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Dear Tim,

## **Proposed changes to Govia Thameslink Railway Ticket Offices and introduction of Station Hosts**

### **1. Introduction**

Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) hereby gives notice of its proposal to alter schedule 17 ticket office opening hours using the major change process at 45 ticket offices at 44 stations, details of which are attached (appendices A & B), in accordance with the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement, chapter 6-18 clause 1.a (i).

GTR also intends to make amendments to the operation of the ticket offices at a further 39 station ticket offices. However we intend to open these offices in AM peak hours only but maintain a further point of sale by transferring an existing ticket office machine into the concourse area. At times that the ticket office is closed this will become the designated point of sale as defined in Schedule 17 and we propose no change to the existing regulated times.

It is proposed to close or change opening hours of ticket offices at stations to meet passenger demand and reflect customer purchasing habits. The different ways tickets are sold and the way customer service is provided at stations has altered significantly over recent years. In particular, an increase in online/web sales; greater use of Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) at stations; the ever increasing use of Oyster and contactless technology along with the introduction of the Key smartcard technology across our Network has driven a need for customer service to be provided in different ways and customers expecting a different customer experience, whilst feeling supported through the ticket purchasing process.

The current, historic, opening times of ticket offices are inefficient and excessive to meet customer demand. We also believe that the practice of having an office based person selling tickets does not provide the level of service for all passengers using the station, only interacting with a fraction of the passengers travelling through that station, and, for limited times of the day.

We propose to introduce Station Hosts at most of our stations, generally the small to medium stations with in excess of 1m footfall per year through those stations. The objective of the new Station Host role is to move away from the traditional station staff roles that separate gateline, ticket office and station assistance. This non-fragmented Station Host role will allow increased staff

visibility, accessibility and flexibility for the benefits of our customers, and deliver improvements in our customer service offer.

These Hosts will be based within the concourse areas to provide customer service, information, travel assistance as well as assisting customers in purchasing tickets for the journey they are making. In every case the Station Host will be available for hours of operation in excess of the current ticket office hours and every station affected by these proposals will have a member of staff on duty from the first train in the morning to the last train of the day, 7 days a week. The Station Hosts will provide customer assistance with regards to refunds, issue of photocards and other transactions that would be carried out in the ticket offices currently and the arrangements will be clarified, and published locally, prior to introduction.

It is proposed that the changes will be implemented between June and September 2016. No ticket office opening hours will be changed until the Station Hosts are appointed and in place.

## 2. Our Proposal

We recognise that we need to reflect current passenger footfall and ticket sales, and types, within our proposals and our approach to ticket office changes and the role of the Station Hosts. We are proposing to make changes to 84 ticket offices at 83 stations and these will fit into one of three categories:

### a. Model 1 stations (Hosted Station : Appendix A)

The affected stations are:

**Great Northern** : Alexandra Palace, Enfield Chase, Palmers Green and New Barnet.

**Southern** : Battersea Park, Carshalton Beeches, Gipsy Hill, Peckham Rye, Queens Road Peckham, Selhurst, Streatham, Streatham Common, Streatham Hill, South Croydon, Tulse Hill, Wandsworth Common and West Norwood.

**Thameslink**: City Thameslink (Holborn), Cricklewood, Denmark Hill, Loughborough Junction and Tooting.

These ticket offices generally issue fewer than 12 tickets per hour at these stations. The majority of customers use ticket machines, online purchases and smartcard or contactless payment technology so there is very minimal need for a ticket office.

At these stations we propose to close the ticket office and introduce staff onto the concourse as 'Station Hosts'. Station Hosts will be visible and available for most of the day, 7 days a week, and every day the station will be staffed from the first train service of the day until the last train has departed. The Hosts will be trained in customer service, will help passengers use the ticket machines and will be able to sell the most popular tickets and provide information using a new handheld device.

A priority of this role is to ensure that our passengers feel confident and reassured that they have the best ticket for the journey they are making. All of these stations will have a Station Host available,

within the station concourse area, for significantly longer times of operation than the current ticket office hours, especially in the evenings and at weekends.

**b. Model 2 stations (Hosted & Concourse Sales Point : Appendix B)**

**Great Northern :** Gordon Hill, Hornsey and Winchmore Hill

**Southern :** Balham, Carshalton, Caterham, Coulsdon South, Falmer, Lancing, Purley, Norbury, Reigate, Sanderstead, Shoreham-by-sea, Sutton, Thornton Heath and Wallington.

**Thameslink:** City Thameslink (Ludgate Hill), Elstree & Borehamwood, Luton Airport Parkway, Mill Hill Broadway, Radlett and West Hampstead Thameslink.

Generally more than 12 tickets are sold per hour at these stations at peak times, but still the majority of customers use ticket machines, online purchases, smartcards and contactless payment. At these stations we propose to introduce staff onto the concourse as ‘Station Hosts’.

We propose to close these ticket offices but will relocate a ticket office machine to a station hosting point within the station concourse area. The Station Hosts that are available on the concourse will be able to sell those tickets that are not available from the self-service machines. The Hosts will be trained in customer service, will help passengers use the self-service ticket machines and will be able to sell tickets and provide information using a new handheld device or the relocated ticket office machine. The Station Host will be available for significantly longer hours of the day than current ticket office hours, especially in the evening and at weekends.

**c. Model 3 stations (Partial Ticket Office, Hosted & Concourse Sales Point : Appendix C)**

**Great Northern :** Hatfield, Hertford North, Hitchin, Huntingdon, King’s Lynn, Letchworth Garden City, Potter’s Bar, Royston Herts, Sandy, Stevenage, St Neots and Welwyn Garden City.

**Southern :** Angmering, Ashted, Barnham, Bexhill, Bognor Regis, Burgess Hill, Chichester, Crawley, Dorking, Eastbourne, East Grinstead, Epsom, Hassocks, Horley, Horsham, Hove, Leatherhead, Lewes, Littlehampton, Merstham, Oxted, Polegate, Portslade and Worthing

**Thameslink:** Flitwick and Harpenden,

These stations still rely heavily on ticket offices for passengers buying tickets as well as the self-service ticket machines and increasing use of smartcards and we do not intend to alter the regulated status of these stations under Schedule 17 of the Ticketing and Settlement agreement as we intend to maintain a sales point that meets the required criteria.

At these stations we will still introduce ‘Station Hosts’ within the station concourse areas. Station Hosts will be visible and available for most of the day, 7 days a week, and the station will be staffed from the first train service of the day until the last train has departed.

We propose to continue to staff the ticket office during the morning peak hours on a Monday to Friday basis to manage the ticket sales demand levels. We will also relocate a ticket office machine to a station hosting point within the station concourse area. When the ticket office is closed the Station

Hosts will be able to sell those tickets that are not available from the self-service machines or when the ticket office is busy.

The Station Host will be available for significantly longer hours of the day than current ticket office hours, especially in the evening and at weekends.

### 3. Sales Review

To determine the approach for each station a review of ticket sales through ticket offices, self-service and other methods was undertaken. Ticket sales through ticket offices continue to reduce year on year and outside of peak hours ticket sales reduce even further. The review of ticket office sales was carried out in hourly time bands.

At stations we propose to close the ticket office and move to the “Model 1 Hosted Station” ticket sales were generally below 12 tickets per hour.

At stations we propose as “Model 2 Hosted and Concourse sales points” ticket sales exceeded 12 per hour during peak times but generally reduced outside of peak times. Analysis shows that most tickets sold at these stations could be sold through self-service, web sales or through use of smartcards or contactless payments. Tickets that would not be possible to sell through the self service machines will be able to be sold through the ticket machine that the Station Host will in the concourse at busier times.

At stations we propose as “Model 3 Partial Ticket Office, Hosted and Concourse sales points” ticket sales exceeded 12 per hour during peak times and, in part, outside of peak times. Analysis shows that most tickets sold at these stations could be sold through self-service, web sales or through use of smartcards or contactless payments. Tickets that would not be possible to sell through the self service machines will be able to be sold through the ticket office that will remain in use during the morning peak hours and at other times, through the ticket machines that the Station Host will use in the concourse area, therefore providing the necessary sales point to maintain the current Schedule 17 arrangements.

Tickets issued during the proposed closure times at the stations within this proposal are mainly ‘walk up’ type tickets or 7 day seasons. These ticket types are easily retailed through self-service machines (TVMs) and will also be available for sale through the hand held ticket machine that the Station Host can use to help at busier times. At Model 2 and 3 stations a ticket office machine will remain available within the ticket office or concourse area to ensure that customers can continue to obtain the full range of tickets at these stations.

### 4. Sales Channels

GTR has a number of current options for passengers to purchase their travel tickets in addition to existing ticket offices:

- Station self-service machines;
- Oyster;
- Contactless;
- The Key Smartcard;
- Web and Telesales;
- Ticket on departure collection through self-service; and
- Staff on ticket gates / Revenue Protection Staff

### ***Self-Service Ticketing***

Self-service machines are the most popular method of purchasing tickets across our network. Every station that we are proposing has self-service machines which are capable of selling any walk up ticket, including railcard discounts, and 7 day seasons. These machines enable tickets to be purchased in advance of the day of travel, with the introduction of the Station Hosts we will expand the booking horizon through TVMs to up to 30 days in advance. In addition every machine has TOD functionality enabling tickets purchased in advance to be collected through a TVM and the functionality to top up or collect Oyster products or upload “The Key” purchases. The machine availability has consistently been achieved averaging over 98% availability.

To further support these machines remote monitoring is undertaken by the suppliers, our own in house TVM team and local managers. They can monitor the current status of machines, identify faults and react quickly to issues that may put machine out of service or partially operational such as low ticket stocks and change. With the introduction of the Station Hosts ticket machines will be constantly monitored and kept well stocked with tickets and change. In the event of a failure of all or part of the machine the Host will attempt fingertip maintenance and if unable to restore the machine to full service they will fault the machine to the TVM Team and maintenance provider and in the meantime sell tickets as required through the machines they have access to,

We have improved the user interface and the ticket products for all walk up and go tickets from that station will be available. Currently at the stations we are proposing ticket office changes the ticket offices are only open for parts of the day and many have reduced opening in the weekends and in the evenings. This means customers are reliant on self-service machines and there is little or no staff on duty to assist customers purchase the best tickets for their needs. The introduction of Station Hosts will enable us to provide assistance with ticket purchasing for the majority of the day, 7 days a week.

Prior to the introduction of Station Hosts we will also be installing a further 65 self-service ticket machines at our stations, 36 of these are being installed at stations within these proposals.

### ***TOD & Season Renewals***

GTR currently supports National TOD at all its stations through self-service and Ticket Offices. We currently have season renewals and the ability to purchase products for our “Key” smartcard through our website.

### ***Oyster / Contactless***

Most passengers within the London area have migrated to Oyster as the preferred travel ticket option. Oyster is easily retailed through our service machines and can be uploaded through our ticket gates or readers. Contactless use is increasing rapidly due to its ease of use and requires no transaction through ticket machines.

## **5. Improved Revenue Protection**

GTR will employ over 460 Station Hosts as part of this proposal who will also manage the automatic ticket gates at the stations. These gates will be in operation for 80% of the time that trains operate from the station, reducing further the opportunity for ticketless travel and also increasing security on our stations and trains. An additional 14 automatic gatelines will have been introduced at stations at the time of the proposed implementation of these changes.

In addition to the Station Host arrangements a number of stations that are not part of these proposals will continue to have ticket gates in operation (i.e. King's Cross, London Blackfrairs, and East Croydon).

Our staffing levels and ticket machine availability will ensure that we can continue to manage our Penalty Fare scheme within the requirements of the Penalty Fare Rules and through extended ticket gate operational hours we will continue to reduce instances of ticketless travel and improve security at our stations and on trains. We will submit an amended Penalty Fares scheme that reflects the changes to our ticket office arrangements prior to the changes being made.

#### **6. Meeting the needs of our disabled customers**

GTR is committed to improving accessibility of our stations and has commenced funding of works that will aid travel opportunities for passengers with impaired mobility or requiring assistance with travelling. We believe that the introduction of Station Hosts will improve the service we can provide currently under our DPP Policy.

The introduction of Station Hosts will significantly improve staffing levels at stations to enable us to assist customers for most parts of the day, 7 days a week, as well as assisting passengers in buying the best ticket for the journeys being made.

#### **7. Station Facilities (waiting rooms and toilets)**

GTR has started investment a number of investment programmes to improve passenger facilities at stations. This includes installing new passenger shelters, seating, refurbishing waiting rooms and toilets. With the extended staffing hours of the stations we will keep these facilities open and available for the vast majority of the times that trains are operating. In most stations these facilities are generally locked out of use when the ticket office is closed.

#### **8. Security at Stations**

GTR is dedicated to improve safety and security for its passengers and our staff. Our proposals will help us to maintain our excellent safety and security standards.

- Our stations will have staff visible and available in most cases from the first train of the day to the last and in all cases for longer hours than the current ticket office times.
- Our staff and passengers will be supported by Rail Neighbourhood officers and our new team of Rail Enforcement Officers, dedicated to GTR to combat crime on the railway.
- We are installing gatelines at a further 21 stations. All stations within this proposal that have ticket gates will have those gates in operation for at least 80% of the time that trains are calling at that station.
- We are investing in improving CCTV at stations and on trains to enhance our current expansive and effective systems.
- We are installing additional help points at stations

We believe that the increased availability of the Station Hosts, especially at weekends and in the evenings will greatly enhance the feeling of safety of security for our passengers.

#### **9. Proposed introduction of changes**

Govia Thameslink Railway Ltd will be communicating the changes to opening hours at stations to passengers through posters and details will be contained on our web site with effect from 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2016.

It is proposed that the introduction of these changes will take place between June and September 2016. This will follow the period of consultation with all relevant stakeholders as well as staff and Trade Union consultation. Following consultation we will commence a programme of selection and training of the Station Hosts.

We believe that the proposals to introduce the Station Hosts and move the majority of transactions to outside the ticket office will provide a significantly improved customer service offering with the following benefits:

- Increased staff presence to assist customers with ticket purchases, provision of information and assistance
- Maintaining the ability to purchase the full range of tickets at stations where demand currently exists
- Increased availability of station facilities
- Improved assisted travel arrangements and times of operation
- Improved revenue protection
- Improved safety and security for our passengers

We intend to employ Station Hosts that are referred to in this proposal, and at the times specified within the appendices to this document, for the duration of the Govia Thameslink Railway franchise. In the event of any changes to this we will fully consult with the Department for Transport, Transport Focus, London TravelWatch and other Train Operating Companies.

If further information or clarification is required regarding these proposals please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Keith Jipps  
Passenger Service Director (GN)