



Elly Baker AM
Chair of the Transport Committee

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
(Sent by email)

23 October 2024

Dear Sadiq,

I am writing on behalf of the Transport Committee to share its findings from its recent meeting on rail in London.

On 26 September 2024 the Committee held a formal meeting on public ownership of rail and how it can work in London. The meeting focused on rail responsibility in London, the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill 2024-25 and transport devolution in London. The Committee heard from Professor Iain Docherty, Dean for the Institute of Advance Studies at the University of Stirling, as well as Seb Dance, Deputy Mayor for Transport and Geoff Hobbs, Director of Public Transport Service Planning at Transport for London (TfL). The Committee has also received correspondence from RMT, Rail Partners and Campaign for Better Transport regarding public ownership of rail.

The Transport Committee has made clear its long-standing support for further devolution of rail in London.^{1 2} Following this meeting, the Committee is further convinced of the merits of devolution of suburban rail services in London and welcomes your statements reported in July this year calling for

¹ GLA, [Transport Now and in the Future](#), February 2020

² London Assembly Transport Committee, [Williams-Shapps: The Committee's response to the Plan for Rail](#), February 2022, see also London Assembly Transport Committee, [Government urged to provide timetable for rail reforms](#), March 2023. The GLA Conservatives did not agree to the recommendations relating to further devolution of rail in either of these publications.

commuter rail lines in London to be devolved to TfL.³ Whilst we welcome these statements, there are several areas in which we would seek further clarification and urge you to consult with the Committee as discussions over the specific details of devolution become clearer.

Accountability and governance

The Committee notes that there are potential complexities around governance and accountability that could arise as a result of further devolution of rail services to London, where services being operated by TfL run beyond London's boundary. The Committee heard from Professor Iain Docherty that there are different possible solutions to this to ensure that people from either side of the metropolitan boundary feel that they are represented and involved in the decision-making process, including a special purpose authority or joint transport board. International models, such as the way regional services around Paris have been organised, could also be drawn upon as examples.⁴

TfL already run some cross-boundary services, on some TfL bus routes and the Overground. Geoff Hobbs told the Committee that in terms of governance, there are currently two TfL Board members, Peter Strachan and Greg Clark, responsible for representing out-boundary users of TfL services.⁵

Given the risk for greater governance and accountability complexities with further devolution of rail, the Committee would like the opportunity to further input into this work should additional services be devolved. The Committee therefore recommends that the Mayor and TfL directly engage with the Committee, as well as with Londoners, at an early stage if the decision is taken to further devolve rail services in London.

Ownership and structure of rail services in London

The Committee believes that, with regard to further rail devolution in London you and TfL should seek maximum flexibility over the system of control and accountability for the devolved services, and over setting the policy outcomes it aims to achieve. This includes the ability to appoint the operator for, and set the direction of, services, as is currently the case with London Overground and the Elizabeth Line.

As it stands, the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill 2024-25 does not specifically refer to London or TfL, and would leave TfL services outside the scope of the Bill. Alongside this letter to you, the Committee is writing to Lord Hendy, Minister of State for Rail, recommending that the Government amend the Bill to allow for passenger railway services to be run by public sector companies owned by an elected public body or Mayoral authority; thus, allowing TfL to run services operating into, and within, London.

In line with the changes to other services operating in London as a result of the provisions in the Bill the Committee believes that TfL should have the power to appoint a public sector operator for the Elizabeth Line and Overground contracts. The Committee recommends that TfL includes a break clause with the potential for public sector operators to be appointed in the new Elizabeth Line contract currently at procurement stage, and any future London Overground contract.

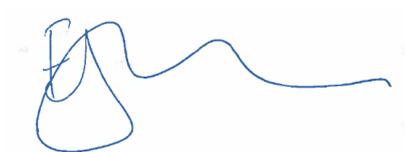
³ BBC, [Watch this space on rail devolution, says Khan](#), 9 July 2024

⁴ London Assembly Transport Committee, [Agenda Transport Committee – Thursday 26 September 2024 10.00am](#)

⁵ London Assembly Transport Committee, [Agenda Transport Committee – Thursday 26 September 2024 10.00am](#)

I would be grateful if you could respond to the Committee in writing by 4 December 2024 copying your response to Eleanor Haigh, the Committee's Senior Policy Adviser (eleanor.haigh@london.gov.uk) and Paul Goodchild, the Committee's Clerk (paul.goodchild@london.gov.uk).

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elly Baker', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Elly Baker AM
Chair of the Transport Committee