

Hong Kong operator adds Docklands line to London target list



The DLR service could be extended TFL

Robert Lea Industrial Editor

Published at 12:01AM, January 14 2013

A competition to operate the revolutionary driverless trains of the capital's Docklands Light Railway could prompt an audacious bid from Hong Kong to run all of London's rail network outside of the publicly operated Tube.

Transport for London has launched a new tendering process to operate the DLR from the summer of 2014. Hong Kong's monopoly Mass Transit Railway Corporation has emerged as one of the early front-runners for the £430 million contract.

Plans for the DLR, which is operated by Serco at present, could incorporate ambitious direct connections of the service under London to St Pancras and Victoria mainline stations. Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London, has promised an extension to the borders of Kent at Bromley.

MTR has already impressed TfL with its operation of the London Overground network. Its growing standing in Britain has led to it being shortlisted by the Department for Transport to run the Thameslink franchise, the long-delayed but crucial north-south London commuter link.

The company has also made little secret of its desire to be considered by TfL for the

operation of what would be the blockbuster Crossrail east-west franchise being built across the capital.

MTR's ambitions in London are backed by Jay Walder, its American chief executive who was a right-hand man of Ken Livingstone when he was mayor and brought the capital the Oyster travelcard.

However, MTR UK said that no decision had yet been taken to run for the DLR contract because of the collateral damage across the industry of the DfT's failed West Coast Main Line franchise competition between Virgin and FirstGroup. The botched tender has brought the busiest period of franchise re-lettings since railway privatisation to a standstill, with key decisions on several networks left hanging. MTR said that the hiatus had prevented it from committing to bidding for the DLR because its bid teams were tied up with delayed franchise tenders.

MTR is shortlisted for the new contract for Essex Thameside, the C2C route between London Fenchurch Street and south Essex operated at the moment by National Express. The winner was supposed to have been announced by now and there is no indication on when the DfT might make the decision.

The Thameslink contract for which MTR is also shortlisted is in crisis. The new operator is supposed to be in place by September, but, with the process frozen, that is likely to slip into next year.

"We just do not know at the moment," an MTR spokesman said of the DLR bid. He added that the group's bid teams would need to remain free to prepare for the Crossrail competition.

A spokesman for TfL indicated that MTR could be a strong bid candidate for the DLR owing to its experience of similar operations and its financial standing — the £13.5 million part-privatised group is backed by the Hong Kong government.

0 comments



 louis bellamacina

1 person listening

		+ Follow	Post comment

Sort: **Newest** | Oldest

Livefyre

Registered in England No. 894646 Registered office:

3 Thomas More Square, London, E98 1XY

[My Account](#) | [RSS](#) | [Classified advertising](#) | [Display advertising](#) | [The Times Whisky Club](#)

[Privacy & Cookie Policy](#) | [Syndication](#) | [Site Map](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#) | [Contact us](#)

Share

Close

In order to read the full article, visitors must subscribe to thetimes.co.uk

[LinkedIn](#)

[Twitter](#)

Discuss this article with...

Close

Friends email Start your conversation here

300