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First Group expected to pip Branson to West Coast

13 Aug 2012 · by Marc Johnson · in Featured Rail News, Franchise News, Rail News, Train Operating Companies · 0 Comments

Rail union RMT is gearing up to challenge West Coast favourites First Group over fears that jobs could be lost if the company is awarded the franchise later this week.

The UK's biggest operator is expected to cross the finishing line ahead of Virgin after submitting a bid thought to be around £1 billion more than its nearest rival for the 14-year franchise.

RMT is now planning a large-scale public campaign to protect jobs after being advised by fleet maintenance company Alstom that the winning bid is likely to put 800 jobs at risk with the removal of shops and catering to add extra seating capacity.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: "Whoever wins the West Coast route this week, and all the signs point to First Group, they should be left in no doubt that RMT will mount a massive industrial, political and public campaign to stop any attacks on our members jobs and the services that they provide to the travelling public."

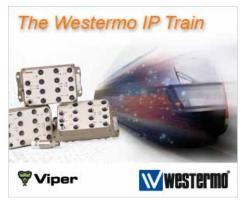
Branson has described First's rumored bid of £7 billion as 'unrealistic', warning that the quality of service would have to be cut drastically to meet the £500m a year payment to the taxpayer.

Sources at the Department for Transport (DfT) have said this would roughly equate to the operator paying them £16 per passenger journey, before any money is used to fund operating costs.

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Crow added: "From the leaked figures it is clear that this franchise in being let on pure McNulty terms with a gold-plated, 12-year contract linked to massive cuts to jobs and passenger services and huge increases in fares as the winning bidder battles to extract every penny that they can in profit.





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