

Below is the text of separate emails sent to the TPE bid teams at
Stagecoach Rail
Keolis Go-Ahead Limited
First TransPennine Express Ltd

From: Dennis Fancett
Sent: 11 April 2015 11:46
To: [Names Removed]
Subject: TPE Bid: Services North of Newcastle

Dear [Names Removed]

I am emailing you because SENRUG (The South East Northumberland Rail User Group) is keen to enter into a constructive dialogue with the companies who are bidding for the new TPE rail franchise that will start from 2016. SENRUG is a voluntary pro-rail campaign group that promotes rail travel and campaigns for better rail services in, within, to and from South East Northumberland, representing the interests of both existing and potential rail travellers in the area. By "potential", SENRUG means those who would use rail services if only the trains went where they want to go, at the time they want to go, at a price they can afford, and in a clean, safe, secure and easy to understand manner. SENRUG has 161 individual and 10 corporate members and additionally receives comments, suggestions and complaints about rail services from a significant number of people who are not members.

As you are hopefully aware, SENRUG advocated to the DfT in our response to its franchise specification consultation that TPE services on the Liverpool – Newcastle route should be extended north of Newcastle at least to Cramlington and Morpeth, where the hourly TPE service could compliment the existing hourly Northern local service to provide a combined 2 trains an hour service for these two significant towns in South East Northumberland. SENRUG pointed out that trains on the TPE route currently sit idle at Newcastle for 55 minutes before returning south, and during this time could easily achieve the extension to Morpeth (about a 15 minute run each way) without the operator requiring additional rolling stock to provide the requirement.

SENRUG is delighted therefore to note that DfT has asked bidders to put forward options for extending these services to Edinburgh. SENRUG therefore requests that bidders actively consider and progress the following 2 options:

Option 1: Extend to Morpeth calling at Cramlington & Morpeth

As stated, this option could be achieved within the 55 minutes the trains currently sit idle at Newcastle Station before returning south and would not therefore require additional stock. It would however require electrification of a few yards of track giving access to the reversing siding at Morpeth which is already part electrified.

Option 2: Extend to Edinburgh calling at Cramlington, Morpeth, Alnmouth, Berwick, Dunbar and Edinburgh

In this instance, SENRUG requests operators to have a calling pattern on their services in which every train serves each station listed, providing a regularly hourly service not just between these stations, but also for journeys south and west of Newcastle to Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool, plus providing an hourly service to / from Edinburgh. SENRUG believes the market between Northumberland stations and Edinburgh is often overlooked, with inter-city operators limiting their focus to those travelling south.

In particular, SENRUG has been campaigning for improvements to the inter-city service at Morpeth (Northumberland's County Town) for some time, and with significant support locally. Whilst improvements in response to our campaigns means the peak service is now significantly improved, the off-peak service remains woefully inadequate with for instance a 6 hour gap (between 08:58 and 14:50 northbound or between 11:19 and 17:15 southbound) for a service to / from Edinburgh. SENRUG is aware of potential passengers who will not use the train because of resistance to travelling south to Newcastle in order to join a northbound train, passing back through their starting point an hour or more later on a non-stop service.

Additionally, SENRUG particularly wants to draw your attention to the potential of Cramlington. Although it currently has a very poor rail service with no inter-city provision at all, planned housing growth could lead to it becoming a town of some 40,000 – 45,000 population making it easily the largest town in Northumberland. Although only 12 miles north of Newcastle, use of Newcastle as a park and ride rail head is extremely difficult due to completely full parking provision at Newcastle station and inability to meaningfully increase it. Bus access to Newcastle Station is similarly difficult as busses from Northumberland do not serve Newcastle Station but drop passengers half a mile away at Haymarket. Cramlington also has significant light industry in its numerous industrial estates and a growing business sector. Cramlington is also the location for a new major A&E Trauma hospital opening shortly, the first of its kind in the country, and SENRUG has approached the NHS about extending the bus service it intends to provide to connect the hospital to the Town Centre on to Cramlington rail station.

What SENRUG does not want is yet another operator running between Newcastle and Edinburgh non-stop as this would provide no benefit for Northumberland and very little benefit to the operator, since services would simply compete with CrossCountry north of Leeds, and with Virgin Trains East Coast *and* CrossCountry north of York. Neither does SENRUG favour the skip stop pattern offered by the limited number of services which do call at Northumberland stations since this pattern makes travel between Northumberland stations almost impossible. The new franchise offers an opportunity to offer new rail services in Northumberland, grow the overall market for rail and exploit the clear potential of latent demand from major Northumberland towns, rather than simply extract market share from the

existing inter-city operators who do not serve Northumberland, especially South East Northumberland, particularly well.

I hope these points are of interest and SENRUG would be very willing to meet a member of your bid team to discuss these opportunities in more depth. It is likely that a member of the Cramlington Development Corporation would be interested in joining such a meeting to discuss the case for Cramlington in greater detail.

NB: SENRUG's response to the DfT consultation on the TPE franchise specification is on our website at <http://www.senrug.co.uk/downloads/DocumentsIssued/140813ResponseToDfTTranSPennineNorthernFranchiseConsultation.pdf>

We would like to wish you and your team well as you develop your bid, and look forward to an ongoing constructive relationship with you should your company be awarded the franchise.

Kindest regards

Dennis Fancett

Chair, SENRUG: The South East Northumberland Rail User Group

Tel [home]: [details removed]

Email: [details removed]

www.senrug.co.uk

Re-open the Ashington Blyth & Tyne Line:

Hirst Park Middle School in Ashington won SENRUG's Schools' competition to create a 7-10 minute DVD setting out their reasons for re-opening the line. See their winning DVD here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FThHXmIO6S0&list=UUhvolzTGcXIU-o62euglwSg>