



Elly Baker AM
Chair of the Transport Committee

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill CBE
Minister of State (Minister for Rail)

(Sent by email)

15 April 2025

Dear Lord Hendy,

I am writing to submit the London Assembly Transport Committee's views to the Department for Transport's (DfT) consultation on a railway fit for Britain's future.

The DfT's consultation includes questions on the many issues that need to be considered as part of establishing Great British Railways (GBR). The Committee does not seek to provide a response to each specific question, instead, our response will focus on proposals for devolution and a new passenger watchdog.

Devolution

The Transport Committee has made clear its long-standing support for further devolution of rail in London, following investigations that ran between 2020 and 2024.^{1 2 3} We wrote to you in October last year as the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill 2024-25 was going through Parliament recommending that the Bill should be amended to include a clause that allows passenger

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.

³ London Assembly Transport Committee, [London Assembly calls on the government to further devolve the running of rail services in London](#), 23 October 2024

railway services to be run by public sector companies owned by an elected public body or Mayoral authority to enable the Mayor and TfL to run services operating into, and within, London.⁴

We also urged you to consider how devolution of rail services to the Mayor can happen alongside the Government's broader reforms of the rail sector. We recommended that as part of any decisions over rail devolution or as part of negotiations over the end of franchises of rail lines that run through London, the Government conducts early engagement with Londoners.⁵ We reiterate these two points today.

Recommendation 1: The Government should enable the devolution of suburban rail services in London to TfL as part of the wider rail reforms.

Recommendation 2: The Government should conduct early, meaningful and continuous engagement with Londoners regarding decisions over rail devolution or negotiations over the end of franchises of rail lines that run through London. This should include a broad and diverse range of stakeholders, including the London Assembly, London boroughs and residents.

We welcome the DfT's proposal to create a statutory role for devolved governments and Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs) in governing, managing, planning and developing the rail network.⁶ While this proposal references London's bespoke devolution arrangements, which make it unique and different from other MSAs, we are mindful of the fact broader reforms of the rail sector are expected in the coming years.

Today, London is a leading global city, especially when it comes to transport policy.⁷ It is vital London retains that status. We note that the plans for GBR offer an opportunity to rationalise the complex picture of rail across the country. As part of these plans, and the proposals for devolution, it is vital that London's bespoke arrangements do not prohibit it from benefitting from the changes introduced by GBR when it arrives.

Recommendation 3: London's bespoke devolution arrangements should be formally recognised in Great British Railways foundational provisions to ensure that London does not lose out on the reforms implemented through Great British Railways.

A new passenger watchdog

The Committee notes the DfT's proposal to create "a powerful new passenger watchdog to be an independent champion for passenger interests and to help ensure Great British Railways (GBR) and other rail operators deliver for their passengers."⁸ The DfT's proposal also states it is "important to consider any impacts on London TravelWatch from the creation of the PSA [Passenger Standards Authority]."⁹

⁴ London Assembly Transport Committee, [London Assembly calls on the government to further devolve the running of rail services in London](#), 23 October 2024

⁵ London Assembly Transport Committee, [London Assembly calls on the government to further devolve the running of rail services in London](#), 23 October 2024

⁶ Department for Transport, [A railway fit for Britain's future](#), 18 February 2025

⁷ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, [English Devolution White Paper](#), 16 December 2024

⁸ Department for Transport, [A railway fit for Britain's future](#), 18 February 2025

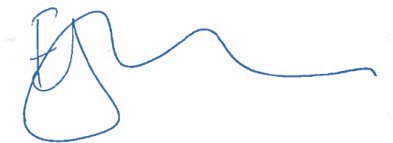
⁹ Department for Transport, [A railway fit for Britain's future](#), 18 February 2025

The Committee believes that London TravelWatch provides a vital service championing the transport needs of Londoners and campaigning for improvements to London's transport system. The work of London TravelWatch goes beyond rail to include other important modes of travel such as buses, Dial-a-Ride and walking, wheeling and cycling, which is vital given the importance of integrated transport in London. As such, it is appropriate that London TravelWatch continue in its role to lead and champion the *specific* interests of Londoners. A new watchdog risks duplicating existing work and diluting focus away from London's specific needs.

Recommendation 4: Given the uniqueness of London's transport system and the vital work London TravelWatch does to champion the needs of Londoners, London TravelWatch should be retained as the independent watchdog for London and work alongside the new passenger watchdog.¹⁰

I would be grateful if you could respond to the Committee in writing by 27 May 2025 copying your response to Eleanor Haigh, the Committee's Senior Policy Advisor (eleanor.haigh@london.gov.uk) and Hannah Barlow, the Committee's Clerk (hannah.barlow@london.gov.uk).

Yours,

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

Elly Baker AM
Chair of the Transport Committee

¹⁰ Assembly Members Keith Prince, Neil Garratt and Thomas Turrell wish to await further details following the conclusion of the consultation process before expressing a view on the merits of retaining London TravelWatch alongside the new proposed passenger watchdog.