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Ms Jo Sloman
Assistant Scrutiny Manager
London Assembly Transport Committee
London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London, SE1 2AA

25th February 2013

Dear Ms Sloman

As the Managing Director of GB Railfreight, I want to thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Transport Committee's work into the future for rail in London.

By way of introduction, GB Railfreight (GBRf) is one of the most dynamic companies in the railway industry. It is a rapidly growing business, having gone from 2 employees in 1999 to over 400 staff today, and it operates around 650 trains a week in the UK. Within London we are currently being contracted by BFK to shift over one million tonnes of excavated material as part of the Crossrail project.

Rail freight is one of the most effective ways to transport goods to London and the country as a whole, and it is vital to the smooth running of Britain's economy. According to the Office of Rail Regulation, the industry is responsible for moving over one hundred million tonnes of goods across the country every year (October 2009). In order to maintain and further grow the freight industry, it is essential that UK policy-makers at all levels create suitable conditions for rail freight operators to move across the country.

It is often the case that policy and politics are heavily passenger-focused. This means that the rail freight industry can be overlooked and not given due consideration by policy-makers. As such, we would suggest that when the Transport Committee meets on 7th March, they take time to not just focus on passenger rail but consider how to bolster the freight industry within the capital.

Establishing freight in its wider context

From our experience of operating in the rail freight industry, we believe that the major issue which stands in the way of maximising the full potential of rail freight is that freight is considered in a



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standalone manner rather than as part of a wider picture. Whilst the freight industry has seen significant growth over the past twenty years, further growth has been hindered as a result of a lack of joined-up thinking between and across local and national Governments.

The fruits of freight investment can only be realised if it is considered in light of the current national network and future investment plans. Therefore, we recommend that all of the Committee's recommendations are first and foremost considered within a national framework instead of in a stand-alone manner.

With Transport for London engaging in detailed discussions with the Department for Transport on further devolution of rail services, there is a strong opportunity for the Transport Committee to give further consideration to achieving an appropriate balance between passenger needs and rail freight's critical role in the economic life of London and the UK more generally; to managing its air quality.

The role of the London Assembly and Transport for London in responding to Department for Transport franchise specifications is also an opportunity for further discussion around showing a joined-up London policy in all freight matters, whether ports, power, construction or logistics.

Comment on issues specific to London

Aggregates, sand and cement carriage into London terminals is key for the continued growth of construction in the city. Whatever passenger proposals are developed, they must always take into account capacity for these key services and the terminals (Acton, Kings Cross, Stewart Lane, etc.) they serve.

The use of the North London line and other key pieces of London rail infrastructure for the carriage of containers from our key ports must also be maintained and enhanced capacity provided for the new London Gateway port. There is a perception that freight services merely pass through London. This is not the case as we serve distribution hubs on the M1/M6 corridor which frequently re-distribute to the London environs.

There is potentially an economic case relating to the carriage of retail products to remove significant volumes of road traffic, and therefore pollution, from London by a fresh consideration of the potential to gain better utilisation of assets by reviewing infrastructure available at stations. Such an initiative will require change to the way that the current distribution of rail retail products is encouraged.

Thank you again for taking the time to consult with us. This letter has provided me with an opportunity to share our initial thoughts on the future of rail with you. We would be delighted to discuss any of the above in greater detail. With this in mind, please feel free to get in touch with my office about arranging a follow up meeting with myself or a colleague. To arrange a meeting please call Nicola Minford on 020 3997 2414 or email nicola.minford@westbournecoms.com.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Smith', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Smith, Managing Director