

News story: More seats for rail passengers as nearly £1 billion is invested in Midlands services

Rail passengers will get new longer trains with more seats and more space as nearly £1 billion is invested in services on the West Midlands network.

There will be 400 new carriages rolled out by 2021 and space for an extra 85,000 passengers on rush hour services in Birmingham and London, with the longer trains providing extra seats and space for passengers.

Under the deal with West Midlands Trains Ltd (a joint venture between Abellio, East Japan Railway Company and Mitsui & Co Ltd) to run the West Midlands franchise, passengers will get:

- free wifi on all main line services by the end of 2019
- for the first time compensation if services are delayed by more than 15 minutes
- improved access for those requiring extra assistance, including disabled people

Smart ticketing and live passenger information will also be rolled out under the deal, as part of a package of reforms that will improve journeys for passengers.

The franchise covers services across the West Midlands, as well as trains from London Euston to Crewe and from Liverpool to Birmingham.

[West Midlands video](#)

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

This is great news for passengers using West Midlands services – with new trains, more space, more regular services and easier access for disabled people.

We are improving the whole travelling experience with live train crowding information, compensation for people delayed by 15 minutes or more, smart ticketing and better value tickets for part-time workers.

This shows we are delivering on our commitment to build a railway that works for everyone.

Dominic Booth, Managing Director of Abellio UK, said:

We are delighted to have been announced as preferred bidder for the West Midlands franchise, driving growth in one of the most exciting regions in the country. We will be investing nearly £1 billion into the network, delivering new trains, better stations and a whole host of other benefits for passengers.

The trains running only in the West Midlands area will be jointly managed by the Department for Transport and West Midlands Rail (WMR), a consortium of 16 local councils.

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, said:

We want to see a new golden era for our local trains and today's announcement is an important step towards that.

Having the ability to use our local knowledge and understanding to shape what West Midlands Trains will deliver for passengers under this franchise has also been a game changer.

I believe the deal secured today will help create a railway that can not only improve people's journeys but keep our economy growing and we look forward to working with West Midlands Trains in making that happen.

There will be 20,000 extra seats for rush hour passengers in Birmingham, and 10,000 for people in London.

On top of this, there will be standing room for 50,000 passengers in Birmingham in metro-style carriages, similar to the ones used on the London Overground, for short cross-city journeys, and standing room for an additional 5,000 passengers in London.

The new franchise will see closer partnership working between track and train – delivering the Secretary of State's vision for the network. The West Midlands network of trains and infrastructure will be run by a local team of people with a commitment to the smooth operation of their routes, improving services and performance.

Other key benefits for passengers under the franchise deal include:

- plans to limit the impact of delays caused by leaves on the line in the autumn, including through the introduction of new modern trains

- an extension of smart ticketing in the West Midlands making this available at more stations, and a new smart card season ticket for people using the Northampton to Euston line
- more than 800 new digital information screens across 150 stations providing real time journey information, plus a new mobile service that gives live crowding information to help passengers plan ahead
- passengers will also be entitled to 25% compensation if their train is delayed by 15 minutes for the first time – they already receive 50% of their money back for delays of half an hour and full compensation if it is more than an hour
- more than £70 million invested in new and existing depots to improve train reliability
- more than £60 million invested on station improvements which will deliver:
 - over 1,000 new car park spaces
 - over 2,500 cycle parking spaces
 - a cycle hire scheme
 - new and refurbished waiting rooms
 - more seats at stations

As well as feasibility studies for the development of new stations in the West Midlands.

The new contract will start in December and last until March 2026.

West Midlands

There will be more than 180 new train carriages for the West Midlands, creating more space for people.

This includes investment in 100 new carriages on the Cross City line and 80 new carriages for the Snow Hill line, offering longer and more spacious services.

The carriages for the Cross City line will offer metro-style services with increased space to carry more passengers, and wider doors for quicker access.

Other benefits for passengers include:

- more trains between Birmingham and Shrewsbury with 2 services per hour from December 2018
- a regular 2 trains per hour service between Birmingham and Rugeley via the Chase Line from December 2018
- a new direct hourly service between Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent from

December 2018 providing much needed additional capacity on this busy route

- an extension of Cross City line services from Longbridge to Bromsgrove
- a new hourly shuttle between Leamington Spa and Coventry serving the new station at Kenilworth.
- two morning and two evening rush hour direct services between Walsall and London from December 2018, helping to unlock economic growth in the region
- more Sunday services on the Cross City line with the number of trains per hour between Longbridge and Birmingham doubling from 2 per hour to 4 in December 2018, and then increasing to 6 in May 2021
- increased Sunday services on the Snow Hill line with the number of trains per hour between Snow Hill and Stourbridge Junction increasing from 2 to 6
- a new Sunday service between Birmingham and Shrewsbury from December 2018, and a second train per hour introduced in May 2021

London

Passengers on London services will benefit from 225 brand new carriages, with all other carriages being completely refurbished.

People travelling between Northampton and Euston and on the Abbey Line between St Albans Abbey and Watford Junction will be able to pay for their travel with a smart card for the first time.

In other improvements:

- more space for passengers will be rolled out on the Marston Vale line with earlier and later services between Bedford and Bletchley and a new hourly Sunday service from May 2021 for the first time
- modern trains for the Abbey line and improvements to Sunday services from May 2021 which will provide a similar level of service to that provided on a Saturday
- mobile phone and laptop chargepoints on all London services by May 2021
- more Sunday trains on the line from Euston to Northampton, with up to 4 services an hour running between Euston and Milton Keynes by May 2021

North-west

New trains will be arriving in the north-west on the Liverpool to Birmingham line, which passes through Crewe and Winsford. These are longer and have more seats for passengers than the existing trains.

A later last train from Liverpool to Birmingham on a Saturday, departing at least 45 minutes later.

Enhanced Sunday services between Birmingham and Liverpool from December 2021 increasing from one train per hour to 2 trains per hour.

A new Sunday service for Acton Bridge from May 2021.