



Craig Whittaker MP

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Response to South Western Rail Franchise – March 2017

Thank you for contacting me about the South Western rail franchise.

First MTR will use the experience of MTR (Mass Transit Railway) in operating the busy Hong Kong metro to deliver smooth and rapid journeys for passengers travelling around London's suburban network. Faster journeys will be delivered through a consistent fleet of new suburban trains offering a regular, metro-style service, while passengers can look forward to more space, ensuring that the railway can support London's growth. First MTR will oversee a £1.2 billion investment that will improve journeys for millions of train passengers, and provide a boost for communities across the South West of England.

Both First and MTR have a wealth of experience when it comes to operating railways. As long as they deliver on the requirements set out in their franchise agreement, I do not personally see an issue with the involvement of the Chinese company MTR.

I believe that competition for rail franchises is the best way to secure a high quality service for passengers and good value for the taxpayer. All franchises are awarded through a competitive tendering process, and on this occasion the Transport Secretary concluded that First MTR's bid was superior to the bid proposed by Stagecoach.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP