

# FirstGroup on track for 8-year TransPennine National Rail Contract

March 16, 2022



FirstGroup is set to be given a direct award for the continued operation of TranPennine Express rail services covering up to eight years.

The UK Government has issued a notice to say that it seeks a direct award (ie. an award without tender) with the incumbent train operator at the end of the current contract.

The contract covers up to eight years. The first four of those are fixed, the following four are flexible and based on the secretary of state for transport's discretion.

Key features of this direct award will be an obligation to support delivery of the TransPennine route upgrade (TRU) programme and to comply with, support, stand behind and drive the delivery of both rail services and workforce reform.

The TRU element was an important factor in deciding the length of the contract: the Department for Transport wanted stewardship and service continuity during this complex project.

A FirstGroup spokesperson, said: “We welcome the Department for Transport’s Prior Information Notice, which provides for a National Rail Contract for TransPennine Express starting in spring 2023.

“This has a minimum core term of four years with up to a further 4 years at the Secretary of State for Transport’s discretion. We look forward to working with the DfT on the new contract, which gives the opportunity to develop and embed our role as delivery partner on the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) programme and wider plans to invest in the railway across the north of England and into Scotland.”