

County Hall
St Anne's Crescent
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 1UE



30 April 2019

Williams Rail Review Consultation
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

TFSE@eastsussex.gov.uk

Dear Sirs

**Response from Transport for the South East to Williams Rail Review
Assessment Criteria Call for Evidence**

Transport for the South East welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Rail Review Assessment Criteria Call for Evidence.

A copy of our draft response is attached. This is an officer response. The TfSE Shadow Partnership Board meets on 14 June 2019 to consider the draft response and a further iteration of the response may follow.

We look forward to working with the Department on the outcomes of the Rail Review.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rupert Clubb".

Rupert Clubb
Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
On behalf of Transport for the South East

Williams Rail Review – Call for Evidence. TfSE Response

1. Introduction

1.1 This document constitutes the response to the Williams Rail Review Call for Evidence published in March 2019. The call for evidence on the proposed objectives and assessment criteria, is the second stage of the Williams Rail Review. The Review was launched in September 2018 and has been tasked with recommending the most appropriate organisational and commercial frameworks to deliver the government’s vision of the UK having a world-class railway, working as part of the wider transport network and delivering new opportunities across the nation.

1.2 Transport for the South East (TfSE) is an emerging Sub-national Transport Body (STB) which is being established in line with provisions of the Local Transport Act 2008 (as amended). As an STB, its principal role is to identify the strategic transport interventions required to facilitate economic growth through the development of its Transport Strategy.

2. Themes and Evidence

2.1 TfSE welcomes the publication of the initial evidence papers, providing a helpful overview of the current rail industry structure, the role of the railway in Great Britain, the numbers of users of the railway relating to passengers and freight, their experience of using the railway, and comparisons with other current railway models in Europe and further afield. The evidence papers provide a comprehensive view of themes that the Rail Review will consider when formalising the final outcomes of the review process.

2.2 The future structure of the railway, and ensuring that it provides a reliable, value for money service for passengers and the taxpayer are key concerns across the TfSE area. Currently around 70% of all rail journeys in Great Britain occur in the South East and London, generating around half of all passenger revenue. As rail forms a core part of the transport infrastructure in the South East, the TfSE Transport Strategy will be considering rail as part of the solution to unlock sustainable economic growth through sustained investment in the South East’s transport infrastructure. We have therefore identified a number of additional themes which we would like to see included in the next stage of the process.

2.3 Following the publication of the Rail Delivery Group’s report “Easier Fares for All” in February 2019, TfSE would like to reiterate the importance of fares reform. This has the potential to unlock the ability for the rail industry to participate in a more integrated approach to ticketing. This would enable passengers to have access to fares which would feel better value for money, and build the foundations for Pay as you Go (PAYG) fares in commuter areas, and other initiatives that better reflect the journeys people are making in the 21st century. This leads to the potential for rail to form a central part of Mobility as a Service (MaaS), making journeys seamless between modes, and making the use of public transport an attractive option for short and longer journeys. By adopting a modern approach to integrated ticketing, there is the potential to attract more passengers to use the railway as accessing suitable fares becomes easier. In turn this could lead to increasing revenue which would make the modern railway a more sustainable form of travel, for the passenger as well as the taxpayer. TfSE is currently undertaking a thematic study on Smart and Integrated Ticketing as part of the development of its Transport Strategy, and would be willing to work closely with the Department for Transport and other key stakeholders on this in the future.

2.4 Linked to the above theme, TfSE would also like to highlight the importance of the rail industry being flexible enough to be able to adapt and respond to emerging innovations and business models, and have the ability to capitalise on newly emerging technological trends. With the recent publication of the “Future of Mobility – Urban Strategy” it is clear that if mass transit is to grow its market share, it will need to compete in a marketplace where personal mobility is likely to be transformed by technology. We would therefore suggest that the future rail structure should have technology and innovation at its core, with the agility to respond to future mobility trends as these emerge.

2.5 As set out above, the South East and London account for over 70% of all journeys in Great Britain. During development of the TfSE Transport Strategy, it has become clear that the evidence base relating to journeys made outside of London is incomplete. We would like to be able to identify the spare capacity on the network away from the radial lines into London, which could be better utilised. Our analysis shows that 84% of commuter trips from the TfSE area remain within the TfSE area and only 13% of commuting trips from the TfSE area are to London. Therefore the potential for growing the rail market within the South East, to better utilise existing infrastructure and encourage passengers onto the railway should be explored further.

2.6 The evidence paper on current railway models outside of Great Britain discusses local decision making on railways, and alludes to the strategic planning of railways in other countries. The extent to which political devolution and regional decision making fulfils this role varies depending on the political landscape. TfSE would strongly encourage the Review to explore the positive role that strategic planning could have on the future development of the railway, ensuring that there is a shared view of the railways role in the transport network. This would enable planning for future trends based on evidence, helping to ensure value for money for the taxpayer, whilst delivering the economic, environmental and social benefits that could be provided by a strong railway network. TfSE is clear that STBs should play a role in influencing the emerging railway structure, providing a regional evidence base on which future developments and enhancements on the railway are measured against.

3. Objectives

3.1 TfSE supports the objectives that have been identified for the Review as these place the passenger at the heart of the rail industry, seek to deliver improved affordability, and realise the social, environmental and economic benefits that a revitalised rail network could bring to the country. We would support the ‘fundamentals’ outcomes becoming broader to mirror the ‘Wider society’ objective, which includes growing social, environmental and economic contributions to the country.

3.2 As set out in the previous section, it is our view that the future development of the railway must be evidence based to ensure value for money. In our previous submission we recognised the need for the rail industry to be attractive to private finance and we emphasised that STB’s could be considered in the new structure as the vehicle that could commission and partially fund rail projects as long as there was a suitable funding mechanism in place. This could enable investment decisions to be made regionally, based on evidence of where investment could unlock economic, environmental and social benefits. TfSE could expedite the delivery of rail schemes but would need to have the necessary powers in place to be able to do so.

4. Key Issues Constraining Success

4.1 The Rail Review has identified the key issues constraining success, and TfSE supports those that have been identified. In particular, we would support the view that the rail sector often loses sight of its customers, and we see this issue as key to rebuilding public trust in the railway. We draw your attention again to making sure that the sector is able to innovate and adapt, particularly as technology is transforming personal mobility, and making rail travel as easy as possible should be a priority. This would also lead to an improvement in the 'experience' of travel by train, which has been lacking in the current structure, and would likely result in higher passenger numbers and increased revenue.

4.2 In our view the lack of a single strategic direction in the rail industry, is also intricately linked to accountability. We support the view that a new organisation that is independent of the DfT should be established to provide a 'guiding mind'. This new organisation would be able to strategically plan the railway for the future, based on a strong evidence base and a role for STB's. A renewed strategic direction, with a long term plan, would also lead to increased certainty in the supply chain for improvements and enhancements, which would help to reduce industry costs in the longer term. Clear lines of accountability would lead to clearer responsibility, with the industry working towards common strategic objectives, with all partners aware of their clearly defined roles in the process.

5. Assessment Criteria

5.1 TfSE welcomes the broad range of the assessment criteria identified by the Review. In our view, care should be taken over the weighting given to specific elements of the assessment criteria, as all are equally important to the long term viability and sustainability of the rail industry. A suggestion based on our own Transport Strategy appraisal framework is to utilise a 'dashboard' approach where criteria are scored and then plotted in a spidergram, which can clearly identify those models that score highly across a broad range of criteria, and therefore are suitable for proceeding to the next stage of assessment. In our view, strong consideration should be given to elements that include growth in the rail network, which helps to support development and economic growth, whilst also supporting social inclusion and environmental outcomes of rail travel for society.

5.2 Our final comment on the proposed system changes relates to the strategic role of STB's. TfSE is ready to assist the rail industry in a formalised and structured way, to help to provide a regional evidence base against which the rail industry can strategically plan and prepare for the future. STB's can help to shape and form the development of the railway, through the Control Period (CP) process and the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (RNEP). TfSE, and the other STB's, are in a unique position to speak with one voice on behalf of our constituent authorities, helping to plan for regional economic growth, with clear responsibility for our local environments and social benefits for our residents. TfSE would expect to work closely with the Department for Transport to support the delivery of the outcomes of the Williams Rail Review.