



**by political editor Paul Francis**

Kent MPs are today urging the rail minister to address spiralling fares - and resist a "rail grab" by the Mayor of London to take over key commuter services.

Boris Johnson has outlined plans under which he would take control of all suburban railways.

It would involve Transport for London having power over some stations and services in west and north Kent by 2014.

Among them could be Dartford and Sevenoaks, but there are wider concerns of a knock-on impact on other services in Kent - which could result in longer journey times and extra stops.

The county's MPs are due to meet the transport minister Stephen Hammond today to flag up their concerns about the power grab.

The minister is also expected to hear concerns from MPs about spiralling rail fares and the increased cost of some season ticket prices.

Chatham and Aylesford MP Tracey Crouch said of the rail grab bid: "This would mean the mayor extending his franchise into areas where he has no political accountability."

Mr Johnson says his scheme would improve services for Londoners and has denied he is making a power grab.

Speaking in February, he said: "This is not some crazed bid for power over



London's railways. It is an attempt to sort out a division between two systems that is letting London down.

"We need a role in these franchises for TfL - it's not a massive land grab. It would be foolish to miss this opportunity."

But Kent MPs are opposed, fearing it will lead to poorer services for already hard-pressed commuters.

Tonbridge and Malling MP Sir John Stanley has said it was likely to be "wholly adverse for my constituents."