



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1A 2AA

16 August 2019

Dear Prime Minister,

I write following the Government's decision last week to cancel the competition for the future South Eastern rail franchise.

Although I support the Department for Transport's commitment to securing value for money for taxpayers and understand the difficulties that have arisen while putting this contract out to tender, it is now well over two years since passengers were first promised a series of much-needed improvements as part of this refranchising process. Over that time, customers – particularly in suburban, commuter-heavy areas like Bromley and Chislehurst – have continued to suffer from a disappointing level of service. Indeed, despite what I believe to be a genuine effort by Southeastern to improve standards, given the considerable disruption and timetabling problems that have been experienced over the last thirteen years many passengers remain sceptical as to their ability to oversee the necessary improvements, especially while the franchise area remains the same.

You will no doubt recall from your time as Mayor of London the challenges associated with the franchise, and given passenger demand and its geographical size, the inevitable conflict between metro and mainline services. I would therefore suggest that now would be an ideal time to reconsider the merits of the joint prospectus published by you and the then Secretary of State for Transport, Sir Patrick McLoughlin, in January 2016. The persuasive, evidence-based business case Transport for London (TfL) and the Department for Transport put forward continues to enjoy widespread support, as it did at the time from MPs on both sides of the House, the London Assembly and Kent County Council.

During your speech at the Manchester Science and Industry Museum on 27 July you set out your ambition to devolve more power to councils and local communities, including on decisions relating to transport and infrastructure. With the root and branch rail review being conducted by Keith Williams due to be published this Autumn, I believe it would be sensible to investigate again the role TfL could play were responsibility for metro services devolved to it, as well as the benefits that could be delivered through closer operational alignment with tube, bus, tram and other rail services on fare levels, ease of interchange, timetabling, systems of ticketing and passenger information systems.

I would be grateful for your thoughts on this matter, and for completeness, have copied this letter to both the Transport Secretary and Rail Minister.

Yours ever,

**Bob Neill MP**

cc. Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, Secretary of State for Transport;  
Chris Heaton-Harris MP, Minister of State, Department for Transport