

East Anglia Rail Franchise Consultation

A response from London Stansted Airport

16 March 2015



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Stansted Airport is a key component of the UK's transport infrastructure. With the ability to handle more than 40 million passengers a year, the airport has an important role to play in helping to meet aviation demand in London and South East over the next decade. Improved rail connectivity will be critical to enabling the airport to fulfil this potential, providing passengers with greater choice and competition while at the same time helping to foster growth and regeneration along the burgeoning London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor.

This significance of Stansted's contribution to meeting the UK's capacity needs was recognised by the Airports Commission and its interim report asked Government to undertake a detailed and urgent study into improving the rail links to the airport. Network Rail was subsequently tasked with the study and as part of its Anglia Route Study process has identified a number of options to improve rail connectivity on the West Anglia Mainline. Our response to the study proposed that Network Rail should adopt a phased, long term programme of investment in the region's rail infrastructure starting with line speed improvements to reduce journey times to Stansted to around 40 minutes by 2019, followed by four-tracking the line in the 2020s and the full integration of Crossrail 2 services in the 2030s.

Throughout the process, we have worked with Network Rail to improve Stansted's rail offer and have an agreed position on the benefits that would be achievable with a package of line speed improvements. Importantly for the franchise process, faster rail services will attract substantial numbers of additional passengers to use rail services to reach Stansted. We believe that an early confirmation from the Department for Transport that these improvements will be delivered is essential and will help bidders formulate their proposals for the new franchise.

For Stansted and M.A.G, the franchise process provides a timely and significant opportunity for Government to bring together its approach on rail infrastructure, rail services and aviation provision. It is important that in developing the franchise specification, the Department recognises that rail infrastructure and services need to be considered together - improving rail connectivity needs enhancements to both aspects to be delivered in parallel. The Department holds the responsibility for making sure these are taken forward together for maximum benefit of all passengers.

To drive the airport forward and fulfil its potential, the franchise process should be structured in way that will incentivise bidders to focus on meeting the needs of airport

passengers, with a particular emphasis on delivering a fast, frequent and reliable railway that provides value for money and a great door to door passenger experience.

Working in partnership with the Stansted Airport Transport Forum, we have highlighted 12 commitments that should be incorporated into the Greater Anglia franchise specification, namely:

- ***A commitment to maintain four Stansted Express trains per hour to London Liverpool Street, operating every 15 minutes; and provide solutions to accommodate an additional Stansted to Stratford service to cater from growing passenger demand in East London.***
- ***A commitment for bidders to work in partnership with Network Rail to implement innovative and creative solutions to reduce journey times on the West Anglia Mainline with a specific target of a 40 minute service between London Liverpool Street and the airport no later than 2019.***
- ***A commitment for bidders to adopt a more flexible approach to service provision and one that responds to the opportunity to run faster services at the times of day when the rest of the network is relatively quiet.***
- ***A commitment to introduce a 03.40 service from London Liverpool Street to Stansted seven days a week by 2017 and explore opportunities with Network Rail to extend operations to 24 hours, seven days a week.***
- ***A commitment to retain the Cambridge to Stansted service and increase frequency to include peak and weekend operation by 2017.***
- ***A commitment to retain all class 379s rolling stock on Stansted Express services and outline a clear plan to introduce a common fleet of rolling stock on all other West Anglia commuter services by 2025.***
- ***A commitment to improve punctuality on the Stansted Express from 91% today to 95% by 2020.***
- ***A commitment to introduce new and innovative solutions to address the management of passenger disruption for airport customers, including the formalisation of contingency arrangements with airport coach operators***
- ***A commitment to introduce a more simplified and flexible ticketing structure based on the low cost airline model that shows the cheapest option for passengers.***

- ***A commitment for bidders to introduce a delay-repay mechanism on the Stansted Express for any delay above 5 minutes.***
- ***A commitment to roll out contactless payment and smart card technology on the Stansted Express and West Anglia commuter services within the first two years of the new franchise.***
- ***A commitment for the bidders to work in partnership with the airport to enhance the door to door passengers experience, including co-branded products and improved facilities and interchange capabilities at Stansted Airport and Tottenham Hale stations.***

We believe these improvements would transform the rail service over the next decade, and demonstrate the Government's commitment to developing Stansted role as one of the UK's leading airports and a key component of the UK's transport infrastructure.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 London Stansted Airport ('Stansted') welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department for Transport (DfT) and Rail Executive's East Anglia Rail Franchise consultation.
- 1.2 Stansted is the fourth busiest airport in the UK and in 2014 served 20 million passengers and handled over 220,000 tonnes of cargo. Since February 2013, the airport has been owned by M.A.G, which also owns and operates Manchester, East Midlands and Bournemouth airports. M.A.G in turn is owned by the ten local authorities of Greater Manchester, in partnership with the global investment manager, IFM Investors.
- 1.3 The purpose of this submission is to provide the DfT, Rail Executive and prospective bidders with Stansted's views on the future franchise specification for East Anglia, with a particular focus on identifying the required improvements to the Stansted Express and the West Anglia Mainline (WAML) that should be delivered as part of the process.
- 1.4 With the Stansted Express delivering approximately £35 million in fare revenue every year - the second highest yield on the franchise - we would like to see the DfT specifically recognise the needs of airport passengers in the franchise specification. In the past, the airport passenger's requirements have often been relegated and treated in ways that do not recognise their particular needs. It is important that the DfT structures the franchise process in a way that will incentivise operators to focus on meeting these particular needs, as part of the overall franchise.
- 1.5 Our submission outlines our concerns at the current deterioration in the level of service on the Stansted Express, particularly the increase in journey times. We also highlight the opportunities available to transform the rail service so that it fully reflects Stansted's role as one of the UK's leading airports and a key component of the UK's transport infrastructure.
- 1.6 The franchise process comes at an important time both for Stansted and the WAML, particularly with regards to the findings from the Airports Commission's Interim Report (December 2013). The report recommended a 'detailed' and 'urgent' study of the WAML to improve rail connectivity to the airport as means to make best use of available runway capacity in the South East. The report gave serious consideration to four-tracking the line between London and the airport and that consideration should be given to the specific needs of air passengers when developing strategies for the UK's rail network.
- 1.6 The interim report was subsequently followed by a commitment from Government in the 2013 National Infrastructure Statement instructing Network Rail to undertake a study of the line to reflect Sir Howard Davies recommendations. We anticipated that the draft Anglia

Route Study published in November 2014 would address the Commission's interim recommendations. However, it failed to mention the recommendations, prompting Sir Howard Davies to write to Network Rail in December 2014 expressing concerns at the lack of progress, stating that the current draft study was *"insufficiently ambitious in setting a direction of travel towards a markedly improved rail service to the airport."*¹

- 1.7 Stansted shared the concerns of the Commission and felt the Anglia Route Study was unambitious, lacked vision and did not reflect the changing nature of Stansted or the wider region. In our response to the study we proposed that Network Rail should adopt a phased, programme of investment in the region's rail infrastructure, starting with journey time improvements and the removal of level crossings by 2019 leading to four-tracking in Control Period 6 (CP6) and the full integration with Crossrail 2 services by around 2030.
- 1.8 Over the past few months we have been working with Network Rail on these issues and we have an agreed position on the benefits achievable from line speed improvements. On the long term improvements, we welcome the creation of the West Anglia Taskforce, which we hope will set out a sustained programme of investment in the WAML.
- 1.9 It is important that in developing the franchise specification, the DfT recognises that infrastructure and service processes need to be considered together - improving rail connectivity needs enhancements in both the infrastructure and the services that operate on that infrastructure. The DfT holds the responsibility for making sure these are taken forward together for maximum benefit. With this in mind, we believe an early confirmation from the DfT that the line speed improvements will be delivered is essential and will help bidders with their proposals for the new franchise.
- 1.10 The submission is structured around **three core objectives** for an airport train service, namely the need to deliver:
 - **A faster and more frequent train service;**
 - **A reliable railway; and**
 - **A seamless door to door journey for airport passengers.**

In formulating our response to the consultation we have liaised closely with, and sought feedback from, the Stansted Area Transport Forum – an independent body comprising of members of local authorities and national government, transport operators, airport companies, Stansted Airport Consultative Committee and other partners interested in the continuing success of surface access connectivity at Stansted Airport.

¹ Letter from Sir Howard Davies to Network Rail, December 2014

2. M.A.G'S VISION FOR STANSTED

- 2.1 Under M.A.G's ownership, Stansted is changing. We are investing in Stansted's existing facilities to attract new passengers and airlines and to offer a wider mix of destinations and services. Our vision is to change the perception of Stansted so that it is seen as the best airport in London in terms of value to airlines, service to passengers and the positive contribution to the communities it serves.
- 2.2 We have already made significant progress. Later this year, we will complete our ambitious £80 million terminal transformation project, part of a £260 million investment to transform Stansted's passenger facilities. The long term deals we have signed with new and existing airlines are having a positive impact on traffic growth at the airport. In the 12 months to February 2015, passenger numbers at the airport increased by 14.4% from 17.9 to 20.5 million, making Stansted the fastest growing major airport in the UK.
- 2.3 Stansted is a national infrastructure asset and will play a vital role in meeting the UK's airport capacity needs. With planning permission in place to grow to 35 million passengers per annum (mppa) on the single runway, and the capacity to increase to between 40 and 45mppa in the future, Stansted has an important role to play in helping to meet demand over the next decade. These views are aligned to the Airports Commission's revised growth forecasts (Nov 2014) which showed that Stansted would reach 35mppa by the late 2020s.
- 2.4 An important part of our vision for Stansted is a commitment to build on our position as the leading major UK airport for public transport usage. In 2013, 51% of our passengers travelled to the airport by public transport.²
- 2.5 Improved rail connectivity will play a key role in helping Stansted maintain this position while at the same time making the airport more accessible to a wider catchment of passengers across London and the South East. This will provide passengers with greater choice and competition at a time when Heathrow and Gatwick airports will be operating at full capacity.
- 2.6 We want to see rail services to Stansted that not only compete with other major airports in the South East, but that are also better in terms of speed, frequency and reliability. To drive the airport forward to achieve this vision, the franchise process should be structured in a way that will incentivise bidders to focus on meeting the needs of airport passengers, with a particular emphasis on the door to door passenger experience and value for money.

² CAA Moving Annual Average statistics, Q1 2014

A thriving and growing region

- 2.7 Stansted Airport is strategically placed in the region and sits at the centre of the burgeoning London-Stansted-Cambridge Corridor – a growth corridor which links the world’s best university with the world’s greatest city. The corridor is home to a rapidly expanding cluster of businesses in digital and bio-medical science including multi-national corporates such as Astra Zeneca, Microsoft and ARM Holdings. These businesses generate over £160 billion for the UK economy and with more knowledge-based industries moving in, the corridor is poised for significant growth and inward investment with plans for 100,000 homes by 2030.
- 2.8 Members of Parliament, businesses, Local Enterprise Partnerships and local authorities along the WAML see it as a key enabler of economic growth and productivity. Those stakeholders, like the airport, want to ensure we have the rail infrastructure and service provision in place to support, not stifle, our vision for a thriving economy - an opportunity we believe that should be factored into the franchise specification for East Anglia.

3. A FASTER AND MORE FREQUENT TRAIN SERVICE

Stansted Express – current service provision

- 3.1 The WAML is a busy, capacity constrained and complex rail corridor, particularly between London Liverpool Street and Cheshunt. Long distance, express and stopping commuter trains all compete for track access and capacity on what is largely a two-track railway. This has had an averse effect on the performance of the line with Peak Performance Measure (PPM) figures over the last five years ranging between 85% and 90% and in some periods dropping to below 75%.³
- 3.2 One of the most serious consequences of the pressures on this constrained railway has been the significant increase in journey times to the airport. Between 1996 and 2014 the fastest London Liverpool Street to Stansted Airport rail journey times have increased from 41 minutes to anywhere between 47 and 59 minutes.⁴
- 3.3 By contrast, Heathrow Airport enjoys a consistent 15 minute journey time to London Paddington on a dedicated line and Gatwick Airport benefits from a 30 minute service to both London Victoria and London Bridge stations. The latter route has seen significant investment as part of Network Rail's £6 billion Thameslink Programme. Both Heathrow and Gatwick will further benefit from reduced journey times and improved rail connectivity provided by the new Crossrail line when it opens in late 2018.
- 3.4 With the growth of London to the East and the regeneration of Stratford and the Olympic Park, we would encourage bidders to offer solutions to accommodate an additional Stansted Airport to Stratford service to cater for increased demand over the lifetime of the franchise.

Journey times and infrastructure investment on the WAML

- 3.5 As outlined in our response to Network Rail's draft Anglia Route Study, M.A.G supports the need for a major programme of enhancements on the WAML over the next 30 years, to deliver step change improvements in journey times, capacity and reliability. This programme should provide additional capacity to support regeneration along the Upper Lee Valley, and to improve the quality of rail services for airport users and commuters along the London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor.

³ In the 4 weeks to 3 March 2012, PPM on the WAML dropped to 74.3%

⁴ A 1996 Stansted Express Timetable advertise journey times to the airport at 41 minutes

- 3.6 Building on work carried out for the DfT in 2010, over the last eight months M.A.G has been working in partnership with stakeholders from the rail industry – including Network Rail, DfT, Abellio Greater Anglia (AGA) and Transport for London – to develop an up-to-date assessment of the options for improving rail services to Stansted and other points along the WAML. The technical studies have been carried out by Steer Davies Gleave (SDG).
- 3.7 SDG’s technical analysis has identified a strong case for renewing the existing rail infrastructure to enable trains to operate at higher speeds along key sections of the WAML. By increasing the maximum speed at which class 379 trains can operate from 80mph to 100mph, journey times between London Liverpool and Stansted could be reduced by up to 9 minutes to 39/40 minutes with corresponding time savings for commuters using services on the line, from Tottenham Hale in the south through to Harlow, Bishops Stortford and Cambridge in the north.
- 3.8 Faster trains will attract more passengers and SDG’s analysis shows that the present value of the additional fare revenue would amount to some £500 million over a 60-year appraisal period. Likewise, the present value of journey time benefits over this period would be around £550 million. The capital cost of the track enhancements is estimated to be £370 million (at 2014 prices, excluding optimism bias).
- 3.9 Using the DfT’s standard appraisal framework, SDG has estimated that the project would have a ‘transport user’ BCR of 3.7, or 4.4 if wider economic benefits are taken into account.
- 3.10 In addition, fewer trains are likely to be needed to operate the current service pattern for the Stansted Express. This would reduce operating costs for the bidder and enable train capacity to be redeployed to other parts of the network.
- 3.11 We feel that it is important for the DfT to commit to these line speed improvements as a core requirement for the new franchise. They should ensure that bidders work in partnership with Network Rail to deliver solutions to reduce journey times on the WAML with a specific target of a 40 minute service between London Liverpool Street and the airport no later than 2019.

Stansted Express – earlier trains from London Liverpool Street

- 3.12 The first Stansted Express service from Liverpool Street to the airport varies in terms of the day of the week, time and length of journey. In the majority of cases the services do not start early enough for rail users to catch the first morning wave of flight departures. For example, the first service on a Monday is at 03.40 whilst on a Tuesday the first service leaves London

at 04.40. This creates confusion for passengers and inhibits greater rail use.

- 3.13 In August 2014, AGA introduced the 03.40 service from London Liverpool Street on Monday, Friday and Saturday mornings. The service has been very popular with passengers and there is a strong case for it to be introduced as a permanent, seven days a week service in the new franchise specification, with the potential over the duration of the franchise to extend operating hours to 24 hours a day.
- 3.14 We appreciate that Network Rail is required to operate an overnight maintenance regime for the line, and we are willing to work with both Network Rail and the future franchise holder to explore the option to trade-off quieter late night services to enable additional trains to operate in the early morning period.

Opportunity to run faster services in the off peak

- 3.15 We would like to see bidders adopt a more flexible approach that responds to the opportunity to run faster services at the times of day when the rest of the network is not busy. This would provide a unique marketing opportunity for the airport and generate additional fare revenue for the operator. The obvious times are the morning departing peak and the evening arrivals peak - times when the rest of the network is operating off-peak.
- 3.16 The airport's morning peak is between 06.00 – 09.00 with between 25 – 30 aircraft movements departing per hour. Those passengers who travel by rail to the airport would need to depart London between 03.00 – 06.00 to allow sufficient time to process through check-in and security and catch their flights. The morning departing peak is significantly earlier than the commuter peak and the railway is relatively quiet at that time, allowing operators the opportunity to run faster or non-stop services to Stansted. A faster service to London could also be replicated in the evening arrivals peak between 22.00 - 00.00, when there are 25 arrival aircraft movements per hour.

Service provision to Cambridge and East Anglia

- 3.17 There is currently only one train per hour between the airport and Cambridge (and Birmingham) that operates throughout the day and one service that operates only in the off-peak. The former is operated by Cross Country and the latter by AGA.
- 3.18 The AGA service was introduced in July 2014, following a campaign by the airport, the train operating company (TOC) and local authorities for increased train frequency to Cambridge. AGA now operates eight off-peak services in each direction between 09.00 – 16.00 on Monday to Friday, providing a 30 minute off-peak service between Cambridge and the

airport. The service has been successful with sample AGA data showing up to 5,000 passengers using the service per rail period. This demonstrates a strong commercial and passenger appetite for this service to be introduced across the day and at weekends.

- 3.19 Although the current off peak service has been a success, it does not meet the airport's needs at its busiest times of the day, primarily due to the lack of peak services. For example, Stansted has the busiest single terminal operation in the UK between 04.00 – 07.00 during the week with between 7,000 - 8,000 passengers passing through the airport. However, the first AGA service from Cambridge leaves at 09.31 and arrives at Stansted at 10.00, missing the first wave of flight departures between 06.00 - 08.00.
- 3.20 With the airport experiencing significant growth and expected to be managing up to 35mppa by the late 2020s, added to the fact that the Cambridge economy is growing strongly, we believe that there is a strong case for a permanent hourly service to be included in the franchise specification for East Anglia.
- 3.21 Subject to the capacity constraints we support steps to introduce new services to the north of Cambridge, Suffolk and Norfolk and improve the journey times and the frequency of services between Peterborough (linking with the East Coast Mainline) and the airport. This will help to broaden Stansted's catchment area, improve accessibility and rail mode share and help to support the development of new air routes, especially to medium and long haul destinations.

Rolling stock

- 3.22 The airport is served by one of the newest sets of rolling stock operating to and from a UK airport. New class 379 trains were introduced in March 2011 and have greatly enhanced the journey experience for rail passengers with Wi-Fi, enhanced luggage space and power sockets.
- 3.23 Along with other stakeholders along the WAML, we believe there is a strong case to replace all of the class 317 commuter rolling stock in operation on the line. The rolling stock is over 35 years old and prone to breakdown and delay. This is highlighted in the prospectus document which states class 317s only achieve 6,635 miles per technical incident compared to 49,873 miles for class 379s.
- 3.24 The replacement of the class 317s and the introduction of a common fleet of stock across the entire line would represent a transformational change for passengers, enabling services, including the Stansted Express, to run at optimum speeds, reducing delay and disruption

and helping to cut journey times to the airport to around 40 minutes.

3.25 The franchise specification should have a clear requirement to retain all class 379 rolling stock on Stansted Express services and outline a clear plan to introduce new rolling stock on all other West Anglia services by 2025. This should also include a requirement to cater for passenger growth at the airport through the introduction of additional carriages on the Stansted Express including an increase from eight to 12 car operation in the airport peak.

3.26 In summary, the franchise specification should include the following commitments:

- 1. A commitment to maintain four Stansted Express trains per hour to London Liverpool Street, operating every 15 minutes; and provide solutions to accommodate an additional Stansted to Stratford service to cater from growing passenger demand in East London.**
- 2. A commitment for bidders to work in partnership with Network Rail to implement innovative and creative solutions to reduce journey times on the West Anglia Mainline with a specific target of a 40 minute service between London Liverpool Street and the airport no later than 2019.**
- 3. A commitment for bidders to adopt a more flexible approach to service provision and one that responds to the opportunity to run faster services at the times of day when the rest of the network is relatively quiet.**
- 4. A commitment to introduce a 03.40 service from London Liverpool Street to Stansted seven days a week by 2017 and explore opportunities with Network Rail to extend operations to 24 hours, seven days a week.**
- 5. A commitment to retain the Cambridge to Stansted service and increase frequency to include peak and weekend operation by 2017.**
- 6. A commitment to retain all class 379s rolling stock on Stansted Express services and outline a clear plan to introduce a common fleet of rolling stock on all other West Anglia commuter services by 2025.**

4. A RELIABLE RAILWAY

Performance and resilience

- 4.1 Services on the Stansted Express are frequently delayed due to a range of infrastructure and operational issues. For example, overhead power failures; theft of equipment; passenger action (trespass, fatalities); and fleet reliability associated with class 317 rolling stock. The current timetable and twin-track railway does not have sufficient resilience to recover quickly from incidents.
- 4.2 Although performance on the Stansted Express has improved over the last 12 months from around 89% to 91% of trains running on time, service punctuality is still below other airport services; the Heathrow Express regularly has a monthly Public Performance Measure (PPM) of around 95%. As airport passengers have a higher value of time, the impact of any delays are more significant for this group and have an adverse effect on Stansted's ability to attract new customers and airlines.
- 4.3 We would like to see a commitment in the franchise for the successful operator to work in partnership with Network Rail and other infrastructure owners to improve punctuality on the Stansted Express from 91% today to 95% by 2020. This should be built into a service level agreement.
- 4.4 As referenced in the prospectus document, M.A.G is also concerned about the adverse effect the devolution of the West Anglia Inners to LOROL in 2016 could have on the Stansted Express and other WAML commuter services performance measures. The franchise specification should have a clear commitment for the bidder to put in place robust measures and contingency plans to mitigate against delays caused by the introduction of any new services.

Management of passenger disruption

- 4.5 Management of passengers during incidents of disruption is often recognised as a significant issue for the airport, primarily because Stansted is an important point of entry for non-UK residents arriving by air with over half of the airport's passengers being overseas residents. Poor communication and the lack of real-time information creates confusion for foreign passengers and we welcome new and innovative solutions in the specification to address the management of passenger disruption for airport customers.
- 4.6 The airport supports the introduction of the 'seven day railway' initiative which aims to increase the time the network is available to run services. As outlined in 3.12, we would like

to see earlier services to cater for airport peak demand plus a reduction of engineering work at weekends and bank holidays – often some of the busiest times for an airport operation.

4.7 The WAML is hampered by a two-track railway and limited diversionary routes. If the line is unavailable due to disruption, trains are diverted via Cambridge to London Kings Cross – adding at least 90 minutes to the journey time to London – or by rail replacement services via Witham and the Great Eastern Mainline. Neither of these options are convenient for airport passengers nor do they provide the quickest or cheapest alternative route to London. During such incidents of disruption, we would welcome operators working creatively with the airport coach operators at Stansted, such as National Express to offer rail passengers high quality and direct alternatives to reach London rather than using rail replacement services.

4.8 In summary, the franchise specification should include the following commitments:

7. A commitment to improve punctuality on the Stansted Express from 91% today to 95% by 2020.

8. A commitment to introduce new and innovative solutions to address the management of passenger disruption for airport customers, including the formalisation of contingency arrangements with airport coach operators

5. A SEAMLESS DOOR TO DOOR JOURNEY FOR AIRPORT PASSENGERS

Value for money and ticketing

- 5.1 Value for money is a key concern for passengers using the Stansted Express. In the bi-annual National Rail Passenger Survey, the Stansted Express often ranks in the bottom quartile of TOCs in terms of value for money, with the Spring 2014 survey showing only 28% of respondents stating it represented value for money.⁵
- 5.2 Together with long journey times and poor reliability, these issues have adversely impacted Stansted's ability to compete in the London market and they have led to a long term decline in rail mode share to the airport from around 29% in 2004/5 to 22% in 2013/14.⁶ Our view is that this decline could be reversed with improvements to the airport rail services, particularly a reduction in journey times to around 40 minutes and improved reliability.
- 5.3 We recognise that the Stansted Express is a regulated fare and have welcomed recent ticketing initiatives by the current TOC to reduce costs and introduce more flexible ticketing options. However, there are still a multitude of different ticketing options and prices on the Stansted Express that confuse airport passengers. We support the introduction of a more simplified ticketing structure based on the low cost airline ticketing model that highlights the cheapest option for passengers and would encourage operators to explore significant discounts for early bookings.
- 5.4 We would like to see bidders introduce a delay-repay mechanism on the Stansted Express ensuring passengers are appropriately compensated for any delay above 5 minutes.
- 5.5 With the advent of mobile technology and smart applications, plus the success of the Oyster card system in London, we would like to see bidders propose options to introduce contactless payment and smart card technology on the Stansted Express and other West Anglia commuter services.
- 5.6 Smartcard technology is the future for public transport and is already in operation on most London commuter routes, with the recent Govia Thameslink franchise announcing that both Gatwick and Luton airports will benefit from contactless payment. There should be a specific commitment in the franchise for new operators to roll out contactless payment and smart card technology within the first two years of the new franchise.

⁵ Passenger Focus National Passenger Survey, Spring 2014

⁶ Stansted Airport Surface Access Strategy update 2011 – 2015 – www.stanstedairport.com/sustainability

5.7 We welcome bidders exploring opportunities for combined air - rail ticketing options.

A seamless door to door passenger experience

5.8 One of the airport's key aspirations is to see the full integration of rail and air services, through the creation of a seamless door to door passenger experience. The quality of the journey plays a big part in attracting passengers to the airport and switching from other transport modes. The class 379 Stansted Express trains are modern with air conditioning, free WiFi and buffet facilities and we would like bidders to continue offering a similar if not enhanced services for passengers.

5.9 To create a seamless door to door journey for passengers, we would encourage bidders to explore opportunities for co-branded products and joint marketing collateral with the airport. This could include employee uniforms, customer service training and seasonal marketing campaigns.

5.10 Stansted Airport has worked closely and positively with the current TOC to improve the provision of passenger information on board the Stansted Express and at key stations along the WAML. This has included the introduction of multi-lingual announcements on board services; the introduction of a joint customer information points at London Liverpool Street and the installation of flight information screens at Cambridge and London Liverpool Street. These improvements have proved highly effective and we welcome bidders putting forward other innovative solutions to provide a step change in the rail and air passenger journey.

Stations

5.11 Over the last three years, Stansted Airport train station has improved significantly with new overhead lighting, ticket office facilities and additional seating provision. We would like to see bidders maintain this high level of service with the potential to introduce enhanced catering / retail facilities at platform level.

5.12 At Tottenham Hale, we encourage bidders to work closely with Network Rail and Transport for London to improve the passenger experience and facilities at the station, including an improved PRM (Passengers with Reduced Mobility) provision.

5.13 Tottenham Hale station is a key gateway for the airport and an important transfer hub for passenger changing for the London Underground to Central London, yet it is often overcrowded with poor wayfinding and limited passenger facilities. As a first measure we would like to see bidders commit to introducing flight information screens at this station.

5.14 With the introduction of the Stratford to Angel Road scheme in 2017/8, this is an ideal opportunity to reconfigure the layout of Tottenham Hale station and optimise the interchange between Stansted Express and Stratford services. As part of the franchise, we would like to see bidders work creatively to ensure maximum benefit for airport passengers travelling between Stratford and the airport, including the seamless integration of timetables and the introduction of simple and convenient cross platform changes.

5.15 In summary, the franchise specification should include the following commitments:

9. A commitment to introduce a more simplified and flexible ticketing structure based on the low cost airline model that shows the cheapest option for passengers.

10. A commitment for bidders to introduce a delay-repay mechanism on the Stansted Express for any delay above 5 minutes.

11. A commitment to roll out contactless payment and smart card technology on the Stansted Express and West Anglia commuter services within the first two years of the new franchise.

12. A commitment for the bidders to work in partnership with the airport to enhance the door to door passengers experience, including co-branded products and improved facilities and interchange capabilities at Stansted Airport and Tottenham Hale stations.

6. QUESTIONS

Question 1 - Please select 3 of the Passenger Focus recommendations set out in paragraph 4.6 which you believe require particular attention in order to improve your end to end journey? If relevant, please identify the rail line to which your answer relates.

As set out in the introduction to this response, we believe the three recommendations which require particular attention on the Stansted Express and the WAML include:

- Delivering value for money;
- Providing a punctual and reliable service; and
- Provision of sufficient capacity.

Question 3 - Are there any changes to the current passenger rail service (i.e. number or trains per hour/day), as set out in paragraph 5.8, which you feel should be considered? If so, please explain your rationale. For example, please identify specific local factors which might influence the future level of passenger demand which you consider should be reflected in the specification,

Stansted Airport supports the need to maintain four Stansted Express trains per hour to London Liverpool Street, operating every 15 minutes to cater for expected growth at the airport over the next decade. In the 12 months to February 2015, passenger numbers at Stansted have increased by 14.4% from 17.9 to 20.5 million, making Stansted the fastest growing major airport in the UK. Future bidders should factor these growth projections into their bid proposals and explore innovative solutions to improve the frequency - particularly in the early morning airport peaks - and future rolling stock capacity to the airport.

As we have set out in our submission, we also believe there is a strong business case to make the airport a more attractive option to new passengers and airlines by reducing the journey times between London Liverpool Street and the airport from between 47 – 59 minutes to a specific target of a 40 minutes by 2019. Improved rail connectivity provides passengers with greater choice and competition at a time when Heathrow and Gatwick airports will be operating at full capacity and will help to foster growth and regeneration along the burgeoning London-Stansted-Cambridge Corridor.

We would like to see a commitment in the franchise to retain the Cambridge to Stansted service and increase frequency to include peak and weekend operations. Since its introduction in July 2014, this service has seen up to 5,000 passengers using it per rail period. This demonstrates a strong commercial and passenger appetite for this service to be introduced in the peaks and at weekends to meet airport needs.

Question 4 - Results indicate that rail is not the preferred mode of transport when travelling to Stansted Airport. What improvements do you believe should be made to the rail service in order to make this your first choice of travel?

At present the Stansted Express does not provide value for money for the time it takes to reach the airport from London, compared to other modes such as airport coaches. Together with long journey times and poor reliability, these issues have held Stansted back in seeking to compete in the London market and they have led to the long term decline in rail mode share to the airport from around 29% in 2004/5 to 22% in 2013/14. Our view is that this decline could easily be reversed with improvements to the rail infrastructure and service provision, particularly a reduction in journey times to around 40 minutes, the introduction of early morning services and improved reliability.

Question 8 - How can the franchise operator help you better during a) planned disruption, such as engineering works and forecasted bad weather, and b) unplanned on-the-day disruption? Please provide separate answers for both cases.

Management of passengers during incidents of disruption is often recognised as a significant issue for the airport, primarily because Stansted is an important point of entry for non-UK residents arriving by air with over half of the airport's passengers being overseas residents. We would encourage the franchise operator to introduce new and innovative solutions to address the management of passenger disruption for airport customers, particularly on weekends and Bank Holidays. This would include the formalisation of contingency arrangements with airport coach operators and the reduction in rail replacement services.

Question 9 - To improve the railway's ability to match growth in demand with appropriate levels of capacity, we recognise that an increase of carriages per train, or in the number of services per hour, would help. However, we are confined by limited timetabling and infrastructure constraints and are therefore looking for other innovative ways to resolve the issue. When travelling on a service where capacity is stretched, what opportunities do you see which would improve your on board experience?

As outlined in our submission, we have set out a strong business case to improve line speeds on the WAML, which in turn will enable faster journey times and enhanced performance on for rail services. This is a cost effective solution with a transport user' BCR of 3.7 and would make the most efficient use of existing rail infrastructure on the WAML.

Question 10 - What are your views on removing first class seating in order to provide more overall seating and reduce standing?

Airport passengers, particularly those using full service scheduled operators, value choice in how they get to and from the airport and we favour the retention of first class seating.

Question 11 - Are there any specific stations or services that you feel could improve on reliability or punctuality? Where possible, please explain your reasoning when responding to this question.

Services on the Stansted Express are frequently delayed due to a range of infrastructure and operational issues including overhead power failures and fleet reliability associated with class 317 rolling stock. Although performance on the Stansted Express has improved over the last 12 months from around 89% to 91% of trains running on time, service punctuality is still below other airport services. As airport passengers have a higher value of time, the impact of any delays are more significant for this group and have an adverse effect on Stansted's ability to attract new customers and airlines. We would like to see a commitment in the franchise for the successful operator to work in partnership with Network Rail and other infrastructure owners to improve punctuality on the Stansted Express from 91% today to 95% by 2020.

Question 12 - What sort of improvements would you like to see prioritised at the station(s) you use? Please provide details and reasoning for these as well as the name of the station(s).

At Tottenham Hale in particular, we encourage bidders to work closely with Network Rail and Transport for London to improve the passenger experience and facilities at the station. The station is a key gateway for the airport and an important transfer hub for London Underground, yet it is often overcrowded with poor wayfinding and limited passenger facilities. As a first measure we would like to see bidders commit to introducing flight information screens at the station.

Question 14 - Are there areas of improvement in customer information and engagement you would like to see before, during and after your journey?

The franchise specification should include a commitment for the bidders to work in partnership with the airport to enhance the door to door passenger experience, including co-branded products and improved facilities. To improve the passenger experience, particularly during periods of disruption, a key requirement is the provision of relevant and timely information for airport passengers and commuters.

Question 18 - In summary, what three aspects of your current East Anglia rail journey would you like to see improved to enhance your overall travel experience?

Throughout the submission we have highlighted a number of opportunities to significantly transform the overall travel experience to and from Stansted Airport. Our key objectives focus on the need to provide a faster and more frequent train service; a reliable railway; and a seamless door to door journey for airport passengers.