately as a joint response: they are attached to this submission as an appendix. We are, as always, happy to discuss any of this response further with the Department.

Introduction: the importance of the East Midlands Franchise to Sheffield

The success of the East Midlands Rail Franchise is vitally important to the functioning of the city and its future success as the core city at the heart of Sheffield City Region. Particularly crucial are the successful operation of both the Midland Mainline (MML) and Sheffield Midland Station.

The Midland Mainline provides the key link between London and Sheffield - the largest city on the MML outside London. The MML is also the key link between Sheffield and the East Midlands, including Chesterfield (within Sheffield City Region), Derby and Leicester. It is important that all franchise specification work recognises the importance of this franchise to this region, its economy, environment and community, as well as to the East Midlands, as well as the links between them. (Indeed, parts of the East Midlands lie within the Sheffield City Region).

Sheffield Midland Station is the hub for all our rail services, with East Midlands Trains (Midland Mainline and Liverpool-Norwich services), Northern, TransPennine Express and Cross Country running services direct to most major cities in the country. Sheffield Midland Station therefore plays a crucial role as both a key gateway into the City and a driver of economic growth through the connectivity it provides. The city centre location places it firmly at the heart of City Council and City Region economic planning, with the City Centre as the main driver of new jobs, acting as a hub for existing and future Knowledge, Creative and Digital Industries, Leisure, Higher Education, Culture and Financial and Professional Services.

The East Midlands service between Liverpool and Norwich links Sheffield (Midland) to the key cities of Liverpool, Manchester and Nottingham, as well as intermediate towns such as Stockport and Warrington, and also provides the only direct rail link between Sheffield and East Anglia.

In addition, the Robin Hood Line provides links to Sheffield (Midland) via interchange at Worksop (which is within Sheffield City Region).

The Sheffield City Region



SCC wants to secure significant improvements to services over the course of the next franchise to support our ambitions for city growth. We welcome the progress that the current EM franchise operator has made in enhancing its services and stations, including several significant improvements that were delivered and funded through joint working with local partners. The progress on achieving faster journeys to London and greater reliability across the network is welcome. It is important that the new franchise operator continues this good work to improve frequency, connectivity, capacity, stations and the overall passenger experience.

For the longer term, this role for Sheffield Midland as a hub for the city and city region has been strengthened by the Government’s confirmation that HS2 will serve Sheffield Midland. We have been assured that the ‘northern loop’ will be electrified so that HS2 services can do this, and run on to Leeds and the north, linking with Transport for the North’s (TfN) aspirations for a high speed network (Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR)) linking the major northern cities. The City Region is leading work on an HS2 Growth Strategy, with City Council involvement, which includes work on what is required to improve connectivity to the station from across the City Region as well as work to develop a Masterplan for Sheffield Midland as the hub for all rail services to/from Sheffield. While these services will not commence operation during this franchise, there is likely to be ongoing development work and **it is crucial that the EMT operator is engaged in this work as it relates to the development of**

Sheffield Midland Station and the route infrastructure and services into it. We therefore expect the East Midlands TOC to be required to co-operate on longer-term planning work.

The City Council also wishes to express its concern about the current operation of the railway industry as a whole: Network Rail and the franchise system are not providing the investment that is needed in infrastructure and rolling stock. We are particularly disappointed that the MML electrification beyond Kettering has been cancelled. There are other issues caused by the lack of integration and co-ordination between different franchises and some of these are noted in the responses to the consultation questions below.

City Council Response to Franchise Consultation Questions

Q1. How do you think closer co-operation between staff in Network Rail and the operator of the next East Midlands franchise can be achieved?

Closer co-operation and good lines of communication between Network Rail and the franchise holder are vital in relation to day-to-day operation; dealing with any disruption; and progressing infrastructure improvements. EMT is currently co-located with Network Rail in the Derby Rail Operating Centre (ROC) for day-to-day operations. We propose that TOC representatives also have a presence in other ROCs that control the routes that the franchise will serve, to ensure that dialogue is consistent.

Joint working will be especially important during the forthcoming major upgrade works on the MML including Derby station re-modelling, Market Harborough upgrade and electrification south of Kettering, and with the challenges of the introduction of the new Thameslink timetable in 2018 and the 6th inter-city train to Corby from 2019, in order to minimise disruption to services and passengers during these changes. Closer co-operation will also be vital in relation to future electrification of the 'northern loop' to an HS2-ready state and improvements at Sheffield Midland

Joint working should also involve the other TOCs using EM lines and stations as much as necessary. Interworking between TOCs is currently achieved in our region with the use of 'concordats', for the purposes of enhancing cooperation between the two parties in the delivery of their respective franchise services. This is useful for ensuring that the operators can work collaboratively on matters which affect both parties. We recommend that a provision for the next franchisee to seek concordats with the Cross-Country, Northern, TransPennine Express and Thameslink franchisees is included in the franchise specification.

We are also keen to see more devolved decision-making and the active engagement of Sheffield and the East Midlands local authorities. This could possibly be through Rail North which covers much, although not all, of this franchise, or a similar collaborative group.

Q2. How can the operator of the next East Midlands franchise engage with community rail partnerships or heritage railways to support the local economy to stimulate demand for rail services in the region?

There are two Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) which cover services into Sheffield Midland - the High Peak and Hope Valley CRP which includes the Hope Valley line; and the North Notts and Lincs CRP (recently established) which includes the Sheffield–Worksop-Lincoln line.

These should be encouraged and facilitated by the future EM franchise operator, working in partnership with local authorities.

There are also a number of active ‘Friends of Stations’ and Rail User Groups in the area, including at Dronfield station; Dore and Totley station; and on the Hope Valley line. The new operator should engage closely with these groups, which have been very successful in promoting their local stations and services, leading to significant increases in patronage. Such groups can often bid for community/lottery funding which can support small scale station enhancements.

Q3. Do you think that the operator of the train service, stations and support services should take the following into consideration when they run the franchise:

- **The environment?**
- **Equality?**
- **Communities in the areas they operate?**

Y/N - Your reasons. If so, how should they do this?

Yes, we consider that it is important that the franchise operator takes all these issues into consideration.

The environment

Air pollution is a critically important issue for the City Council which has been recently designated as a Clean Air Zone. Sheffield Midland Station has recently been identified as one of four areas in the city centre that breaches EU threshold limits for Nitrogen Dioxide (NOx) levels, for which diesel engines are a major source. It is important that the new operator takes steps to reduce air pollution at stations and as part of their operations. This is particularly pertinent given the recent announcement that the MML will not be fully electrified to Sheffield. It is important that new bi-mode trains have reduced emissions when in diesel operation, including when standing at stations and particularly termini.

The worst exceedances of EU threshold levels for NOx in Sheffield are on the station platforms and covered footbridge. This is directly as a result of the diesel trains that serve the station. **Whilst improvements to the next TOC’s Carbon emissions are important, Nitrogen Dioxide and Fine Particulate (PM10 and PM2.5) levels should also be measured, and improved, as part of the new franchise.**

We would like the TOC to be required to work with us and others (e.g. Q-Park) to develop and fund measures to tackle air quality at and around Midland Station and its impact on staff and passengers and encourage access by cleaner means including an obligation on the franchise holder to agree taxi permit numbers with us. There is a particular air quality issue immediately outside the station caused by large numbers of taxis which we are keen to tackle through a mixture of reducing waiting taxi numbers and encouraging/specifying greater use of electric/hybrid vehicles. The current arrangements operate under a permit system from the TOC which we would like to see revised through joint working.

Related to this, there is now good quality, well managed secure cycle parking at Midland Station at the cycle hub at the station but cyclists are not able to cycle legally to the front door of the hub. The road access to the hub is the same access road as that used by taxis which presents safety issues for cyclists as well as well as poor air quality.

Air quality beyond the station: we note that there is significant running of empty trains over long distances due to base locations of trains and crew. This creates environmental pollution for no passenger benefit.

Equality

The franchise consultation has been discussed in Sheffield by the Transport 4 All group which is a forum of disabled people which acts as a pool of expertise to advise the City Council, Passenger Transport Executive and local public transport service providers on all aspects of transport provision and transport infrastructure for people with disabilities. **Sheffield Transport 4 All is submitting a response to the consultation so, rather than duplicate, we commend and refer you to that.** We note that the group is offering to work with the TOC to improve facilities and services for customers with disabilities and recommend that this offer is taken up.

In relation to groups with other protected characteristics, it would be interesting to hear what work there is on rail use and rail experience.

Communities

Particular community issues relevant to Sheffield and this franchise include air quality around the station (see above) and local accessibility. Importantly, the footbridge at the station links the station concourse, train services, the Supertram stop and local residential areas without any barriers. We understand that increasing passenger numbers mean that the footbridge and platform steps from it will need to be improved/replaced within the life of this franchise: this is important for passenger safety.

There must be a requirement on the operator to work with the City Council, Network Rail and others as appropriate to do this in a way that maintains and improves local barrier-

free accessibility, as well as future-proofing in relation to electrification of the northern loop and future station Masterplanning and redevelopment (HS2 and NPR).

In summary, in relation to Q3, we would like a Franchise requirement to work with the City Council (and others as appropriate) to improve station facilities; tackle air quality; and plan for future services and infrastructure.

Q4. Do you agree with our proposed approach, which could reduce journey times on long distance services and increase the likelihood of getting a seat?

As the consultation document points out, there are two key markets on the MML - the long distance inter-city market and the commuter market from stations closer to London, particularly southwards from Kettering. The MML is a key link between Sheffield and London and it is important that journey times are reduced as much as possible to maintain and increase the attractiveness of rail, for business travel and also for social and leisure journeys. This proposal will address the anomaly of some peak trains currently having longer journey times than off-peak trains between Sheffield and London. We therefore welcome the approach proposed.

The City Council has been making the case, for some time, for a reliable journey time of less than 2 hours between Sheffield and London which is hugely important in attracting investment in some of our target employment sectors. The importance placed in the city region on reducing journey times to London is illustrated by the agreement made for Sheffield City Region to contribute £5m to Network Rail's Line Speed Improvement Scheme on the MML at Market Harborough. **We would like to see a regular and reliable journey time of less than 2 hours between London and Sheffield with a better clock-face than currently, to include an earlier morning service to get business people to London before 0900.** Conferences and many meetings often start at 0900/0930, so the existing first peak fast train (the Master Cutler) which leaves Sheffield at 0729 arriving St Pancras 0933 is not adequate. We think this changed approach will also improve the likelihood, for business travellers, of getting a seat on London to Sheffield/Chesterfield return journeys northbound, following meetings in London where unpredictable finish times mean that seat reservations are more difficult to book.

However, in omitting stops south of Leicester from peak Sheffield trains, it is important that good connections are provided at Leicester for passengers from Sheffield/Chesterfield who may wish to access intermediate stations, both in the peak and off-peak. This must take account of platforming and customer assistance, allowing time for connections to be comfortably made.

We have some concerns about whether new bi-mode trains will be able to maintain improved journey times reliably, given the speeds achieved by existing rolling stock. It is important that they are capable of at least 125 mph in electric and diesel mode, with the

most efficient acceleration, braking and door opening capability, to enable a reliable Sheffield to London journey times of less than 2 hours. We note that there is limited UK operational experience with these trains and only one or two types of bi-mode train are available on the market; also that the bi-modal stock on the ECML can operate at 140 mph where electric but only 110 mph where diesel.

Q5. What are your suggestions about how to mitigate the potential loss of some direct services between Oakham, Melton Mowbray and London?

No comment.

Q6. Additional seats for passengers are, in your view, most needed: on which EM services? On which EM routes? At which times of day?

The proposed approach for MML (Q4) should relieve crowding on inter-city services between London and Sheffield at busy times, including making it easier to find seats on London to Sheffield and Chesterfield return journeys

The main focus of rail commuting, and therefore the need for additional capacity, in the city region is on services into and out of Sheffield in the peak hours. Therefore, on EM services there is a need for additional capacity between Chesterfield and Sheffield on the MML and into Sheffield in both directions on the Liverpool-Norwich services. There is also a significant level of commuting from Sheffield (including Dore and Totley) to Stockport and Manchester on the latter services. Additional capacity would be welcome on all local services during peak times where there is demand.

The expansion of the Liverpool to Norwich service to 4-cars between Liverpool and Nottingham was a very welcome development, providing much needed additional capacity on this busy section of the route. However, this service suffers from regular short-forming due to the age of the rolling stock. Further additional capacity, including seating and luggage, is expected to be required on this route during the life of this franchise and should be planned for.

Consideration should be given to reducing the number of first class carriages in relation to standard class on inter-city trains. On 7-car Meridian trains between Sheffield and London there are usually 3 first class carriages, while on 5-car trains it is usually 1.5 carriages, which is a high proportion of total capacity and reduces seating capacity for standard class passengers. Ideally first class should occupy no more than 20% of total train carriage capacity. It is important that new rolling stock is configured with a suitable balance of standard to first class capacity.

7. Which on-board facilities in order of preference, are most important to you (indicate your preference from 1 –highest – to 13 – lowest)? On (1) journeys of up to 60 mins and (2) journeys of over 60 mins

The list is:

- **Baby changing facilities**
- **Catering**
- **CCTV**
- **Cycle storage**
- **First class areas**
- **Free wi-fi**
- **Luggage space**
- **Power sockets**
- **Seat-back tables**
- **Table seating**
- **USB sockets**
- **Wheelchair space**

As we are not responding directly as or on behalf of rail users, we have not prioritised this list of on-board facilities. We refer you to Transport Focus's recently published research on what East Midlands rail passengers want from the next franchise and also commend the Sheffield Transport 4 All group's response already referenced in Q3. We consider these facilities important, indeed some are essential for all services, some more particularly for longer journeys, and we make the following comments:

Catering: improved catering facilities should be available, particularly on longer distance trains, including a better range of hot meals and sandwiches/snacks, and should cater for all diets;

Storage in general: adequate, versatile storage space including for wheelchairs, luggage, bicycles and pushchairs should be provided;

First class areas: it is important that the right balance is struck between first and standard class to meet demand (see the response to Q6). This should include a first class offer on Liverpool – Norwich services to at least match that on TPE Manchester – Sheffield – and preferably to exceed that offer as this is much longer journey;

Free and unlimited Wi-Fi: should be provided throughout the train on all inter-city services and inter-urban routes, as well as sockets and USB charging facilities.

Q8. What other on-board facilities should be:

Q8A - Introduced?

A number of family coaches could be available for use on the most appropriate trains.

Q8B - Improved?

The configuration of carriages between first and standard class can be flexible in some respects – e.g. improvements to Wi-Fi provision, charging facilities, catering, storage, table provision and so on, in combination with quiet coaches – can be used to provide the type of travel environment most suited to passengers making particular types of journeys;

Better on-board real-time information and customer assistance;

Allocated seats or improved seat management systems: such as information on platforms about which coach stops where and which coaches are pre-booked;

Well maintained and accessible toilet facilities on every train should be a given. If toilet facilities have become broken, then information about facilities that are not working should be provided to passengers before boarding. This could be done through working with customer announcement system suppliers to develop a method for conveying such information.

Q9. How could your local train services be changed to better meet your current and future needs? Including:

- **At peak and/or off peak periods?**
- **During the early mornings, late evenings, or at weekends?**
- **At Christmas and New Year periods?**
- **During the Summer period?**
- **For students travelling to local schools?**
- **To special events? (and let us know which events you are thinking of)**
- **New housing, employment or retail developments?**
- **On journeys where interchange is poor?**

Early mornings, late evenings and weekends: we are keen to see better services in the early mornings, later evenings and at weekends, with the railway operating as a 7-day railway. East Midlands Trains has made good progress with reducing journey times on Sunday services of late but we hope the new franchise will have 7 day specification on journey times. Sunday afternoon and evening is a peak travel time: there is growing demand for Sunday travel across the day and our railways are lagging behind in adequate provision.

This includes the need to operate earlier in the morning, to ensure first trains arrive in city centres such as Sheffield before 10am, to allow retail and other workers to get to work by train – so local services from stations including Dronfield and Chesterfield. There are more specific suggestions for early morning, late evening and weekend services in later sections below.

Christmas and New Year: the railway should operate throughout the year including on Boxing Day. In line with the current TPE and Northern franchises, we would like the new franchisee to consider the viability of providing Boxing Day services. There needs to be a commitment to work with TPE and Northern to ensure they can deliver their Boxing Day proposals, for example the opening of stations where EMT is the station operator and Northern or TPE services call, such as Sheffield Midland.

Possible changes to Liverpool-Norwich services to better meet current and future needs: see our response to Q15 below. This includes comments on late evening services between Sheffield and Manchester and also between Sheffield and Nottingham.

Possible changes to MML services to better meet current and future needs:

We would like to see the provision of two fast trains per hour between Sheffield, Chesterfield and London, which are evenly spaced at 30 minute intervals to provide a regular and consistent service offer to passengers, with good connections provided between inter-city, inter-regional and local services at key interchange stations such as Derby and Leicester: see our response to Q4.

There may be some opportunity to improve links between other parts of South Yorkshire and London, extending some services to run direct to Barnsley or Rotherham. This needs further consideration and must ensure that there is no negative impact on Sheffield – London services. However, we would like the next EMT franchisee to be required to co-operate with any work on options to extend these services.

Early mornings, late evenings and weekend changes to MML:

- We would like to see the introduction of later weekday and Saturday evening services between Sheffield and London and propose specifically (1) London to Sheffield: Currently the last train leaves London at 20:56, which is too early for people visiting London for an evening out. A later train leaving London between 22:00 and 22.30 would better serve day visitors to London allowing the option of departing after some evening entertainment; and (2) Sheffield to London: Currently the last 'fast' service leaves Sheffield at 19:29 and the last 'semi-fast' at 20:49 (Sx): we would like to see a later fast southbound departure leaving for London at around 21:30.
- We would like to see the introduction of better Sunday services between Sheffield and London and specifically propose earlier northbound services and better journey times. Currently the first train leaves London at 09.30 and calls at all main stations, arriving in Sheffield at 12:28. We would like to see an earlier northbound departure around 08:30 with an improved journey time arriving into Sheffield before 11:00. There is then only an hourly stopping service for most of the day on Sundays, taking

up to 3 hours, enhanced by a number of faster services in the evening. This presumably reflects the fact that the main passenger demand is later in the day from people returning from a weekend away. Nevertheless, we would like to see the introduction of an hourly all-day fast/semi-fast service to meet growing demand for Sunday travel.

Other possible changes to services to better meet current and future needs:

Dronfield: Dronfield station has been a success story since regular passenger services were reintroduced in 2008, with patronage increasing from 35,000 passengers per annum (ppa) in 2008/09 to almost 200,000 ppa in 2015/16 (ORR figures). It is served by some Northern services on the Nottingham–Leeds route and some EMT services on the Liverpool-Norwich route. There is demand for additional trains to call at Dronfield, particularly at peak times and particularly to improve links to Sheffield, Chesterfield, Nottingham and Manchester. Most of these additional trains are likely to be provided by the Northern franchise. However, consideration should be given to stopping additional East Midlands trains at Dronfield. Specifically, we proposed that the current EMT 21:37 Liverpool–Nottingham (23:37 ex Sheffield) train could call at Dronfield to provide a later service that better serves the evening economy.

Robin Hood Line: The Robin Hood Line from Nottingham to Mansfield and Worksop has been a great success since it reopened in the 1990s. This line currently has an hourly service to Worksop and an hourly service to Mansfield Woodhouse. Consideration should be given to extending the hourly Mansfield Woodhouse train to Worksop to provide a half-hourly frequency along the whole line. This would complement the doubling of the frequency on the Sheffield-Retford service, as proposed by Northern under its franchise. Connections between the two lines at Worksop are currently very poor, with in most cases a wait of at least 30 minutes in both directions. Connection times at Worksop should therefore be improved to make rail journeys between North Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire and Sheffield more competitive with car journey times.

Q10. What additional services would you wish to see provided in the next franchise?

These are in addition to those proposed in response to Q9 and Q15.

Sheffield – Manchester

The EMT Liverpool – Norwich route (see Q15) uses the South TransPennine (Hope Valley) line: this line is the only direct rail link between Sheffield City Region and Manchester City Region (including Stockport and Manchester Airport) and Liverpool City Region. The current service of two ‘fast’ trains (one EMT and one TPE) is not adequate to meet current or anticipated levels of demand.

In the short-term, the new franchise should ensure co-ordination of the EMT Liverpool–Norwich services with the TPE services to provide as evenly spaced an interval as possible. At present the timings are relatively well co-ordinated, but there is a 3-4 minute difference in journey time between the two services on the Sheffield–Manchester route, despite the same stopping pattern. Journey times are also several minutes slower in the westbound direction compared to eastbound due to pathing delays, mainly in the Stockport area. We would like to see these journey time anomalies ironed out and the franchise holder required to discuss how this could be achieved with Network Rail. This should also include better timetable co-ordination between EMT and TPE to provide an evenly-spaced and consistent quality of service, with similar journey time and fare offers.

SCC's aspiration for Sheffield and Manchester connectivity (to drive agglomeration benefits to the northern economies) reflects that of SCR and TfN for six fast tph. The shorter-term aspiration is for at least three 'fast' Sheffield–Manchester trains taking no more than 40 minutes with evenly spaced departures, in addition to an hourly stopping service on the Hope Valley Line, as soon as the Northern Hub (Hope Valley line capacity works) infrastructure is in place to allow this. This shorter-term aspiration will be enabled by the Hope Valley Capacity scheme. We are waiting for the decision on the Inspector's Report into this, following Public Inquiry: the Report has been with DfT since November 2016. This upgrade is a fairly modest scheme which will provide additional capacity on the only existing rail route between the core cities of Manchester and Sheffield. **We would like to see this additional third 'fast' service provided within the timespan of this next franchise** (whichever franchise it becomes part of).

We understand that there is pressure from some East Midlands quarters for this valuable new train path on the Hope Valley line to be used for improved services between the East Midlands and Manchester/Liverpool via Dore South Curve which would not serve Sheffield. We are totally opposed to this – **any new capacity through the Hope Valley must be used for services between Sheffield and Manchester. This is backed up by the aspiration for 6 fast tph (30 mins) between Manchester and Sheffield as part of the Northern Powerhouse Rail network: achieving this aspiration will be work for the longer-term but shorter term improvements to the existing route should be made wherever possible.**

There may be a number of destination options for such a service beyond Sheffield and Manchester. These would include Liverpool (there is demand for additional direct services between Sheffield and Liverpool), Manchester Airport and Hull, all of which could contribute towards the NPR network.

Doncaster Sheffield Airport

We would like to see a train service to our fast developing regional airport – Doncaster Sheffield Airport. There are various studies going on into some different propositions for rail links to the airport: we just note that a link to Sheffield would be welcome.

Q11. Do you support the proposal to reopen the line between Shirebrook and Ollerton to passenger trains? Y/N. Your reasons? If so, what sources of investment could be identified to fund this proposal?

We are neutral regarding this proposal which would not directly serve Sheffield City Region. However, we would like to see Mansfield Woodhouse trains extended to Worksop, doubling that frequency, and linking at Worksop into the Sheffield – Lincoln line services: see our comments on the Robin Hood Line in the response to Q9. It may also be feasible to run future services direct between Sheffield – Worksop - Mansfield.

Q12. Do you think that the current number of services on the Midland Main Line to and from Luton Airport Parkway is adequate?

This airport largely serves the north London and south Midlands market: Sheffield is better served by airports at Manchester; Doncaster Sheffield; and East Midlands (see Q14).

Q13. Would you like additional fast trains from London each hour to call at Luton Airport Parkway if this meant that, as a trade-off:

- **Some services are withdrawn from other stations, such as Luton?**
- **Journey times to other stations may increase?**
- **Freight capacity and/or frequency is reduced?**

See our response to Q12. We would not support fast MML trains between Sheffield and London stopping at Luton Airport Parkway: there is a trade-off between faster journey times and stops at stations such as this.

Q14. How could the train service be better at meeting the needs of passengers travelling to and from the airports within the East Midlands franchise?

Our priorities for improved rail access to airports would be to Manchester; Doncaster Sheffield; and East Midlands.

EMT services only serve East Midlands Parkway, the station for East Midlands Airport, directly – on the MML. However, the Parkway station is some distance from the Airport and there is no public transport link. If MML trains are to continue to stop here on a semi-regular basis, then there should be a rail link bus service funded by the franchise holder.

On Doncaster Sheffield, see our response in Q10 about the need for a new station and services linking to Sheffield.

Manchester International Airport is served directly from Sheffield by TPE services. The EMT Liverpool-Norwich service is also used by Sheffield residents/visitors using Manchester Airport, although it involves a change at Manchester Piccadilly. This EMT service also serves

Liverpool John Lennon Airport via Liverpool South Parkway Station which has a good rail link bus connection.

In general, train services which serve airports should provide additional luggage space that can be viewed from within the carriage. In this franchise, this applies particularly to the Liverpool–Norwich service (used for both Liverpool and Manchester Airports), where it is clear luggage capacity has been sacrificed for additional seating capacity. Lack of luggage capacity also harms accessibility for both the visually impaired with higher likelihood of trip hazards, and for wheelchair users having no space.

Q15. What ideas do you have for improving the current service on the Liverpool–Norwich route?

The Liverpool-Norwich service provides a key link between Sheffield and Manchester, and Sheffield and Nottingham, also serving Chesterfield, with three trains in the morning and three in the evening also calling at Dronfield. It also provides the only direct link between Sheffield and Liverpool and provides one of the two ‘fast’ services between Sheffield and Manchester and the fastest service between Sheffield and Nottingham. **Rail currently has a 42% market share for journeys between Sheffield and Manchester, and 44% between Nottingham and Manchester, reflecting the importance of the Liverpool-Norwich service in serving this route**, and the slow road links across the Peak District.

We understand that the majority of the passengers using this route are travelling on the section between Nottingham and Liverpool but that there are (on the face of it) conflicting figures about the volume of cross-Nottingham travel which we understand that DfT is investigating further. Putting the mapping question to one side, we note that this service provides the only ‘cross country’ link between East Anglia and South Yorkshire/the North West and is a long-standing and well-used route.

We would strongly object to any reduction in connectivity from Sheffield and think there is scope to improve and develop these services. We also note that accessibility for those with disabilities is also aided by having fewer, or no connections for journeys.

Improving the current service west from Sheffield:

The service between Sheffield and Liverpool is in need of further additional capacity, including seating and luggage, during the life of this franchise, as well as better catering, some first class provision and through train access. Serving Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield and Nottingham, as it does, it would seem to deserve **consideration for upgrade to Inter City fleet.**

Later weekday and Saturday evening services between Sheffield, Manchester and Liverpool would be a great improvement. For example, currently the last ‘semi-fast’ service from Manchester to Sheffield leaves Piccadilly at 22.28 serving Stockport and the Hope Valley.

This is an EMT service. This is followed by one extremely slow (over 1.30 hours) service (not EMT) at 23.50 which is direct from Manchester Piccadilly to Sheffield with no intermediate stops and not via the Hope Valley. The train is well used, indicating demand for better late evening services in this direction. (The service in the other direction is somewhat better, with a service at 22.48 out of Sheffield through the Hope Valley – this is not EMT - allowing a reasonable evening out in Sheffield).

Improving the current service south and east from Sheffield:

Cambridge: we think there is a case for a new link between Sheffield/Nottingham and Cambridge – potentially from the north-west if not re-mapped - which is a rapidly growing city region and important academic centre with no direct rail link to the north of England at present. At present a 4-coach train provides the service from Liverpool to Nottingham and 2 coaches then go on to Norwich. We suggest running the 4-coach train as far as Ely and then splitting it there, with 2 coaches running to Norwich as now and 2 coaches running on to Cambridge and possibly on to Stansted Airport.

Sheffield – Nottingham: journey times are uncompetitive with road at present and should be improved if possible. There is a piece of work to be done with the franchise holder and Network Rail to see how this could be achieved.

Later weekday and Saturday evening services between Sheffield and Nottingham would be a great improvement. These services are EMT services: with the last direct service from Nottingham to Sheffield currently running at 21.46. The service in the other direction is somewhat better, with a similar service at 21.37 but then a later one at 23.37, allowing a reasonable evening out in Sheffield. Late evening services could also be improved by additional station stops – see Q9 in relation to Dronfield and late evening services.

Dore and Totley station: PTE passenger surveys show that Dore and Totley station has quite a large catchment area and currently acts as a ‘park and ride’ station for services to Manchester and further afield (including Manchester Airport) as well as Sheffield. There is a roughly 50/50 split between people travelling to Sheffield Midland (& possibly onwards) and people travelling towards Manchester: however 80% of people who park there are travelling towards Manchester. There is demand for more services to stop at Dore and Totley: for example, SCR/LEP and SCCI would like to consideration given to stopping additional EMT Liverpool-Norwich trains there, particularly at peak times. Other TOCs would like to stop more services here and are keen to see additional car parking at the station. In addition, SYPTE did some feasibility work a couple of years ago to look at the case for reinstatement of the platforms on the MML. The Northern Hub (Hope Valley line capacity works) includes for double-tracking through Dore station and a new (second) platform on the Hope Valley Line to allow for improvements to Manchester such as the third ‘fast’ train.

This is a prime example where the structure and operation of the railway industry as a whole makes it very difficult to determine any way forward. The station and car park is operated by Northern. EMT is one of 3 TOCs, together with Northern and TPE, which operate services that stop here. Network Rail will be undertaking the infrastructure improvements. While there is demand for more services to stop, and possibly for more parking, this will have implications for local traffic levels. **We would therefore like to see a requirement on the next franchise holder to work with all stakeholders on this.**

Q16. Would you support changing the destinations served by the existing Birmingham – Stansted Airport service, such as serving Norwich instead of Stansted Airport? 5 options from strongly support to strongly oppose

No comment.

Q17. Are you in favour of any of these route changes: Y/N & your reasons:

We are generally neutral on the franchise/operator for services, and instead focus on outcomes.

• **Liverpool – Norwich: part transfer to TransPennine Express.**

All fast services between Sheffield and Manchester/ Liverpool should offer a co-ordinated, competitive and consistent high quality inter-city service regardless of operator. The route should offer integrated ticketing, better inter-city style rolling stock, improved journey times, and joint promotion of the services. .

We understand that there is a proposal to re-map part of this route to the TPE franchise and that TPE sees this as an opportunity to provide service improvements between Sheffield and Manchester within a short period of time, ahead of any infrastructure improvements. There are pros and cons of transferring all or part of the route to TransPennine Express and we refer to our response to Q15. We also note that, if this service is to be split at Nottingham, we would want to see overlapping services between Liverpool–Nottingham and Sheffield–Norwich/Cambridge to maintain connectivity and strengthen the Sheffield–Nottingham service.

• **Birmingham – Nottingham: Transfer of local service from the Cross Country franchise.**

No comment.

• **Birmingham – Leicester/Stansted: Transfer service from the Cross Country franchise.**

No comment.

Q18. Would you like to see any other routes transferred to or from the East Midlands franchise? If so, which?

No comment.

Q19. Do you support increasing the frequency of train services in Lincolnshire despite the impact this may have on level crossing users? Y/N & your reasons:

We would like to see a regular service to Doncaster Sheffield Airport (see Q10). As noted there, there are various studies going on into some different propositions for rail links to the airport and we just note that a link to Sheffield would be welcome. One option is for a service on the Lincoln line which could potentially increase the frequency of train services in Lincolnshire.

Q20. How can we improve all aspects of your door-to-door journey experience?

Please see Questions 21 through to 26 for suggested improvements to aspects of the door-to-door journey experience. Those cover access to stations; facilities at stations; fares and ticket purchases; information and staffing issues. **We note that the Transport Focus results showed most customer dissatisfaction with (1) personal safety and security and (2) how the TOC deals with helping passengers when there is service disruption.**

Q21. What more could be done to improve access to stations, including for those with disabilities or additional needs?

What more could be done to provide better facilities at stations, including for those with disabilities or additional needs?

Q21 General

Our answer to this question is specifically with reference to Sheffield Midland. This franchise is critical to the functioning and future of the city and revolves around the successful operation of Sheffield Midland which is, and will continue to be, the hub for rail services in the city and city region. The station has seen significant growth in passenger numbers (more than doubling in the last 10 years) without major station investment. While it provides the facilities expected of a station of its size, it lags some way behind its peers in terms of its offer and quality. There are some fairly basic improvements that need to be made early in the franchise period: see below.

Network Rail modelling of anticipated future passenger flows shows that improvements will be needed early within the period of the next franchise to the footbridge and platform steps from it. It is also probable that a number of interventions and development related to electrification of the 'northern loop' will come forward. It is therefore crucial that the EMT operator is engaged in work related to the future of Sheffield Midland Station itself and the route infrastructure and future services into it. This is a key challenge for the next franchise holder. That longer-term work may provide more scope for expansion of what is currently a constrained site.

There must be a requirement on the operator to work with the City Council, Network Rail and others as appropriate to do this in a way that maintains and improves local accessibility, as well as future-proofing in relation to electrification of the northern loop and future station Masterplanning and redevelopment (HS2 and NPR).

Q21A. What more could be done to improve access to stations, including for those with disabilities or additional needs?

We are looking for a generally positive attitude to greater integration of transport modes linking to the station and would like a commitment within the franchise for joint working on this with Local Transport & Highway Authorities to integrate service improvements into wider transport networks in ways that improve air quality; community links and access for those with disabilities.

This would cover all means of transport to and from the station. Some particular points:

Supertram/local residents: the operator should work with SCC to maintain and improve **barrier-free access and permeability across the station between the city centre, the station concourse and train services, Supertram services at the station stop and local residents** - all linked by the footbridge at the station.

Car parking: drop-off/pick-up parking for Blue Badge holders should be reviewed with a view to improving facilities.

Taxis access: taxi access is good but causes air quality issues and impacts on station access for other means such as cycle access. There is now good quality, well managed, secure cycle parking at the cycle hub but road access is the same as that used by taxis and this presents safety issues for cyclists as well as poor air quality.

The City Council is currently working with EMT on a scheme to invest significantly in improving the forecourt and station access as part of a project called the Central Knowledge Gateway. **We would like to see this continue, with an obligation on the franchise holder to agree taxi permit numbers with us.**

EM at Sheffield Midland facilitates access to local South Yorkshire services operated by other TOCs. For passengers with disabilities, this access should be of a 'turn up and go' standard as it is for other passengers. Sufficient staff and regular attendance at T4A meetings would allow a closer feedback loop and co-operation.

Q21B. What more could be done to provide better facilities at stations, including for those with disabilities or additional needs?

At a very basic level, adequate doors, seating, lifts and disabled toilet facilities should be provided. There are problems at Sheffield Midland with the operation of one of the main doors and the lift which result from the increase in use over recent years and are life-

expired. These basic issues should be rectified as soon as possible, even before the next franchise commences. Maintenance of the backup set of lifts and footbridge (goods) must also be maintained to ensure Sheffield is a resilient station for wheelchair users to use.

There is space within the station concourse which is not currently utilised to its full extent so could be used to provide better facilities. For instance in the ticket office area (which suffers from flooding when there is heavy rain and so already needs some work to be carried out to it), the existing counters are not all needed as many people now purchase tickets in alternative ways. However, it is important to retain the appropriate number of ticket counters to meet the maximum level of need. This includes a counter suitable for disabled passengers as, for example, visually-impaired people cannot use ticket machines and also these machines can be inaccessible for wheelchair users.

Any changes to station lay-out should bear in mind the need for non-slip surfaces: this is a problem at the moment when surfaces are wet. Visually impaired passengers would also benefit from tactile navigation tiles on the main concourse from the main access points to the customer assistance point.

Proposals to improve Customer Assistance:

The Customer Service Desk should always be staffed: this is not currently always the case. If there is a particular reason that it cannot be staffed for short periods of time, then there should be an ability to 'hail' the staff that are on duty. This is particularly critical for those who have booked Customer Assistance as it is the meeting point for this. In addition, for many local journeys, disabled passengers will not book assistance in advance, nor should they have to. It is therefore important that the station is adequately staffed so that disabled passengers have sufficient and comparable access to other passengers.

Disabled people have also flagged up that it is important for Customer Assistance staff to wear hi-vis clothing to identify them;

Customer assistance if arrive by tram (no staff there): a big yellow 'help' button was installed at the tram stop to provide access to a person to talk to, but has never been operational. An alternative would anyway be needed for visually-impaired passengers;

A clearer process for customer assistance is needed: currently, the passenger is required to turn up 20 mins early: s/he will then be seated by the Customer Assistant (CA) who then goes away and returns nearer the train departure time. This can cause worry to passengers who may feel they have been forgotten: there is no way to contact them;

There is no system for people who have booked Customer Assistance to manage the booking on the day. For example, a passenger arriving by train can't communicate what seat they're in (if not pre-booked & reserved) so how will they be found (& do they wait in their

seat or try to get off the train). Or if they catch an earlier train home, they can't contact the destination station to change the CA arrangements;

In general, people using Customer Assistance need to be able to communicate independently with the service to enable them to travel more confidently and independently. So the service could be improved and generally it could be clearer how it should work.

Other proposals for station facilities:

MML train departures to London should always be from the platform where the First Class lounge is situated.

There should be free Wi-Fi provision across the station, with improved reliable coverage.

There should be adequate information, assistance and signage. This should include a better tactile station plan: the existing one is out-of-date and can't be updated. It was provided through RNIB. We understand that there are better ways of providing these maps now which enable them to be updated when necessary and also enable individual customers to have portable ones. Kelham Island Industrial Museum in Sheffield has been mentioned as an example of good practice.

Better information, assistance and signage at times of service changes, disruption or diversion are needed. Such things occur regularly, the most frequent type of change being platform alterations. Thought should be given to improving how these are communicated including to hearing-impaired passengers. Any such improvement would be of benefit to all passengers as it is frequently hard to hear announcements over the noise of the station.

Q22. How could the next franchise operator make better use of stations for community purposes?

How could the next franchise operator make better use of stations for commercial purposes?

Q22 General

Sheffield Station is the city's 'front door' and the first impression for many visitors and potential investors is very positive. It is important that it continues to create a positive impression of the city as it currently does, with its external high quality public space and Listed Buildings.

It is our Hub station for rail services. This response has already mentioned the work that will be going on over the course of this next franchise on services and infrastructure improvements. In addition, the City Council/SYPTE/SCR will be working on Supertram renewal and possible extension proposals as part of developing local and city region

transport plans. Some of this is looking further ahead than the next franchise period but it is crucial that the franchise holder is aware of these challenges and committed to work in partnership with us to tackle these and develop solutions which make best use for both community and commercial purposes.

Q22A. How could the next franchise operator make better use of stations for community purposes?

Stations have an important role to play as community hubs: at Sheffield Midland this includes the Sheffield Tap public house; the cycle facilities; and exhibition space. We welcome the active promotion by the current operator of the station as a community resource for non-rail related use.

As already emphasised, community cross-station access is also hugely important and must be maintained and improved to cater for increasing numbers, allowing free movement across the station..

Q22B. How could the next franchise operator make better use of stations for commercial purposes?

Sheffield Station is an important interchange located in Sheffield City Centre with direct rail links to all of the main centres of the City Region. SCR's Integrated Infrastructure Plan identifies the City Centre as one of seven growth zones across the region. As the SCR hub for Knowledge, Creative and Digital Industries, and Financial & Professional Services sectors, the City Centre is the growth zone which will see the biggest jobs growth up to 2025. **These sectors tend to be attracted to city centre locations because of density and agglomeration benefits, connectivity and culture and quality public realm. This is beyond the scope of the franchise but it is important that the station operator recognises the wider role of the station.**

The station itself could offer opportunities for further commercial purposes. As already mentioned, there is space within the station concourse which is not currently utilised to its full extent. This could be used for a variety of purposes including commercial, with an enhanced and attractive retail and catering offer, enhanced by quality design and public realm.

Q23. What could be done to improve the way tickets are sold? Your view:

What could be done to improve the way tickets are provided? Your view:

The current East Midlands franchise lags some way behind the progress made by others with regards ticket retailing and the use of new technologies. We would expect any new franchisee to embrace the latest ticket retailing technologies.

It should be possible to reserve seats, and pick your seat, in advance on all trains: this can be critical to disabled travellers.

We would expect the sale of Advance Purchase tickets to be available up to the point of departure in order to ensure that customers get the best value.

Given that an increasing proportion of tickets are bought online and collected at stations, we would expect more ticket collection machines to be provided at larger stations such as Sheffield. Ticket collection machines also need to be made more user-friendly, for example so that all tickets purchased in one transaction are accessible on one code, and printed automatically without having to press a 'print' key.

We would like to see smart ticketing, integrated with other local transport products, rolled out across the franchise by the next operator. EMT currently operates a smartcard scheme and there are card readers at Sheffield station, however these appear to get very limited use. There may be scope to better integrate with the roll-out of smart ticketing on other forms of public transport in the Sheffield City Region or as part of TfN/Rail North's Smart ticketing scheme. Could this also be integrated with ENCTS cards being able to hold at least season tickets or being registered to have a season ticket for that ID number.

We have noted in our response to Q21 that the counters in the ticket office are not all needed as many people now purchase tickets in alternative ways: however, it is important to retain the appropriate number of ticket counters to meet the maximum level of need. This includes a counter suitable for disabled passengers as, for example, visually-impaired people cannot use the current ticket machines and also these machines can be difficult for wheelchair users. It is also important to retain the facility to ask for advice on tickets: staff in the ticket office are invariably extremely friendly and helpful.

Q24. What changes to the fares structure would be of benefit to you?

Part-time and more flexible season tickets should be offered to meet the needs of changing work patterns. This could include carnets and pay-as-you-go smartcards, similar to the Oyster Card in London, as well as contactless debit card payments as in London.

Measures should be taken to remove fare anomalies and ensure passengers are always given the best value fare. This should address the issue of split tickets often being cheaper than direct tickets, as this is not always obvious to passengers, and splitting tickets distorts industry ticketing data, planning and revenue apportionment. For example, a ticket from Chesterfield to York is significantly cheaper if split at Sheffield, while Sheffield to Leicester is cheaper if split at Derby.

More flexible and competitive fares and ticketing should be considered to fill empty seats at less busy times, and encourage more off-peak usage. Operators need to get the right balance between cheaper advanced fares and walk-up fares. It is not uncommon for walk-

up fares to be very expensive yet many seats remain empty at less busy times, including the 'shoulder peak'.

There should be a better balance between standard and first class to ensure efficient use of available capacity: see our suggestion in Q6.

The franchise operator needs to be aware of the competition with the ECML services for journeys from Sheffield to London, which can be cheaper and almost as quick for Sheffield to London via Doncaster.

Q25. What additional information would be useful to you when planning or making your journey, such as seat availability, journey times and connections?

How would you like the additional information to be communicated to you?

Information must be easily understood by passengers, including passengers with different disabilities: TOCs should think through situations from the passengers' point of view.

There is one regular issue at Sheffield Midland which should be able to be minimised with additional information. This is that, often, passengers who want the fast train to Manchester Airport (operated by TPE via Manchester Piccadilly) catch the Hope Valley stopping train (operated by Northern to Manchester Piccadilly) in error.

Information on coach and seat location and availability would help greatly, both at the time of booking and on the platform. On the platform, this will enable passengers, both with and without seat reservations, to know where is best to wait, so spreading the load along the platform and speeding up boarding times.

Some departure screens have two pages (sometimes more), alternating between immediate and longer term departures: this is not helpful when rushing for a train and looking for the platform number. At Sheffield Midland, where there is one big destination board on the concourse, smaller departure screens, particularly on the bridge, should only show immediate departures. The full list should also be available at the tram entrance.

When there is disruption, clearer information is crucial. Obviously, sometimes disruption is known about a long time in advance (e.g. planned engineering works), sometimes not at all (e.g. some crowding issues), sometimes anything in-between (e.g. 'weather events'). This will affect how information can be provided. Again, this information should also be available should be thought through from a passenger's perspective. For example, "Disruption at Barrow on Soar" is not helpful if you have no idea where that is.

There should be better information on rail replacement bus services and where to find them, when these are in operation. This should include staff on hand to provide advice.

There should also be better information on a simple compensation system at a lower trigger point: the new SW Franchise has set repayment triggers at a level of 15 minutes – this helps build trust with passengers.

Q26. How could staff be more effective in providing the service and assistance that passengers need on a modern railway network?

On train services, better access to the Train Manager is necessary. The Manager should be accessible including by phone in case of crowding and for passengers with reduced mobility, so that passengers can communicate with them. They should also be empowered with the ability to sort out issues that may arise in a flexible manner. This will reduce passenger worry and stress.

Sheffield Midland a key interchange station for passengers between services provided by a variety of different rail operators, along with good links to bus and tram services. It is important that staff are able to provide accurate up to date information on all the TOCs that serve the station.

The Customer Assistance service at Sheffield is much valued: see our response to Q21 on how this service should be augmented. If fewer staff are required in ticket offices due to falling demand, then these staff could be reallocated to customer assistance and other more public-facing roles.

We would like to see Station Ambassadors at Sheffield Midland, particularly when there are major events in the city, such as at the start of the academic year at both the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University; festivals/events such as World Snooker, Tramlines and DocFest; and also regularly on football match days (to welcome visiting supporters – in addition to the Police role).

Q27. How would you prefer the next operator to engage with:

• You as an individual?

Not relevant.

• Your organisation?

The role of Stakeholder Engagement Manager within the current franchise is a relatively recent introduction and is a useful single point of contact into the TOC. We would support the continuation of this role and recommend that it become a contractual commitment within the franchise.

We also appreciate the value of wider and local Stakeholder events that have been held by the current operator. We expect to continue to receive regular feedback and engagement from the TOC.

Also, we refer back to our earlier responses about the importance of partnership working in relation to a number of matters.

Q28. What would make you feel safer and more secure on your journey in relation to:

- **Trains:**
- **Routes:**
- **Stations:**
- **Other:**

In general, there should be zero tolerance of any anti-social behaviour. Access to staff that are able to handle issues as they arise is the most effective way to improve passenger perceptions of safety and security. This could be dealt with on trains through expanding the role of the Train Manager (see our response to Q26) which could be backed up by enforced regulations, such as a ban on alcohol which is not purchased on the train (like London Underground and airlines) or a ban on the use of video/music devices without headphones. There could also be more use of Quiet Coaches. This requires a commitment to staff training.

The British Transport Police (BTP) is a finite resource which covers all elements of crime detection and prevention on the railway. We propose that, in addition to existing on-board and station staffing, the EM franchisee has a dedicated in-house team responsible for crime reduction and community safety. This team would have a visible presence for front-line operations, and a support team committed to community engagement in tackling crime, anti-social behaviour, and an intelligence-lead approach to crime reduction. This can address perceptions from customers (East Midlands rail franchise passenger research: Transport Focus) that anti-social behaviour isn't tackled because staff are not trained or visible enough.

It should be a committed obligation of the franchise that, as a minimum, all staffed stations operated by the franchisee have and maintain Secure Stations Scheme accreditation.

Customers should also have the opportunity to report back to the TOC on their experiences at stations and on trains with a robust feedback mechanism (complementary to any existing initiatives).

Q29. How do you think more investment might be put into the railways to match money already coming from government through Network Rail?

We require more clarity from government on what Network Rail funding will be forthcoming in what timescale, particularly in relation to electrification works on the northern loop to make it 'HS2-ready' and the Hope Valley improvement works.

To increase revenue available for investing back into the railway, we refer back to suggestions for improved services. There is also an issue about revenue protection and ticketless travel at Sheffield, which mainly relates to busy local Northern Trains and not EMT. We suggest that Northern needs additional staff to sell/check tickets on its trains. We recommend that a standard penalty fare should be introduced across the rail network for consistency.

Q30. Are there any other areas that you think it is important for us to consider that have not already been discussed in this consultation?

Rolling Stock

This is a fundamental issue for this franchise: see Q4 for our concerns about MML and the journey time reliability of bi-mode trains. See Q15 for our concerns about the quality of the fleet between Sheffield and Liverpool. We also note that some of the existing rolling stock, the HSTs that mainly operate to Nottingham, will not be compliant with disability accessibility regulations after 2020 although they can be refurbished to become so. What is the plan for these?

General point on any new rolling stock: improvements for disabled people should include improving seat design so that a wheelchair user can sit together with a travelling companion and also so that two wheelchair users can sit together. Design should make it easy for other passengers to keep wheelchair zones clear, this means luggage zones with ample capacity (space to fold a buggy) and a policy that clearly communicates priority.