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ScotRail franchise shortlist named

Five rail companies have been shortlisted by the Scottish government to bid for the ScotRail franchise, which is due for renewal in 2015.

Transport minister Keith Brown said Abellio, Arriva, FirstGroup, MTR and National Express had passed the pre-qualification stage of the process.

ScotRail provides passenger train services throughout Scotland.

FirstGroup currently holds the franchise, which is due to expire on 31 March 2015.

ScotRail operates more than 2,000 train services a day, delivering more than 76 million passenger journeys and 1.6 billion passenger miles a year.

The franchise employs a total of 4,300 staff.

Mr Brown said the five shortlisted companies had demonstrated, in their responses to the pre-qualification questionnaire, "an understanding of, and a commitment to realise, our ambitions for a transformed rail service".

He added: "I am convinced that this strong competition will deliver a great public rail service for the people of Scotland."

A draft invitation to tender will be published on 19 November.

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