



Tracy Brabin
Mayor
of West Yorkshire

Mayor Tracy Brabin
West Yorkshire Combined Authority
40-50 Wellington Street
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Rt Hon Mark Harper MP
Secretary of State for Transport
[By Email](#)

16 April 2023

Dear Secretary of State,

TransPennine Express – National Rail Contract

As you know, the current contract to operate TransPennine Express (TPE) ends in just over five weeks on 28th May, but as yet there is no indication from government on your decision for next steps for this failing service.

We are hearing from a number of sources, government may be minded to extend the existing contract with First Group to continue to operate TPE services. We vehemently believe such a decision would be rewarding failure and be a betrayal of passengers in the North.

For a year we have heard TPE promise services are on the verge of improvement, but performance levels remain dire. Latest statistics from the Office of Rail and Road showing almost a quarter of TPE trains were cancelled in the four weeks between February and March.

We are of the unanimous view that TransPennine Express needs to start afresh under new ownership.

We note your letter to Lord McLoughlin and are heartened that you agree that the performance of TransPennine Express has been unacceptable.

We do, however, challenge your suggestion that the core issues facing TPE would still remain under the Operator of Last Resort. There is ample evidence - including from recent experience with Northern Rail – to show how a change of ownership can transform relations between senior management and the dedicated, hard-working frontline members of staff that keep TPE's services running day-in, day-out.

Transport for the North resolved at our last meeting that the only course of action is to move to a single operator for the North under Operator of Last Resort. Stabilising TPE services across the region would finally provide a stable platform upon which the long-term future of rail reform can be built.



We urge you to put the views of the passengers of the North ahead of any other considerations when making the decision on the future of TransPennine Express.

Rail passengers have had enough. The Northern economy has had enough, the failure of TPE is holding us back. We need change now.

Yours sincerely,



Tracy Brabin
Mayor of West Yorkshire

Andy Burnham
Mayor of Greater Manchester

Oliver Coppard
Mayor of South Yorkshire

Jamie Driscoll
North of Tyne Mayor

Steve Rotheram
Mayor of Liverpool City Region