

News Release from DfT

Friday 11 August 2006 10:13

Silverlink franchise extended to November 2007

The Department for Transport today confirmed that Silverlink's train franchise will be extended from 15 October 2006 to 11 November 2007. There will be an investment of £97 million in services.

New terms have been introduced to encourage recent performance improvements to be maintained. There will be no change to the timetable and service pattern Silverlink operates as a result of the franchise extension.

The extension helps facilitate the re-mapping of franchises in the Midlands, which was announced by the Department for Transport in October 2005. Three new franchises - East Midlands, West Midlands and Cross Country - will replace four current franchises, which are operated by Central Trains, Silverlink, Virgin Cross Country and Midland Mainline. Remapping existing franchises will facilitate closer working between track and train to improve efficiency and performance. The extension of the contract will help to align the end dates of the four existing franchises to 11 November 2007.

Rail Minister Derek Twigg said: "Our contract with Silverlink commits them to maintaining current standards of performance, where over 90% of trains are running on time. It also means that we can continue with our plans for the new West Midlands franchise which will deliver further improvements to passengers travelling across the West Midlands."

Silverlink County services will be transferred to the new West Midlands franchise. Responsibility for Silverlink Metro services will be transferred to Transport for London (TfL) in November 2007. TfL are in the process of procuring a concession to operate services after the transfer.

The consultation on services in the new West Midlands franchise closed recently. Responses are being considered and will inform the Invitation to Tender, which will be given to pre-qualified bidders in Autumn 2006. The closing dates for receipt of bids is February 2007 and the winner announced in Summer 2007.

Notes to editors:

1. Silverlink Trains is owned by the National Express Group and commenced the franchise in February 1997 for a seven year term. It was extended for two further years, with the current contract due to expire on 15 October 2006.
2. The new franchise runs from 15 October 2006 until 11 November 2007.
3. The routes to be transferred to the West Midlands Franchise are currently operated as Silverlink County which incorporates services on the West Coast Mail Line between London Euston and Northampton via Watford and Milton Keynes. Silverlink County also operates the local services between Watford Junction and St Albans Abbey, and between Bletchley and Bedford.
4. The new Franchise Agreement will be placed on the public register at a future date.
5. Documents relating to the new West Midlands franchise and central remapping are on the DfT website.