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South East Trains anniversary shows public sector works

TSSA, the second largest rail union, has welcomed news that Britain's only publicly run train franchise is outperforming its private competitors in punctuality and customer satisfaction.

A year after the Strategic Rail Authority took control of SET, 86.5 per cent of trains run on time compared with 84.2 per cent under Connex. This compares favourably with performance of neighbouring operators, such as South West Trains (78.2 per cent) and Southern Trains (81.8).

The union believes this proves that public ownership is the right track for our railways and urges to Government to keep SET in the public sector when its franchise comes up for renewal.

TSSA pushed through a policy at Labour Party conference in September calling for an "integrated, accountable and publicly owned railway" with recent research showing that 67 per cent of all voters and 75 per cent of Labour voters back public ownership.

TSSA general secretary Gerry Doherty said: "Passengers are seeing some real improvement after a year of running South Eastern Trains in the public sector. It proves train services can be provided effectively by the public sector.

"So it beggars belief that the Government would waste taxpayers' money by putting the franchise out to tender again. Is it really worth the risk of creating a 'Connex Mark II'?

"It would be lunacy for the SRA, having taken the franchise over and started to put right all the damage done by Connex, simply to give it to another private sector firm to run down in a years' time.

"TSSA urges ministers and the SRA to think again and keep South Eastern in the public sector. If nothing else, it would give ministers a not-for-profit benchmark to help them measure the effectiveness of private franchises."