

Briefing

Great Local Railways

Models and principles for rail devolution in
England under Great British Railways

February 2025

A. An idea whose time has come – the case and context for rail devolution

1. In its recent English Devolution White Paper, the government diagnosed that the over-centralisation of decision-making powers in Whitehall has been a key limiting factor on the country's economic growth. The White Paper has set out a 'generational project of determined devolution' to move decision making closer to local communities.¹
2. The railway has a vital role to play in achieving these objectives and helping to unlock regional growth. Last year, the government launched a call for ideas on a new Integrated National Transport Strategy, which aims to better join up transport services at a local and regional level. Mayors across the country have called for greater control and influence over their local rail services, and the Parliamentary debate in the House of Lords on the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Act demonstrated strong cross-party consensus for greater local control of rail services.
3. As government progresses its plans for rail reform and the creation of Great British Railways (GBR), it will need to do so in a way that facilitates the wider English devolution agenda. Government has committed to giving Mayors a statutory role in GBR's planning processes, with Strategic Authorities entering into 'partnership agreements' to deliver improvements to services in their areas.² The most mature devolved authorities will have a 'right to request' further devolution, up to and including control of local rail services.
4. Importantly, as part of the English Devolution White Paper, government has committed to developing guidance on the process for devolved authorities to request further rail devolution. If government can develop a clear and objective set of criteria to guide its decision making, then devolved authorities will have clarity about what they need to do to make the case for greater local control. This briefing is intended to help government develop that policy position.
5. As part of the guidance, government will need to recognise and address the potential tensions between its plans for rail reform and its wider devolution agenda. The overarching objective of rail reform is to reduce fragmentation in the railway by running the network on a more whole-system basis under the control of a 'directing mind'.³ However, there is a risk that given GBR's size, it may not give due weight to local priorities, or it may be incentivised to prioritise the Secretary of State's requirements (as its owner and primary funder) over local needs.
6. Concerns that devolving control of rail services will undermine GBR's ability to co-ordinate across the rail system are legitimate. Retaining a coherent approach to managing the railway is vital for those services that operate nationwide, particularly rail freight, and a joined-up ticketing system should be retained so that passengers can continue to buy tickets between any two places on the national rail network.
7. However, challenges around network coherence should not be insurmountable – as evidenced by successful examples in England and across Europe. Decisions about which services should or should not be devolved need to be based on an assessment of how individual services are used by passengers today and in the future. Where

¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. (2024). English Devolution White Paper. [Link here](#).

² Strategic Authorities will be comprised of a number of councils working together, covering areas that people recognise and work in. Many places already have Combined Authorities that serve this role – Strategic Authorities will be the successors to these.

³ Labour. (2024). Getting Britain Moving. [Link here](#).

services are primarily used for local journeys as part of an integrated transport system, the benefits of devolving control of those services are likely to outweigh the risks of any marginal inefficiency across the national network.

8. Experience shows that devolving ownership and control of rail services to local leaders can be transformative. As part of integrated transport strategies and Local Growth Plans, the potential of rail services to support economic regeneration and unlock new housing opportunities can be fully realised. When paired with bus franchising powers as set out in the English Devolution White Paper, there is a huge opportunity for leaders across the country to emulate Transport for London (TfL) and create genuinely integrated public transport systems at a local level.⁴

Case study 1

Unlocking the potential of the London Overground

- i** Before being brought together under TfL in 2007, routes which now form parts of the Overground were operated under the Silverlink franchise, combined with inter-urban services from London to Birmingham, Northampton, as well as rural services around Bedford, Milton Keynes and St Albans. A Greater London Authority report on the North London Line at the time branded it 'London's forgotten railway', and cited passenger complaints that the service was 'shabby, unreliable, unsafe, and overcrowded'.
- i** Since coming under TfL's control, Overground services have been transformed. Consistent branding and the Oyster ticketing system (as well as pay-as-you-go) have seamlessly integrated Overground services into London's wider transport system. Investment in rolling stock means that the average age of an Overground train is around half the national average, and TfL has overseen a significant expansion of the Overground – adding the East and South London lines, services from Liverpool Street to Cheshunt and Enfield, and extending to Barking Riverside.
- i** These improvements had a transformational impact on areas which had historically been poorly connected and economically deprived. This is particularly notable in East London, where the Overground unlocked more convenient travel options from some of the most deprived neighbourhoods to employment centres such as Shoreditch, and helped enable construction of 10,000 homes, along with a new school, a £40m Wellbeing Hub, and a new district centre commercial zone at Barking Riverside.

9. Local control can also bring stronger accountability and oversight, which can in itself contribute to higher service standards. Northern Mayors have been rightly frustrated in recent years with the levels of rail performance in their areas, but although Transport for the North has powers as the co-specifier of Northern Rail and TransPennine Express, ultimate control and ownership of these operators remains with the Department for Transport (DfT). Proposals to brand services in local liveries, but leave delivery to GBR, could bring reputational

⁴ Case study 1 references:

- Greater London Authority. (2006). London's forgotten railway. [Link here](#)
- Urban Transport Group. (2017). Rail devolution works. [Link here](#)

risks for devolved authorities if they lack the powers to direct change. By contrast, TfL and Merseytravel are able to exert close contractual oversight of their services, which are among the highest performing in the country.⁵

10. The proven success of rail devolution in Britain and Europe demonstrates the benefits local control of rail services can bring in supporting growth and improving services. We urge the government to be ambitious as it develops guidance on rail devolution.

“ Our rail system today is acting as a brake on growth and, as the UK's fastest growing city-region, Greater Manchester deserves better.

We need a railway that is reliable and fully integrated with the rest of the Bee Network to drive growth and deliver new homes with public transport connections on the doorstep. ”

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester

⁵ Office of Rail and Road. (2024). Passenger rail performance. [Link here](#)

B. How to decide – principles and models for rail devolution

11. It is welcome news that government is going to develop and publish guidance on the process for Strategic Authorities to request further rail devolution. Historically, decisions around devolving services have been made on an ad hoc and bilateral basis, and been subject to the shifting policy position of central government. If government can develop a clear set of principles and criteria to guide its decision making on rail devolution, that would be a significant step forwards and a key enabler to widening the scope of rail devolution.
12. As government develops that guidance, we recommend that it applies a consistent set of criteria to its decisions. Key considerations could include:

A. **The overlap between political and railway geographies:** Where services lie wholly (or predominantly) within a Strategic Authority’s area, locally accountable leaders are well placed to provide stronger oversight and governance over these services to drive improvement.

B. **The degree of interaction with the wider national rail network:** Many devolved services will often need to share tracks and stations (especially city centre termini) with longer distance passenger services, or rail freight. Where services are relatively self-contained, it will be easier to devolve them in practice.

C. **The appetite and financial capacity of the authority:** Although many devolved authorities have experience of managing trams or other mass transit systems, taking on control of rail services could represent a technical challenge and potential financial risk to some devolved authorities.
13. In the context of a unified national rail system under GBR, we believe there are three broad models for greater devolved influence over rail services. These should be considered as a spectrum, with variation possible within each broad model.

Table 1: High-level models for rail devolution under GBR

i. Partnership	
e.g. Transport for Greater Manchester’s partnership deal with GBRTT	
Key features	Likely to be most suitable when
<div>⇒ Devolved leaders are consulted in the design and specification of services, but delivery and ultimate decision making remains with GBR as the ‘directing mind’.</div> <div>⇒ An integrated ticketing system is developed so that local rail services can be used as part of a wider integrated transport system, and there may be branding changes to support this.</div> <div>⇒ The non-operational elements of train stations could transfer to the control of the devolved authority, creating opportunities for development and local place-making.</div>	<div>⇒ There is some overlap of railway and political geographies (although services may continue beyond the authority area).</div> <div>⇒ Significant interactions with the wider network mean decisions about railway services ultimately need to be made at a national, rather than local level.</div> <div>⇒ The devolved authority may not yet be ready or willing to take on responsibility for services directly, but has sufficient control over other modes to drive progress towards an integrated transport system.</div>

ii. Control of train services

e.g. London Overground

Key features	Likely to be most suitable when
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Ownership of infrastructure remains with GBR. ⇒ Devolved leaders are given control over local train services. They may choose to contract those services out for delivery by the private sector (likely under a concession model), or deliver them in-house. ⇒ There is integrated branding and ticketing as part of a wider integrated transport system, and full operational control of stations could also transfer to the devolved authority (although GBR may retain ownership of the asset as infrastructure manager). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ There is a clear overlap of railway and political geographies to provide strong accountability over devolved services. ⇒ Local services predominate on devolved routes, but there is still significant interaction with other services (for instance rail freight) requiring deconfliction by GBR as 'directing mind' for the national rail network. ⇒ The devolved authority has the experience and financial resilience to manage large and complex contracts (or take services in-house, if desired). ⇒ The devolved authority has sufficient control over other modes to achieve an integrated transport system.

iii. Full divestment of track and train



e.g. Core Valley Lines

Key features	Likely to be most suitable when
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Ownership of the infrastructure (including stations) and full control of train services passes to the devolved authority. ⇒ The authority may choose to contract out the management of the network for delivery by the private sector (likely under a concession model, which could also act as a vehicle for private sector investment), or operate it in-house. ⇒ There is integrated branding and ticketing as part of a wider integrated transport system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ There is a clear overlap of railway and political geographies to provide strong accountability over devolved services. ⇒ Routes are almost entirely used by local services, meaning there are limited interactions with the wider network which would require de-conflicting. Operating across multiple infrastructure managers can present challenges for rail freight operators in particular, and freight operators would need protections on devolved networks to ensure they are treated fairly. ⇒ The devolved authority has the capability and financial resilience to manage a rail infrastructure network. This model could also facilitate private sector investment in infrastructure improvements as part of an integrated track and train concession. ⇒ The devolved authority has sufficient control over other modes to achieve an integrated transport system. ⇒ The networked nature of Britain's railway means there may be limited scope for this model.

14. The models set out above are agnostic as to whether services are delivered directly by devolved authorities themselves, or outsourced. For instance, today TfL deploys delivery partners to operate the Overground, Docklands Light Railway, and Elizabeth line through concession contracts, but has chosen to operate the Underground in-house. Contracting out services could serve as a vehicle to facilitate private investment, or as a mechanism to help deliver a multi-modal transport system. For instance, at the launch of the Integrated National Transport Strategy, the previous Secretary of State celebrated the example of Dijon, where the city has appointed a single private company (Keolis) to run the whole city's transport system.⁶
15. The best approach to delivery will depend on the circumstances of the services in question. Crucially however, this should be a choice for local leaders to make, based on securing the best outcomes for passengers and taxpayers, rather than a political one dictated from the centre.⁷

Case study 2

Delivering high quality services through a concession model in Liverpool

-  The Merseyrail concession consists of the Northern and Wirral lines in the Liverpool region and is managed by Merseytravel as part of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. The concession has been operated by Serco and Transport UK Group since July 2003 after having been awarded a 25-year contract.
-  Under the current operator, Merseyrail has delivered a high-quality service, with the highest passenger satisfaction scores of any train operator nationwide in Transport Focus' most recent survey. In 2023/2024 (the last full financial year where data is available), Merseyrail was among the 10 most punctual operators nationwide, with an on-time performance of 70.7%, exceeding the national average of 67.6%. Similarly, Merseyrail ranked among the 10 most reliable operators, with 3.2% of trains cancelled, below the national average of 4.2%.

⁶ Department for Transport. (2024). Speech: Announcing the launch of the Integrated National Transport Strategy. [Link here](#)

⁷ Case study 2 references:

- Transport Focus. (2024). Rail User Survey – train operator results. [Link here](#)
- Office of Rail and Road. (2024). Passenger Rail Performance, January to March 2024. [Link here](#)

C. The size of the prize – an ambitious vision for rail devolution in England

16. The English Devolution White Paper stated that 'Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities', the most mature devolved authorities, will have a right to request greater devolution of rail services. The table below illustrates how the principles set out above could be applied to the six Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities proposed in the government's White Paper (plus the Greater London Authority, which has bespoke devolution arrangements set out in statute) to identify the most ambitious appropriate model for devolving rail services in each area. Current devolved control over tram or metro services would be unaffected, and we have not considered any changes to national devolution arrangements in Scotland and Wales.

Table 2: Potential models of rail devolution for Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities

Authority and illustrative services	Overlap between political and railway geographies?	Degree of interaction with the wider rail network?	Experience managing rail, tram or light rail systems?	Most ambitious suitable model
Greater London Authority TfL has previously identified a number of lines in South London which could be brought under TfL control as part of a vision for 'metroisation'. Other London commuter services, for instance parts of Great Northern, could also potentially be devolved.	Yes	Some	Yes	Control of train services
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Merseyrail operates heavy rail services around Liverpool. There may be limited scope to extend these further eastwards, or to take on Northern Rail services between Liverpool and Wigan.	Yes	Limited	Yes	Full divestment of track and train
Manchester Combined Authority Eight heavy rail lines will join Transport for Greater Manchester's Bee Network from 2028 in terms of integrated ticketing and branding. However, services on these lines could potentially be devolved to Manchester's control.	Yes	Some	Yes	Control of train services
North East Combined Authority Nexus already operates the Tyne and Wear Metro in Newcastle. Northern Rail serves the Authority as part of its wider network, but many of these are longer distance services crossing multiple authority areas.	Limited	High	Yes	Partnership

Authority and illustrative services	Overlap between political and railway geographies?	Degree of interaction with the wider rail network?	Experience managing rail, tram or light rail systems?	Most ambitious suitable model
South Yorkshire Combined Authority The South Yorkshire Super Tram network is centred on Sheffield and operates partly on the national rail network. Northern Rail serves the Authority as part of its wider network, but many of these are longer distance services crossing multiple authority areas.	Limited	High	Yes	Partnership
West Midlands Combined Authority A zonal fares system is already in place, centred on Birmingham. Some West Midlands Railways services are predominantly within the Combined Authority area and could potentially be devolved, and co-operation agreements are already in place to allow for increasing local control by the West Midlands Rail Executive.	Yes	High	Yes	Control of train services
West Yorkshire Combined Authority A zonal fares system is already in place, centred on Leeds under the West Yorkshire Metro brand. Some Northern Rail services are predominantly within the Combined Authority area and could potentially be devolved, but many continue beyond.	Some	High	No, but has aspirations for a Leeds-Bradford mass transit system	Partnership, potentially moving to control of train services

17. Beyond the authorities listed above, England's devolution landscape is evolving rapidly. Government is looking to create new Strategic Authorities in areas which have not previously had Combined Authorities, and devolution arrangements are likely to mature in those areas which already have them. In the longer-term, the scope for devolving local rail services could be substantially larger, for instance in areas such as East Anglia or the South West, but we have not considered these in detail.
18. Practical issues would need to be considered on a case-by-case basis, but at a level of principle there appears to be significant potential scope for greater local control across England, particularly in the West Midlands and the North.⁸

⁸ Case study 3 references:

- Department for Transport. (2016). West Midlands rail franchise competition 2016: invitation to tender. [Link here](#)
- West Midlands Railway Executive. (2021). West Midlands Railway Executive Powers in Relation to Franchise Agreement. [Link here](#)

Case study 4 references:

- Office of Rail and Road. (2024). Table 2233 – Full-time equivalent employees by operators. [Link here](#)
- Northern Rail. Network map. [Link here](#)
- Northern Rail. (2024). Northern performance improvement plan: high-level overview. [Link here](#)

Case study 3

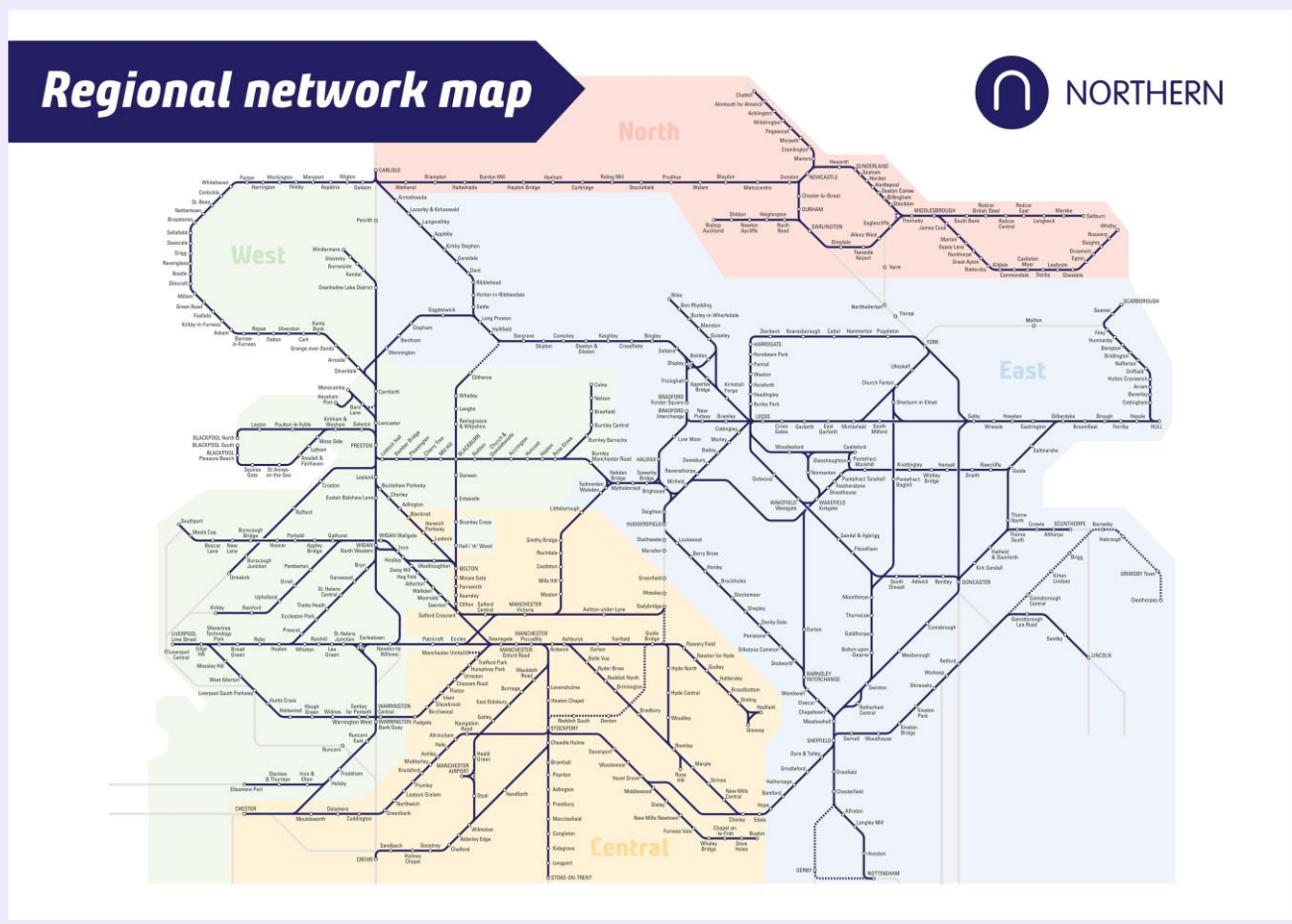
Devolving control of rail services in the West Midlands

- i** The strategic setup and operational structure of West Midlands Trains means that parts of its operations are well-placed to be devolved to local control.
- i** When the current franchise contract was originally let in 2016, it was specified that the operator should be set up in order to enable the devolution of local services in the future. To facilitate this, West Midlands Trains operates under two distinct brands: West Midlands Railway centred on Birmingham, and London Northwestern Railway providing longer distance services to London.
- i** West Midlands Rail Executive is already closely involved in the oversight and management of the operator, so is already building the capability and expertise necessary to exercise greater local control. West Midlands Railway's branding also deliberately mirrors the 'hexagon' design of Transport for the West Midlands and the West Midlands Metro, to present passengers with a more integrated experience.
- i** This separability is also reflected within the operator, where accounts and management information are reported on a business unit basis, and there are also separate control centres at Saltley (for West Midlands Railway) and Rugby (for London Northwestern Railway) which could facilitate the devolution of operational control.

Case study 4

The future of Northern Rail is key to rail devolution in England

- i** Northern Rail is the second largest train operating company in Britain (by staff numbers) operating an extremely complex network across the North of England that combines local urban services centred on major cities with interurban regional services that run between the major population centres. Northern has been publicly owned by the DfT since 2020, but is also overseen by Transport for the North and the Rail North Committee. It serves five of the Mayoral Combined Authorities government has identified as 'Established', and therefore eligible to request control of their own rail services.
- i** Performance on Northern has been poor in recent months. Recently, Kim McGuinness, Mayor of the North East Combined Authority, suggested that Northern should be jointly owned by a consortium of Northern Mayors, rather than DfT. Governance and accountability arrangements would need to be clarified, but this could also represent another alternative model for rail devolution.
- i** In its own recent performance improvement plan, the operator has proposed that it needs to pivot Northern to a more 'local' railway. As identified in Table 2 above, some of Northern's local services (for instance around Manchester and Leeds) align well with Mayoral authority boundaries. Detailed work should be undertaken by the DfT and Transport for the North to ascertain whether the service could be better delivered through greater devolved control, and whether sections of Northern could feasibly be split off to improve local accountability and reduce the scale and complexity of its operations.



D. Recognising the challenges of devolving rail services

19. While the potential benefits and scope of devolving rail services (alongside GBR as part of a reformed railway) are substantial, there are also significant challenges that will need to be worked through on a case-by-case basis to deliver local control of rail services.
- A. Building the capacity and capability of devolved authorities:** Given the scale and complexity of rail services, not all devolved authorities will immediately have the willingness or financial resilience to take on management of rail services. Any devolved control of services will need to be accompanied by budget transfers and practical support for devolved authorities.
 - B. Operational considerations:** Practical issues will need to be worked through on a case-by-case basis before splitting off and devolving control of any rail services. Operational factors such as the location of depots and rolling stock diagramming patterns will be important factors in defining which services can practically be devolved as a coherent operational unit. Interactions with wider services will also need to be managed, with a fair and transparent process for managing trade-offs.
 - C. Funding and efficiency:** It will only be practical to devolve services where a critical mass can be achieved to secure efficient delivery, recognising that there are generally efficiencies of scale in rail operations. However, countervailing factors such as the greater agility of a smaller business unit, and the ability to better tailor service delivery to local conditions with clearer strategic objectives, could offset this. Funding arrangements between central government and devolved authorities will need to be worked through to ensure they accurately reflect the transfer of costs to devolved authorities.
 - D. Transferring services in practice:** Devolving control of any rail services will take time. For instance, the transfer of Merseyrail to local control took three years to complete once the transfer was agreed in principle.⁹ Devolved services will need to be split out from existing train operating companies, requiring detailed work to identify exactly which business units, contracts and assets will need to be divided between the newly devolved services and the current operator. Devolution will also involve the transfer and reorganisation of staff, who will need to be consulted on the changes and treated fairly as part of the transfer process, with a potential risk of triggering industrial relations challenges.
 - E. Retaining a national rail network for passengers and freight:** Today, although railway services are delivered by a number of train operators, through-ticketing arrangements mean passengers can buy a single ticket between any two stations on the national rail network. Under devolution this would need to be retained, with agreements in place between GBR and any devolved services to ensure this. For rail freight, if infrastructure is divested to a devolved authority, arrangements would need to be put in place to ensure that timetabling processes are aligned, and contractual arrangements as streamlined as possible. On those networks, rail freight will need to be appropriately protected and prioritised to support the achievement of the government's wider rail freight growth target.
20. However, these should be seen as practical challenges that will need to be worked through, rather than fundamental blockers to devolution. The existing examples in London and Liverpool are testament that the

⁹ Select Committee on Transport. (2003). Supplementary memorandum by Merseyrail Electrics (FOR 114A). [Link here](#)

devolution of heavy rail services can be made to work effectively, and other countries have gone far further than England in promoting rail devolution. Indeed, regional control of local services is the norm in countries across Europe, and those regional authorities have recently been securing benefits by competitively tendering those services.¹⁰

Case study 5

Devolved control of regional rail services is the norm across Europe

- i** As noted by the Institute for Government, 'the UK, and England specifically, is one of the most centralised large, advanced economies in the developed world'. This wider constitutional trend is also evident in rail, with devolved control the exception rather than the norm in Britain, compared to widespread devolved control in similar European countries.
- i** For instance, in Germany the 16 federal states are responsible for urban, suburban and regional transport. The federal government allocates funding for a five-year period and passenger rail operating contracts are managed by 27 Public Transport Authorities. Similarly, in France, regional and suburban services are the responsibility of the 13 regional authorities, and in the Netherlands regional passenger rail services are managed locally, with 23 concessions for regional rail lines delivered by seven different private operators.
- i** In each of these cases, devolved control of local services (which are increasingly being contracted out for delivery by private operators under concession contracts) exists alongside public ownership of the national rail infrastructure, with the nationalised rail company often also operating some services itself (such as SNCF or Deutsche Bahn) – potentially providing a model to emulate under GBR.

¹⁰ Case study 5 references:

- Institute for Government. (2022). Subnational government in England: An international comparison. [Link here](#)
- Rail Partners. (2023). Track to Growth. [Link here](#)
- Rail Delivery Group. (2024). How rail systems work around the world – a comparative review of international approaches. [Link here](#)

E. Decision time – key enablers for rail devolution

21. Devolving control of any rail services will take time, but key policy decisions around the future structure of the railway are being taken now. As government develops a new legal framework for the railway and designs GBR, it will need to take these decisions in a way that facilitates devolution in the future. Government has also committed to publishing guidance on the process for Strategic Authorities to request further rail devolution – getting this right will be key if government is serious about facilitating further devolution in rail.

Key enablers for rail devolution as government progresses rail reform

A. A legal framework that proactively drives devolution

The legal powers to devolve national rail services to local control already exist, but there is currently no requirement on government to proactively consider opportunities for devolution. In addition to codifying the proposed requirement for government to publish guidance on rail devolution, the upcoming Rail Reform Bill should require government to review services from time-to-time to consider whether they would be better provided by devolved leaders, rather than GBR. To provide certainty for local leaders, government could develop a pipeline for these reviews.

B. Design and structure of GBR

GBR's organisational structure will need to reflect the competing objectives of maintaining the coherence of a national network (for instance, producing a single national timetable that accommodates traffic flows across multiple regions, including rail freight) with the stated goal of bringing rail closer to its customers. To enable rail devolution, local leaders will need clarity around which parts of GBR they should engage with and hold to account for delivery, and there must be a transparent process for making trade-offs between national and local objectives.

C. Protections for non-GBR users of the network

Where devolved services overlap with GBR's own passenger services, strong protections will be needed to ensure they get fair access to the network and that GBR does not compete unfairly by cross-subsidising its own operators. Without such safeguards, there is a risk that GBR will be incentivised to prioritise its own interests over other operators (including rail freight and open access services, as well as English devolved operators and the national operators in Scotland and Wales). In the context of the Rail Reform Bill, this will require a strong regulator, with the power to direct access to the network.

D. Opportunities to deliver devolution alongside the nationalisation of passenger rail services

Government is already in the process of bringing contracted passenger rail services into public ownership. However, where elements of existing franchises could be split out and devolved, there may be a brief window of opportunity to require the current private operators to deliver this change as part of their handover to the public sector – leveraging the expertise of the current operators, and avoiding the need to transfer services and staff twice (into public ownership under DfT, and then to the devolved authority).¹¹ Once rail services are consolidated within GBR, union pressures and the natural interests of GBR itself may make it difficult to separate services back out again.

¹¹ This may be most relevant for the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise in London, currently due to terminate next year, given that Transport for London already has the willingness and capability to take on the management of those services.

Key enablers as government develops guidance on rail devolution

E. Clear and objective criteria for deciding when to devolve control of rail services

It is positive that government is going to develop and publish guidance on the process for devolved authorities in England to request further rail devolution, up to full devolution of defined local services. If government can develop an objective set of principles and criteria to guide its decision making, such as those proposed in this briefing, it will be easier for devolved authorities to bid for local control of services, and government decision-making will be more transparent and predictable. In developing this guidance, government should consult with industry and devolved leaders.

F. Transparent funding arrangements and practical support from government

As part of that guidance, government should set out the principles of funding arrangements for devolved rail services. Where devolved authorities are working in partnership with GBR, there will need to be clarity about what level of service provision GBR is already funded to provide, and what incremental improvements devolved authorities are responsible for funding. Where control of rail services is fully devolved, devolved authorities will need a stable long-term funding settlement to underpin those services, as proposed in the English Devolution White Paper, including appropriate risk-sharing arrangements that recognise their financial capacity. Government should also set out what ongoing support it can provide to devolved authorities looking to build their capabilities – for instance, by providing guidance on how to secure efficient delivery and through facilitating the sharing of best practice.

About Rail Partners

Rail Partners exists to make the railway better by harnessing the expertise and creativity of private sector operators for the benefit of those who use the railway, passengers and freight customers, and those who pay for it, including taxpayers.

Rail Partners provides advocacy and policy solutions for its private sector passenger owning group and freight company members. Rail Partners additionally provides technical services to train operating companies in both the public and private sectors.