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Wolverhampton joins West Midlands Railway family

West Midlands Railway has taken charge of Wolverhampton station, replacing previous operator, Virgin Trains.

To celebrate the handover of the station, the new owner provided reusable cups and free coffee to customers on the morning commute. Across the station, distinctive orange branding announced the arrival of the new train operator for the region.

The changeover forms part of a widespread move throughout the West Midlands towards more devolved transport services, which focus on local towns, cities and residents. Wolverhampton is integral to this drive, with the building of a £150 million transport hub, improving links to the city by rail, bus and metro.

Alongside the work being undertaken in Wolverhampton, West Midlands Railway will be introducing a raft of improvements for the region. These include 20,000 extra seats and standing room for an additional 50,000 passengers at peak time in and around Birmingham and investment in new rolling stock. Additional late night and Sunday services across the region will be available and passengers will be able to take direct West Midlands Trains services to Wolverhampton and Walsall.

Additionally, over the course of new West Midlands franchise and subject to feasibility assessments, West Midlands Railway intends to introduce seven new stations across the region.

After recent works began in March on the Wolverhampton Interchange scheme, the transfer of ownership of the station is the next step in the process. Under West Midlands Railway's stewardship, the station facilities will be transformed, offering passengers a state-of-the-art gateway to the city; integrated with other transport modes.

The current station will continue to operate normally whilst the new facilities are being built. The scheme is due to be completed by 2020.

Richard Brooks, customer experience director at West Midlands Railway, said: "The West Midlands has been crying out for its own dedicated rail operator for a number of years now and we're extremely proud to be in the process of delivering that.

"Wolverhampton is a key part of our network in the region and as the new station facilities owner, we want to make sure our customers have the best experience possible whilst the works are underway, and into the future when they are complete.

"The response we've had from colleagues and customers has been overwhelmingly positive and we're excited to be a real part of the city's

ambitious development plans.”

Malcolm Holmes, executive director of West Midlands Rail, said: “We believe local responsibility of the railway and its infrastructure is good for passengers, good for the economy and good for taxpayers.

“Once complete, Wolverhampton Interchange will be a fabulous gateway to the city and to the wider West Midlands through massively improved connectivity across all modes of public transport.

“The railway station is a key part of the Interchange. Local management is quicker to identify and respond to the service levels, facilities and development needs of an area and ensures investment goes where it is most required.”

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Notes to editors

For further information on West Midlands Trains, London Northwestern Railway or West Midlands Railway call our **newsroom** on **03300 955150**.

About West Midlands Trains

West Midlands Trains Ltd. will be running the West Midlands rail franchise from 10 December 2017 until 2025/6. Abellio has a 70.1% share of the company, East Japan Railway Company (JRE) and Mitsui & Co., Ltd. (Mitsui) own the remaining 29.9% in a 50:50 split.

About Abellio

Abellio is the international passenger transport subsidiary of the Dutch national railway company, Nederlandse Spoorwegen. Every day our people provide rail, bus and tram services to 1.7m customers across the UK, Germany and in the Netherlands. In the UK we operate buses through Abellio London, as well as ScotRail and Greater Anglia train services, and Merseyrail in a joint

venture with Serco. In Germany we operate Abellio Deutschland, serving communities in North Rhine Westfalia, Saxony, Lower Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Hesse and Thuringia. Our role in transport extends beyond the journey from a-to-b. With our international heritage and our policy of sharing best practice, not just amongst ourselves, but across the wider transport industry, we provide thought leadership and truly innovative ideas which make a positive contribution to the communities we serve. For more information on Abellio visit www.abellio.com

About Mitsui

Mitsui is one of the most diversified and comprehensive trading, investment and service enterprises in the world with 139 offices in 66 countries as of March, 2017. Utilising our global operating locations, network and information resources, we are multilaterally pursuing business that ranges from product sales, worldwide logistics and financing, through to the development of major international infrastructure and other projects in the following fields: Iron & Steel Products, Mineral & Metal Resources, Infrastructure Projects, Integrated Transportation Systems, Chemicals, Energy, Food Resources, Food Products & Services, Consumer Services, IT & Communication, and Corporate Development Business. Mitsui is actively taking on challenges for global business innovation around the world. For more information, visit www.mitsui.com.

About JR East

East Japan Railway Company (JR East) was established in 1987, when Japanese National Railways was divided as part of a package of railway reforms. JR East's railway business covers a 7,500 km (approx. 4,660 miles) network in the eastern part of the Japanese main island, including Tokyo Metropolitan area, and provides transportation services, comprising urban, suburban and high speed operations, for 17 million passengers on a daily basis. JR East also undertakes non-transport commercial activities, which account for more than 30% of the total revenue of JR East Group. JR East contributes to passengers and communities it serves by delivering high degrees of punctuality, reliability and comfort and also continues to pursue higher levels of safety and service quality through technical innovation. For more information, visit www.jreast.co.jp/e.

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