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Dear Ian

I am writing to you to clarify Gemini Trains' position on plans to call at intermediate stations. This follows our participation at the 'International rail event' held in Kent on 26th September where the Rail Minister Lord Hendy gave a clear steer about the need to serve intermediate stations.

Unlike the other S17 applicants, Gemini has developed its entire business plan around serving Stratford International **and** Ebbsfleet International stations to create a brand-new offer. This is a complementary service, not one that simply copies the incumbent's offer. Gemini firmly believes that this approach best delivers on the objective to make international rail travel more accessible to more people.

However, Gemini recognises the potential additional value of also serving Ashford International given its ability to stimulate economic growth and the fact that it boasts excellent existing infrastructure which is currently unused. Serving Ashford International is not in Gemini's initial business plan. Our decision in this regard was taken based on the assumption that the costs of re-enabling both Ebbsfleet and Ashford would not be supported by the benefit of both. As well as station access charges, any operator will incur separate costs for UK Border Force, PAF, security and other necessary enablers as well as its own staffing.

At the Ashford event, Gemini and other attendees heard from the rail minister that there may be appetite for government to enter discussions with successful operator(s) about potential financial support to re-open all intermediate stations, including Ashford.

Gemini welcomes this position and, to the extent this is a crucial evaluation criterion for ORR in the determination of access to the maintenance facilities at TMI, Gemini would like to put on record its willingness to consider adding Ashford to its stopping pattern in light of the offer put forward by the Minister. However, we also recognise that such a move would require a change to the international paths on LSPH (HS1) with earlier departure times from Stratford to accommodate an Ashford stop to maintain the dedicated channel

tunnel paths. We have not modelled the impact of this adjustment but stand ready to do so should the additional stop be viable.

In conclusion, Gemini is the only applicant that has already recognised the value of serving intermediate stations and while Ashford has not been included in the initial business plan, it remains open to discussions with local and national stakeholders to find a commercially viable solution for all intermediate stations.

Yours sincerely

