Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
EMAIL ONLY

28 July 2025

Dear Heidi,

Re. TUPE transfer from TOCs to DFTO, and harmonisation of pay, terms and conditions under GBR

I am writing regarding the ongoing movement of Train Operating Companies into public ownership, their consolidation under Great British Railways alongside Network Rail, and what this means for pay, terms and conditions for those working in the sector.

As you know, TSSA welcomes and strongly supports recent legislation to bring TOCs into public ownership and the Government's plan to combine them under the umbrella of GBR. We see this process as a key opportunity to improve the sector for passenger and transport workers, levelling up pay and conditions as we make services safer, more accessible and efficient.

For that reason, we strongly believe that the movement from private to public ownership under GBR must be a just transition for transport workers. In the longer term, I have set out what that might look like in the annex to this letter.

That process starts with the TUPE transfer of workers from the private TOCs into DFTO. Since the Passenger Railways (Public Ownership) Act 2024 was given royal ascent last year, we have now seen South Western Railway and C2C pass into public ownership. In those two early transitions, the process has been uneven. For example, while our C2C members have retained their travel benefits – terms and conditions that remain critical during the continued cost of living crisis – this has not been true of our SWR members. In both instances DfT has, in the last analysis, held the pen over what was and was not included in the transfer.

I would be keen to meet with you to discuss the DfT's framework for upcoming TUPE transfers, but also – looking further into the future – for harmonising pay and conditions across GBR, too. Given that GBR will bring in workers from across TOCs on varied pay scales and contracts, this process of integration must be carefully planned, orderly, and transparent. That would be aided with a standardised approach to private TOC to DFTO TUPE transfers in the here and now that was committed to protecting existing pay, terms and conditions.

We are clear, too, that harmonisation under GBR should not be a race to the bottom, and that Ministers should be seeking to level-up pay and conditions across the sector. We are keen to work with the Government on devising an equitable framework for this.

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Relatedly, it would also be useful to hear an update on the Government's plans for introducing fora for conducting industrial relations under GBR, and initial proposals on what a collective bargaining machinery under the new structures might look like.

To that end, I would appreciate the chance to meet with you to discuss these issues.

Yours sincerely,



Maryam Eslamdoust

TSSA General Secretary

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Annex: A just transition for transport workers

1. Protecting TSSA members jobs and ensuring there is access to training

- GBR must commit to safeguarding all existing transport jobs – no compulsory redundancies – a just transition for transport and travel workers.
- New training paths, career progression pathways and development opportunities for workers on the transport network.
- Protect our ticket offices – no to closures, and new-build stations to be built with ticket offices.
- Redeployment is an opportunity to make our railways more passenger focussed – from expanding ticket office machine back offices and the staff teams available to help at stations, to providing more staff for delay attribution and making our railways more efficient.

2. Improving pay, terms, and conditions through collective bargaining – levelling up across the industry

- National collective bargaining for all transport and travel workers, including management grades and all those supporting the transport sector.
- Protection and extension of travel facilities, valuing the staff the who keep Britain moving
- Levelling up terms and conditions across National Rail and Train Operating Company employees
- Levelling up to most favourable people-processes across the industry
- Levelling up best pension conditions across the industry
- Levelling up redundancy and voluntary redundancy conditions
- Levelling up for equal pay across the sector
- Levelling up family-friendly policies such as flexible working, paternity and caring leave across the industry

3. Ensuring we have a safe and accessible railway for all.

- Take a stand against rising abuse, violence and harassment on our railways, supporting efforts like TSSA's *Keep Transport Workers Safe* campaign, publicly opposing violence in the sector.
- End lone working practices.
- Investing in a railway that's accessible for all.
- Reversing the cuts to British Transport Police with a funding settlement to maintain a safe and efficient rail network.
- Maintaining safety standards on the railways, with no undermining of health and safety provisions.

- Safe and fully resourced staffing levels, with training to maintain competency levels.

- Championing equality, diversity and inclusion across the railway, for both workers and passengers, building a healthy and positive workplace culture and improving customers relationships.

4. Putting passengers at the heart of GBR – delivering a railway that the British people deserve

- Running the railway for people, not profits and putting the travelling public first with a culture of public service and affordability.

- Integrating ticketing systems and timetabling across the entire transport network while simplifying fares and refunds.

- Excellent customer service provided by well-trained staff – from back-office delay attribution to front-of-house station staff and dispatch.

- Putting passengers at the heart of decision-making with a national railway that benefits local communities and links to local services.

- Worker and passenger representation on the board.

5. Protecting the environment by promoting green travel on our railways

- Using the guiding mind of GBR to put rail front and centre in plans to upgrade our infrastructure and make the whole-economy transition to net zero

- Electrifying and expanding our railways with an investment pipeline that ends boom and bust in the sector.

- Taking freight off our roads and on to our railways to green supply lines.

- Promoting public transport over private car use, while investing in our railways to make them more efficient and more affordable.