

Southeastern launch procurement plan for up to 570 new trains

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Southeastern has invited expressions of interest for a fleet of cutting-edge new trains.

The operator, which runs services in south-east London, Kent, Sussex and Surrey has had a turbulent few years, and is currently managed by the Department for Transport's Operator of Last Resort through SE Trains Ltd since the end of the Govia franchise in October 2021.

The organisation is hoping that the purchase of a significant number of new trains will help them swerve hefty maintenance, repair and leasing costs for its existing fleet, which is getting fair senior, and could even be the tipping point that wins them back the contract. The bottom line though, is that a refresh of rolling stock, some of which are over 30 years old, will no doubt also be welcomed by the thousands of commuters that rely on their services every day.

The new fleet is to be manufactured, maintained and operated with sustainability in mind, and with reduced carbon footprint, energy usage and embedded carbon.

Bidders will also be required to supply initial spares, special tools and equipment to support staff training

The EOI is looking for between 350 and 570 new vehicles (possibly up to 70 more) with numbers based on an assumed 20 metre length, and they are looking to ensure that

The key requirements are:

- full compatibility with Southeastern infrastructure (excluding High Speed 1 infrastructure)
full compliance with all applicable accessibility regulations (PRM NTSN)
- interiors suitable for metro & mainline operation
- air conditioning
inclusion of options for traction batteries with capability for operation in depots and sidings without the need for external power supply, and with the capability to operate on the main line where power supply is not available due to isolations or incidents, or for non-electrified line sections of up to 20 miles

They are looking to have the new trains in full operational service by October 2027, so there's not much time to hang around. Southeastern is hoping to issue an Invitation to Pre-Qualify in 2023, with shortlisted bidders progressing to an Invitation to Negotiate later in the year.

The trains are looking to last a minimum of 35 years, with the initial lease term (to be financed by the winning bidder) to run for six to ten years, with optional extensions at Southeastern's discretion. Bidders will be required to provide ongoing maintenance support by way of a materials supply and technical support agreement, whole life cost guarantees and a performance regime.

And the really good news for passengers? They're all planned to have toilets! Great news for anyone commuting in the south east!

Image credit: Southeastern