



URBAN TRANSPORT GROUP

Consultation response

**GBRTT commission on simpler, better
industry processes**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Urban Transport Group (UTG) represents the public sector transport authorities for the largest city regions in England (London, Liverpool City Region, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Midlands and Tyne and Wear). UTG is also a wider professional network which includes West of England Combined Authority, Translink in Northern Ireland, Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, Nottingham City Council, Tees Valley Combined Authority, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Transport for Wales.
- 1.2. UTG has a rail strategy group and this includes representatives from devolved administrations and sub-national bodies. As a Rail Devolution Network, the group promotes the case for more devolution of rail services to local and devolved authorities. We have produced a series of reports setting out the [benefits of the devolution of local rail services](#) and responded to the [Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail](#).
- 1.3. One in three rail journeys in Britain are made on rail services which have at least some element of devolution. UTG's members and associates see improved rail services as part of wider strategies to transform cities and the places served by rail.

2. Summary

- 2.1. Our general comments on the Commission and its consultation documents so far are as follows:
 - these proposals are in general welcome, but will need to be considered in the context of legislative change, which is not yet committed - the Government has not yet published its response to its consultation on rail reform, conducted last year.
 - the proposals envisage a new "Access and Use Policy" (AUP) which will allow for GBR to take a wider social and economic view of the future rail services and timetables. This is welcome but will need to consider the strategic objectives of combined/devolved authorities, who should be among the interested parties able to challenge GBR decisions based on this policy.
 - to the extent that the proposals simplify current systems, which are, as GBRTT say, complex and sometimes outdated, they will be very welcome. A single asset management system will be particularly welcome.
 - however, aspects of what is proposed will have impacts on combined authorities and devolved administrations and their strategies, objectives and plans and there will be a need to involve them at an early stage and throughout relevant processes, notably on timetable planning, station access and depot access.



3. Response

Discussion paper 1.1: Planning the use of the railway

Q1 *Given the limits of this workstream and its remit set out in section 1, do you agree with our analysis of the problems outlined in section 2.1? Are there other problems in this area that we have missed?*

Q2 *Given the contextual constraints of current plans for reform as described in section 2.2, do you agree that the general approach outlined in section 3.1 is correct? If not, what do you suggest?*

- 3.1. UTG agrees with the paper's diagnosis of the problems with current industry planning processes. There have been a number of cases where local/devolved authorities' objectives have been undermined by rail industry decisions – for example on key corridors where capacity is constrained, such as Coventry-Birmingham-Wolverhampton and the Castlefield corridor in Greater Manchester. There is also the risk that investments made or supported by local authorities can be undermined by decisions made by different parties in the rail industry.
- 3.2. We would support the approach outlined in section 3.1 towards more collaborative timetable planning (in fact both the corridors mentioned above have benefitted more recently from such a collaborative approach).
- 3.3. However, we would like to see more clarity in three areas:
 - First, the definition of “devolved authorities” mentioned in figure 2. These should include mayoral and non-mayoral combined authorities, partnerships involved in specifying rail services such as West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) and Transport for the North (TfN), and the devolved administrations in Wales and Scotland.
 - Second, the status of those authorities and their statutory duties and plans. Devolved authorities and administrations (and in some cases district authorities below them) are subject to statutory duties and have statutory plans, for example spatial plans, local transport plans, provision for home-school transport etc. Rail services and investment will in many cases form part of these plans, and this needs to be given particular recognition in the proposed integrated planning process, rather than treated as simply one among many external pressures. In particular, where the GBR makes a decision that might run against a statutory plan or requirement – examples might include a decision on services that makes home-school transport more difficult for some students, or reducing services for a new housing development – it should be required to set out its reasoning and any mitigation proposed. The AUP as set out on p9 needs to include this.
 - Third, the protection of investments made by or with support of devolved authorities. As UTG has noted in its rail reform publications, city regions and devolved authorities have been major investors in the railway, and this is continuing. In some cases, this investment has been predicated on the existence of a rail service at a specific level. These should be given specific status in the proposed planning process. As WMRE has suggested in its response, service changes which form part of infrastructure investment business cases should be given specific protection in the future integrated



planning process, for example by giving such service commitments first refusal as timetables are being assembled.

Discussion paper 3.1: Station Access

- 3.4. As we pointed out in our response to the consultation on legislation, “local, combined and devolved authorities have a track record of investing in, managing and upgrading stations and developing them as hubs or gateways for the communities they serve, meeting many of the Government’s wider policy objectives including increased housebuilding.” . As a result, they have in some cases taken on the role of station operator (the paper notes the example of Bromsgrove). There are also access rights for metro services run by or for city regions to national rail stations (e.g. Metrolink in Manchester Victoria and various London Underground arrangements). We therefore welcome the proposals here to simplify the rules and processes on stations. We see this as an essential pre-requisite to enabling more third party investment in stations.
- 3.5. We particularly support the proposed joint asset management system to provide “one version of the truth” at stations. We think this can help reduce costs, safeguard previous investments and promote new ones by making the position and state of current station assets more transparent.

- 3.6. In response to the questions:

Q1 Are there any other problems and issues that GBRTT should consider within the scope of this Commission?

- 3.7. We think the paper covers the current problems and issues well. Reforming current complex processes and creating simple rules should help reduce barriers to third party investment in stations.

Q2 Are there any other proposals for the Station Contractual Framework and Operating Model that you do not agree with? If so, please say which ones and why

- 3.8. No. However, the new framework should be about enabling the most effective and efficient method of delivering works at stations. Train operators or local authorities could be best placed to carry out works at stations and the new contractual framework and operating model should be flexible enough to allow for this where this is the best option for the work in question.

Q3. Are there any proposals for Making Changes at Stations that you do not agree with? If so, please say which ones and why

- 3.9. No, these seem to be moving in the right direction, but see questions below.



Q4. Do the proposals deliver all of your aspirations? Are there any other proposals that GBRTT should consider?

Q5. Which (if any) proposals could offer opportunities to improve existing arrangements with devolved authorities?

- 3.10. We believe that these proposals if carried through, would meet the aspirations of many of UTG's members and associates. However, there will need to be further detail. On the proposals for simplifying station changes, we will want to see more detail to ensure that this continues to protect assets and facilities at stations that are important to users and the wider community.
- 3.11. As we have said, UTG's members and partners want to encourage third party investment in stations, and the proposals here, though welcome, are only part of this. In our response to the consultation on legislation, we suggested that GBRTT might "consider and promote models for local involvement and investment in and management of stations as appropriate". We would welcome further discussions with GBRTT and others on such models and on ways to reduce barriers and risks for third parties in investing in stations. As noted above, this partly relates to the "Access and Use Policy" – for example, the case of the proposed station at Beam Park in East London, which despite links to planned housing developments has been paused on grounds of operation and access costs, shows the need for clear agreements in advance of capital and operating costs and allocation of these between the rail industry and third parties. New processes need to safeguard against cost/time overruns for third parties.
- 3.12. UTG and its members and partners have significant experience in this area – as noted above they manage rail stations and also their own metro stations and parts of stations such as car parks. We would be happy to help GBRTT develop its policy in this area using the experience from our members and partners.

Discussion paper 3.2: Depot Access

- 3.13. We support the proposals in this paper and have no further comments on them.

Discussion paper 4.1: Framework for access and joint industry processes

Q1: Are the problems, issues and barriers set out in Section 2 recognisable and do they have significant impacts?

- 3.14. We support the principles in this paper to simplify and reduce costs in the current rail system. As noted above, UTG and its members and partners want to improve and upgrade railways in their areas as part of their wider economic, social and environmental objectives and strategies. We find the current systems and processes create barriers and costs that makes it difficult for us to achieve this.

Q2: Are there missing problems issues or barriers in Section 2?

- 3.15. No



Q3: Do you agree the proposed framework features set out in Section 3 are relevant, helpful or necessary for the future framework?

3.16. We support the roles of GBR in shaping, serving and simplifying the current systems and processes. In particular, we support the proposal in 3.1 on “shaping” that “the [future] framework should explicitly require GBR to efficiently deliver social and economic benefit from rail overall, including through planning and managing use of the railway”. As we said in our response to the consultation on legislation, we would want this to include, on a statutory basis, the requirement for GBR to consult with devolved authorities and administrations in drawing up its plans and strategies. We would therefore want to see here a recognition of the importance of working with stakeholders and of incorporating their views and comments.

Q4: Are there other questions that are important when considering which controls and requirements should sit in which instruments (Section 4.2)?

3.17. As noted in our response to the consultation on legislation, we would want to ensure that local and devolved authorities and administrations are able to influence the controls that influence rail services and infrastructure in their areas or over which they exercise some control themselves. We would welcome further discussion on this in phase 2 of the Commission.

Q5: Do you have specific views on holding GBR to account for delivery, performance and non-discrimination (Section 4.3)?

3.18. This section is about ORR’s role in holding GBR to account at a national level – we will want to see reference to, and methods for, holding GBR to account at a local level, with good information and transparency at this level too.

Q6: Do you have comments on the high-level propositions set out in Section 4.4 to:

- **Introduce a GBR Code,**
- **Reduce overlapping controls and duplications, and**
- **Remove some procedural requirements from the secondary legislation?**

3.19. No. We support this, subject to safeguards for non GBR operators as above.

Q7: Do you have views on how to design the GBR Code change mechanism described in Section 4.4?

3.20. We support the proposals here and look forward to further discussions on them.

Q8: Do you have any further comments on the issues explored in this paper?

3.21. We support the paper’s ambitions for simplification and reducing bureaucracy. As noted, we want to see more explicit recognition of the role and importance of devolved authorities and administrations and look forward to further discussions on this.