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## Labour Takes Over Second Train Operator, c2c, Sparking Concerns About Growing State Control

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The Labour Government has brought yet another rail franchise under public ownership, as train operator c2c officially transferred to state control on Sunday. The Labour Government has brought another rail franchise under public ownership, with train operator c2c officially transferring to state control on Sunday. The move, part of a broader strategy by Labour to expand government-run rail services, raises questions about long-term efficiency and accountability in Britain's transport network.

The c2c service, running between London Fenchurch Street and South Essex, had previously been operated by Trenitalia, Italy's state-owned railway, since 2017. The c2c service, which runs between London Fenchurch Street and South Essex, had been operated by Trenitalia, Italy's state-owned railway, since 2017. Now, its operations will be managed by the DfT (Department for Transport) Operator, the public body tasked with overseeing nationalised train services on behalf of the UK Government. Now, its operations will be managed by DfT OLR Holdings, the public body tasked with overseeing nationalised train services on behalf of the UK Government. Despite the change in management, DfT has stated that previously purchased tickets remain valid and that fares are "not changing as a direct result of the transfer."

While Labour officials have positioned the move as a step toward a "railway run by the public, for the public," critics argue the nationalisation push risks creating a bloated and inefficient system. Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander said the public ownership model was "already tackling deep-rooted problems" like fragmentation and waste, promising further integration under the incoming GBR (Great British Railways). Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander said the public ownership model was "already tackling deep-rooted problems" like fragmentation and waste, promising further integration under Great British Railways (GBR), the new state entity set to oversee both infrastructure and operations. This new state entity will oversee both infrastructure and operations across the network.

Supporters of the takeover point to relatively strong customer satisfaction scores. The latest survey by watchdog Transport Focus ranked c2c sixth out of 22 operators, with an overall passenger approval rating of 89%. Nonetheless, performance ratings alone do not guarantee improved service under government control, especially as operational costs and political interference often become barriers to long-term success.

Trenitalia UK's Managing Director, Ernesto Sicili, issued a measured response, acknowledging the handover while noting the challenges of unifying the UK's fragmented rail system. Trenitalia UK's Managing Director, Ernesto Sicilia, issued a measured response, acknowledging the handover while noting the challenges of unifying the UK's fragmented rail system. He added that Trenitalia would continue operating Avanti West Coast until its transfer to public control in 2026, pledging to remain a "constructive partner" throughout the industry's transition.

This marks the second nationalisation by Labour since taking office, following the takeover of South Western Railway in May. Other previously nationalised operators, including

Northern, TransPennine Express, Southeastern, and LNER, were brought into public control by the previous Conservative government. Other nationalised operators, including Northern, TransPennine Express, Southeastern, and LNER, were brought into public control by the previous Conservative government. Still, those decisions were largely made in response to performance failures and franchise mismanagement.

Greater Anglia is expected to follow on 12 October, as Labour's centralised rail strategy continues to unfold. Greater Anglia is expected to follow on 12 October 2025, as Labour's centralised rail strategy continues to unfold. While proponents see the shift as a means to restore public trust in rail services, sceptics view it as a return to outdated models of state-heavy control, risking inefficiency and stifling the role of private innovation in modern transport.

As the Government takes a stronger role in rail operations, the long-term success of these efforts will likely depend on whether public ownership can genuinely deliver better value and reliability or simply result in more bureaucracy and rising costs for taxpayers.