

# LONDON ASSEMBLY

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM, Chair of the Transport Committee

London Assembly  
City Hall  
The Queen's Walk  
London SE1 2AA

Rt Hon Theresa May MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1A 2AA

13 December 2016

cc.

Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer  
Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State for Transport

Dear Prime Minister,

## **Devolving rail services in London**

The London Assembly Transport Committee advocates the devolution of suburban National Rail services to TfL as a key part of efforts to improve the quality, reliability and affordability of services for Londoners. We have set out the case for this change in our report, *Devolving rail services to London: Towards a South London Metro*.

We are extremely disappointed with the news that the Secretary of State for Transport has decided not to proceed with the devolution of suburban routes on the South Eastern rail franchise to Transport for London. Proposals for this had been agreed by his predecessor with the previous Mayor of London.

This decision is not in the interest of rail passengers in London and the surrounding areas. In a survey conducted by the Transport Committee, devolution to TfL was supported by 68 per cent of London rail passengers. It is also clear that the proposal has the strong support of passengers living outside Greater London, such as those in Sevenoaks, Kent, who rely on Southeastern services for travelling to London. There is overwhelming cross-party support for this proposal, with Assembly Members, Members of Parliament and Councillors of all political affiliations backing it.

I am urging you to conduct an urgent review of this decision. If the South Eastern franchise is re-let in its current form, the likely consequence is that passengers will continue to suffer from poor service performance, without any of the benefits that local control can bring.

The benefits that could be delivered by devolution include:

- Higher capacity: TfL has invested in longer and more frequent trains on the London Overground, reducing crowding significantly.
- Better reliability: TfL has increased the proportion of trains running on time on the London Overground, enabled by strong performance management and incentives for the operator.
- Integrated fares: By integrating rail services with the fares regime for TfL services, passengers can expect simpler and cheaper fares.
- Better accessibility: TfL would improve station design and increase the number of station staff to allow a turn-up-and-go service for disabled passengers.
- Economic development: As part of the Greater London Authority Group, TfL can coordinate its investment in the rail network with wider strategies for the development of London's economy.
- Stronger accountability: The Mayor would be directly accountable to Londoners for service performance every four years, with close, ongoing scrutiny from the London Assembly.
- Passenger engagement: TfL engages effectively with London Overground passengers, including those outside London, in ways that the Department for Transport does not for its franchised services.

I would be grateful if you could respond personally to this letter setting out your plans.

Yours sincerely,



**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM**  
Chair, Transport Committee