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'Vital commuter link'

By Michael Bowden

A politician says the Government "needs to listen" to its own independent report and give Transport for London control of some local rail services.

Joanne McCartney AM, Labour London Assembly Member for Enfield and Haringey, says there would be a "better deal" for passengers if Transport for London (TfL) took control of local rail services run by Great Northern Railway.

Ms McCartney made her latest comments after asking the London Mayor Sadiq Khan for an update on his talks with the Government about suburban devolution of rail services.

An independent report in 2017 by Chris Gibb, a non-executive director of Network Rail, recommended TfL take over the Great Northern Metro lines, which run out of Moorgate, through Enfield & Haringey.

Mr Gibb's proposal stated the move would reduce the risk to the current train operator, Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), and the handover could happen this year.

In the past, Ms McCartney has expressed disappointment that the transfer of responsibility might not take place until 2021.

The Government suggested the decision needed "further assessment" but Sadiq Khan says he is hopeful of progress after seeing a "new willingness" from the Department for Transport

to talk.

Ms McCartney said: "The Great Northern line serves as a vital commuter transport link for my constituents and services and capacity can be improved if TfL is in control.

"TfL have already massively improved their existing services, including the lines out of Liverpool Street which also serve my constituency. They have proved that they can absorb more responsibility and deliver a better journey for passengers.

"The Government needs to listen to their own independent report and devolve the Great Northern lines to TfL as soon as possible."

In his independent report, entitled *Changes to improve the performance of the southern net-*

work and train services, and restore passenger confidence, Mr Gibb, states: "I believe there is an option to transfer the Great Northern Metro operation to Transport for London and its London Overground concession in 2018.

"If Transport for London or the London Overground concessionaire were to take the lead in this transfer, and the implementation of the new trains and service, this could reduce risks associated with the Thameslink programme, led by the Govia Thameslink Railway.

"However, a decision should be made immediately, and discussions commenced with Transport for London and the London Overground concessionaire."



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