

National Express keeps Essex c2c rail line



Trains on the c2c line achieved 97 per cent punctuality between April 2012 and 2013

Katherine Griffiths

Updated 42 minutes ago

National Express has been awarded a new contract to continue running the Fenchurch Street to Southend-on-Sea train line under its c2c brand.

The company will now run the line until September 2014, with an option that the contract may be extended until April 2015.

The present contract for the operation of the line, which carries hundreds of thousands of commuters into the City, was due to expire on May 26.

Dean Finch, National Express's chief executive, said: "We are delighted with today's announcement. Under National Express this service has gone from being dubbed 'the Misery Line' to become the UK's most popular and most punctual rail franchise."

Services on the line ran at an average 97.3 per cent punctuality between April 2012 and April 2013, the best in the country. During one four-week period in the year they ran at 97.5 per cent punctuality, an all-time UK record.

The decision by the Department for Transport to choose c2c again for the East London and

Essex line may bode well for its bid for the 15-year Essex Thameside franchise that will follow the extension of the current contract.

National Express is one of four companies shortlisted to run the new franchise. National Express was stripped of the East Coast mainline in 2009.

National Express recently won two contracts to serve millions of German rail commuters in Cologne and Bonn after beating current incumbent Deutsche Bahn.

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