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Four shortlisted to operate Crossrail services

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Transport for London has shortlisted four train operators to run Crossrail services.

The bidders for the Crossrail concession, which will be similar in structure to the existing London Overground concession, are Arriva Crossrail Limited, Keolis/Go-Ahead, MTR Corporation (Crossrail) Limited and National Express Group PLC.

Invitations to tender will be issued in September 2013 to allow an operator to be appointed at the end of 2014.

The successful bidder will start running trains from May 2015 between Liverpool Street and Shenfield, taking over the stopping services currently operated by Abellio Greater Anglia. The route through the Crossrail tunnels now under construction will open in late 2018 with the full Crossrail network operational by 2020.

Services to Shenfield will initially operate with existing rolling stock which will gradually be replaced in 2017 by the new Crossrail trains currently being procured. ITTs were sent out to Bombardier, CAF, Hitachi and Siemens by Crossrail Ltd last month (MON 00848). The new rolling stock is expected to enter passenger service from May 2017.

The shortlist of bidders for the concession features names familiar to UK train operations and metro systems around the world. Arriva parent Deutsche Bahn and Hong Kong metro operator MTR, which together own Overground concessionaire LOROL, have chosen to put in separate bids for Crossrail.

Keolis, part of SNCF, currently has a minority share in the Southern, Southeastern and London Midland rail franchises through its GoVia joint venture with UK-based Go-Ahead. However, the Crossrail bid sees Keolis emerge as the dominant partner with a 65% share which reflects SNCF's ambition to play a greater role in the UK market. The French operator has a stake in the RER system which Keolis describes as the Parisian equivalent of Crossrail.

Another UK PLC, National Express Group, has been shortlisted despite overbidding for the East Coast rail franchise which resulted in train operations being returned to state control in 2009. National Express currently operates the Essex Thameside franchise under the C2C brand.

One notable absence from the list is RATP, the group which operates the Paris Metro and Manchester Metrolink trams. Earlier this year RATP appointed Elaine Holt, who has formerly held senior positions at First Group, National Express and Directly Operated Railways, to lead pre-qualification for the Crossrail concession (TB 9179).

TfL's Crossrail concession shortlist contains little overlap between the shortlist of four to run the Docklands Light Railway from autumn 2014, announced in April this year. Incumbent Serco is competing against Stagecoach, a joint venture of Go-Ahead and Colas Rail and a joint venture of Amey and Keolis.

Howard Smith, Crossrail director of operations who was formerly in charge of TfL's Overground and DLR operations, said: "We are a step closer to

Heathrow Connect: will be subsumed into Crossrail network from May 2018



Picture: Bill Turvill

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appointing an operator for Crossrail. As our population grows faster than forecast, the case for stable and sustained investment in London's transport network has never been stronger. Crossrail will help cut journey times across the city and will achieve internationally recognised high standards of reliability, train frequency and customer service."

The precise opening strategy for Crossrail has yet to be finalised but the current planning assumption is as follows:

Heathrow to Paddington (mainline platforms) - May 2018
(Crossrail concession takes over existing Heathrow Connect service)
Paddington (Crossrail platforms) to Abbey Wood - December 2018
Paddington (Crossrail platforms) to Shenfield - May 2019
Full through London service (including services to Maidenhead) - December 2019

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