

LONDON ASSEMBLY

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM, Chair of the Transport Committee

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

13 September 2016

Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

Dear Secretary of State,

Devolving rail services in London

I wrote to your predecessor, Patrick McLoughlin MP, in July on behalf of the London Assembly Transport Committee to request an update on plans for the devolution of suburban National Rail services to the Mayor and Transport for London. I would be grateful if you were able to write to the Committee with a response.

The Transport Committee called for devolution in 2015 and in our report, *Devolving rail services to London: Towards a South London Metro*, set out practical steps towards achieving this aim.

The arguments in favour of devolution are very strong. There is cross-party consensus behind this reform, and it is supported by a large majority of rail passengers in London. 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 GLA Group, TfL can coordinate its investment in the rail network with wider strategies for the development of London's economy.

- **Stronger accountability:** Passengers will know they can hold the Mayor of London directly to account for their rail service.

The Committee warmly welcomed the prospectus published by the Department for Transport in January 2016, *A new approach to rail passenger services in London and the South East*, with London's previous Mayor, as the starting point for further devolution.

The next opportunity for transferring suburban rail services to TfL comes with the end of the South Eastern franchise in 2018. However, at the present moment it is not clear to the Committee or to rail passengers in London what steps have been taken towards devolution of these services. Passengers in south London and areas outside the capital expect to see the Government acting on the plans it set out. Two months on from our first letter expressing this concern, the lack of communication is even more worrying.

Furthermore, we have also seen service performance on Southern Railway decline in recent months. The introduction of an emergency timetable, in an effort to improve reliability, has resulted in cuts to rail services in south London and beyond. The impact on passengers is completely unacceptable and the Government has to take action to resolve this situation without delay. We strongly believe that devolution to TfL, plus major investment in infrastructure, is a vital long-term solution. We therefore urge you to devolve Southern's suburban services to TfL as soon as practical.

I would like to request a full update from you on plans for rail devolution in London. I would appreciate a response at the earliest opportunity, copying in the Committee's scrutiny manager on Richard.Berry@london.gov.uk.

I look forward to future discussions on this topic.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM
Chair, Transport Committee