

Pat Glass responds to announcement First Group & MTR are to take over the South Western Franchise

Pat Glass MP, Labour's Shadow Transport Minister,

commenting on the announcement that First Group and MTR are to take over the South Western Franchise, said:

"In an agreement made in January of last year, the Government announced that the South Western franchise around London was to be taken over by TfL at the end of the franchise period. It is therefore disappointing to see that it has now been handed over to a private operator which is partly owned by a foreign company. We are now in a ludicrous situation where 75 percent of our railways are now wholly or partly controlled by foreign states or foreign companies.

"It is also hugely disheartening to hear that bidders were required to include plans for Driver Only Operation. It is important that the new franchisee is aware of the safety critical role of the second member of staff on board and they should not seek to remove this. It seems that the Government is deliberately intent on spreading the disruption faced daily by commuters on Southern to commuters passengers using the South Western Network.

"First Group and MTR have promised more trains, more seats and a better service but now only time will tell as to whether they will deliver that."