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Dear Maureen

I am pleased to advise that the specification for the ScotRail franchise will be published, as the Draft Invitation to Tender, on the afternoon of 19 November. It will be made publicly available on Transport Scotland's website:

<http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/rail/scottish-franchise-renewal-programme/scotrail-franchise>

Publication of the specification is the start of the formal tendering process. Five bidders – Abellio, Arriva, First Group, MTR and National Express – have been invited to tender and, according to our plans, I expect to confirm a successful bidder in autumn 2014, which will allow sufficient time for mobilisation prior to the successful bidder assuming the franchise on 1 April 2015.

The commitments that I have made within the specification should secure a transformed future and deliver an improved service to the people of Scotland. The Final Invitation to Tender will be published, in accordance with our schedule, in late January 2014.

Kind regards

KEITH BROWN