

[News story: First MTR South Western Trains Limited wins South Western franchise](#)

We are determined to transform the way that the railways work to deliver a revolution in services for passengers. Two weeks ago we announced a [consultation on the South Eastern franchise](#) which explained our ambition for bringing together the operation of track and train, so that one team of people is focussed on providing the best service to passengers. And today (27 March 2017) we can announce that First MTR South Western Trains Limited has been awarded the South Western franchise which will run for 7 years from 20 August 2017. This is the first franchise awarded since the Secretary of State set out his [vision for the future of the railways](#) in a speech on 6 December 2016, and marks a new era in joined up working between train operators and Network Rail.

First MTR South Western Trains Limited will use the experience of one of its major shareholders MTR, who operate 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. Passengers can look forward to more space, ensuring that the railway can support London's growth.

Passengers travelling across the South Western network will also benefit from more space and faster rail services as the new 7 year South Western Franchise has been [awarded today to First MTR South Western Trains Limited](#).

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Following on from our announcement on the start of the South Eastern Franchise consultation, this deal is more great news for rail passengers.

First MTR South Western Trains Limited will deliver the improvements that people tell us they want right across the South Western franchise area, from Bristol and Exeter, to Southampton and Portsmouth, to Reading, Windsor and London.

We are delivering the biggest rail modernisation programme for over a century and this franchise will deliver real changes for passengers, who can look forward to modern trains, faster journeys and a more reliable service.

The new franchise will see closer partnership working between track and train. A railway that is predominantly run by an integrated local team of people with a commitment to the smooth operation of their routes, improving services and performance, is at the heart of Secretary of State's vision for

the network and First MTR South Western Trains Limited expects to work even closer with Network Rail, with the shared aim of giving passengers exactly that.

First MTR South Western Trains Limited will oversee a £1.2 billion investment that will improve journeys for millions of train passengers, and provide a boost for the communities served. The next franchise will see:

- 22,000 extra seats into London Waterloo each morning peak and 30,000 extra seats out of Waterloo each evening peak
- a fleet of 90 new trains, providing more space for passengers on Reading, Windsor and London routes
- refurbished existing trains with charging sockets, new seat covers and refurbished toilets
- more frequent and additional services across the franchise
- faster journeys across the network; journeys to London will be:
 - 8 minutes faster from Southampton
 - 5 minutes faster from Portsmouth
 - 10 minutes faster from Reading
 - 12 minutes faster from Hounslow
 - 11 minutes faster from Salisbury
- earlier first and later last trains, including between London and:
 - Twickenham
 - Hounslow
 - Windsor
 - Reading
 - Epsom
 - Guildford
 - Portsmouth
 - Salisbury
- more Sunday services across the network, with many routes having the equivalent of a Saturday service after 1.00pm

The government is supporting record investment in rail that will not only deliver new world-class infrastructure but will create thousands of jobs opportunities across the country. The government is committed to creating 30,000 apprenticeships in the road and rail sector by 2020 and the new franchise will also see First MTR South Western Trains Limited offer more than 100 apprenticeships each year helping boost skills and jobs.

The new contract will see passengers provided with better information throughout their journey, on-board trains, on platforms and through a new mobile phone app, including live information on seating availability and crowding levels, so that passengers know the best place to stand to board the train.

The new contract will also see:

- investment to make Southampton Central station a destination fit for the community it serves, with:
 - a new look entrance
 - improved retail

- better facilities for passengers
- new delay repay compensation, including for delays of 15 minutes or more, and with automatic claims for smart card season tickets and advance purchased tickets bought in advance through their digital channels
- free wifi at all stations and on-board mainland trains
- investment in station improvements including:
 - refurbished waiting rooms
 - additional seating
 - improvements for step-free access
 - 60 electric vehicle charging points
- new smart card, automatically offering the cheapest walk-up single or day return fare
- new flexible season tickets, offering a discount for passengers travelling fewer than 5 days a week
- season, single and return tickets on smart cards across all of the franchise
- new discount for purchasing 12 consecutive monthly season tickets
- new student connect smart ticket for 16 to 18 year-olds, offering one-third off weekly or longer tickets, and further term-time discounts for under 16s
- mobile phone barcode tickets will be available on the network for the first time
- better connections for the Island Line, and work with the Isle of Wight Council and other local bodies to develop a business plan and option for a more sustainable long-term future
- at least 1,500 new car park spaces
- over 40% reduction in energy use at stations and depots

FirstGroup Chief Executive Tim O'Toole said:

We are delighted that our partnership with MTR has been selected by the DfT to run the South Western rail franchise, a key part of the country's railway network which millions of people rely on every day. Our successful bid will deliver the tangible improvements that customers and stakeholders have told us they want from this franchise. Passengers can look forward to new and better trains, more seats and services, quicker journey times, improved stations and more flexible fare options.

Jeremy Long, CEO – European Business, MTR Corporation said:

MTR is known across the world for the excellent quality of its rail services, and we look forward to working with FirstGroup to provide a best-in-class travel experience for passengers in London and the South West. Together we will deliver a major programme of upgrades, including improvements to both rail services and customer experience, for passengers travelling across the South Western network.