

STANSTED AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

RESPONSE TO THE EAST ANGLIA RAIL FRANCHISE CONSULTATION

Introduction

The Stansted Airport Consultative Committee welcomes this timely consultation and the opportunity to comment. Following the change in ownership, the Committee notes that the airport is actively seeking to expand operations and utilise the available capacity. A key factor in this expansion will be the availability of efficient public transport services with rail services forming an important element in providing improved access. A further consideration that will need to be addressed in developing future services is that the airport provides an important local transport hub serving the local community as well as the airport's customers. The area is also experiencing considerable economic growth through the London - Cambridge corridor and wider. The availability of good transport links will be a key factor for companies wishing to relocate in the region

Issues

The Committee is aware that the Manchester Airports Group will be submitting a separate response which will focus on three main elements:-

- Faster and more frequent train service;
- A reliable railway;
- A seamless door to door journey for the passenger.

The Committee considers that these key broad principles should underpin future rail development and wish to offer the following comments:

Faster and more frequent train service

The Committee considers that the issue of ensuring consistent and reduced journey times must be addressed. At present, there is considerable variation in journey times. This places the airport at a competitive disadvantage when compared with the Gatwick Express and the Heathrow Express where passengers are offered a consistent journey time. It is fully understood that infrastructure improvements e.g. a second tunnel at the airport and four tracking will be required to provide greater flexibility for increased services. Priority should be given to ensuring that such improvements can be progressed by all key stakeholders.

A further issue is the lack of train services from Liverpool Street during the night. At present a 0340 train only operates on three days a week. This means that passengers wishing to catch a flight in the first wave of departures have on many occasions to sleep overnight in the terminal building. This does not represent a good passenger experience especially for the less able and families. Accordingly the Committee believes that there should be a better range of services throughout the night.

Whilst the main focus tends to be on improving services to London, priority should also be given to developing an improved network to the north of the airport especially beyond Cambridge to places such as Ipswich and Norwich in the Anglia area, as well as the Cross Country route to

Peterborough and beyond. The new franchise should also take account of the need to provide connectivity to facilitate and encourage economic development in the London - Cambridge economic corridor and the increasing economic development in East London. It is noted that there are no current direct services between the airport and Stratford. It is understood that the CrossRail development will release some track capacity between Stratford and Liverpool Street. When this happens, consideration should be given to running Stansted Express services via Stratford, thus providing fast links between the airport and both the City of London and the important new business developments in Docklands and elsewhere in inner east London, as well as cross-platform interchange with the wide-range of rail services at Stratford.

A reliable railway

Whilst punctuality performance is at a high level, there is still room for improvement. Clearly there are factors affecting infrastructure that influence performance levels but close engagement amongst key stakeholders should be encouraged to help improve levels. Effective plans to deal with disruption including the development of efficient communication strategies should be built into any new franchise. The Committee also considers that there should be better co-ordination between the transport providers in respect of rail replacement bus services and the existing highly efficient and competitive network of coach services serving the airport. This would benefit the customer experience.

A seamless door to door journey for the passenger

New ticketing opportunities offered by emerging technology should be fully explored especially contactless payment. Ideally passengers should have the flexibility to purchase a single ticket covering both the air and rail sectors. There is also considerable scope for the simplification of the existing fare structure which has many confusing elements. Extension of the Oyster card would also provide customer benefits.

The Committee also believes that passengers should be provided with better communication on board trains and at key stations. This should cover for example flight information and security waiting times.

Any new services should cater for all passengers and provide ease of access. The Committee was disappointed to note that whilst some stations have been equipped with improved PRM facilities, there is evidence that the capital investment has been wasted because staff at the stations are not always able to use the equipment provided. Passengers requiring special assistance should be able to expect a consistent quality of service at all stations and on board trains.

The Committee would be happy to expand on any of the issues set out above.

**Stansted Airport Consultative Committee
March 2015**