

Board meeting 31.01.17

Secretariat memorandum

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LTW541

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Confidential

Thameslink Southern Great Northern rail franchise

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1. To inform members of the current status of various issues affecting this franchise

2 Recommendation

- 2.1. Members are advised to note the report

3 Issues affecting the operation of this franchise

- 3.1. The franchise is divided into four businesses (Thameslink, Southern, Great Northern and Gatwick Express). Each of these businesses have been subject to a number of major problems and disputes since the beginning of the franchise in September 2014, and subsequent additions of services and stations previously operated by Southeastern.(December 2014) and Southern / Gatwick Express (July 2015).
- 3.2. The franchise covers a large geographic area¹ from Milton Keynes, Bedford ,Peterborough and Kings Lynn in the north to Southampton in the west and Ashford (Kent)in the east including most of South London and local services to the north of London from Moorgate.
- 3.3. GTR is a joint venture between Go-Ahead group and Keolis. Go-Ahead is a major bus operator in London, the North East, the South Coast, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Plymouth and East Anglia. It also operates the London Midland and Southeastern rail franchises (the latter also in a joint venture with Keolis). Keolis is a subsidiary of SNCF (State owned railway of France) that also operates the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) franchise for Transport for London (TfL).
- 3.4. GTR as a franchise at the time it was let was globally the largest ever rail franchise, and accounted for over one third of the entire United Kingdom rail network in terms of passenger numbers and revenue. The largest stations with exception of East Croydon are managed by Network Rail (Clapham Junction is managed by South West Trains).

¹ GTR Franchise map <http://www.railtechnologymagazine.com/Rail-News/govia-takes-over-thameslink-franchise-from-fcc-from-sunday>

3.5. The performance of the franchise can be seen in the performance report here :-

http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=4301&field=file

3.6. A summary of the main issues affecting the different parts of the franchise is shown in the table below

	Thameslink	Southern	Gatwick Express	Great Northern
Role of the driver in opening and closing train doors and responsibility for the safe of operation of trains.	All services are operated under Driver Only Operation (DOO)	Metro areas trains operated under DOO. Longer distance services now under Driver Controlled Operation (DCO) but subject to dispute by the trade union	All services are operated by DCO method	All services are operated under DOO
Rest day working and driver shortages	Franchise started with fewer drivers than anticipated. Recruitment an ongoing issue	Staff shortages occur when train services are disrupted	Not an issue	Franchise started with fewer drivers than anticipated. Recruitment an ongoing issue. Particular problems with weekend cancellations
Poor infrastructure reliability	Issue has got worse since the enforced diversion of services away from London Bridge	Constant problems with this	Constant problems with this	East Coast Main Line has had problems with signalling and overhead electricity supply
New infrastructure works – Thameslink upgrade	Works at London Bridge have had big impact	Works at London Bridge have had big impact especially for driver training on new layout	Gatwick Station rebuild	No major impact

	Thameslink	Southern	Gatwick Express	Great Northern
Introduction of new trains	Introduction of two new fleets of trains in life of the franchise. Class 700 has been delayed, has had teething problems and driver training issues	Introduction of some new trains and some trains brought in from other parts of the business	Introduction of complete new train fleet	Introduction of older trains brought from other parts of the business
Retention of older trains longer than anticipated	The failure to introduce new trains on schedule and in sufficient quantities has meant that older trains have been retained longer than anticipated with consequent higher failure rates.	The failure to introduce new trains on schedule and in sufficient quantities has meant that older trains have been retained longer than anticipated with consequent higher failure rates.	The failure to introduce new trains on schedule and in sufficient quantities has meant that older trains have been retained longer than anticipated with consequent higher failure rates.	The failure to introduce new trains on schedule and in sufficient quantities has meant that older trains have been retained longer than anticipated with consequent higher failure rates.

- 3.7. The franchise and the Thameslink Programme have been subject to considerable scrutiny since its commencement. Previous reports to the London TravelWatch board are available here :-

http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=3948&age=&field=file

and here

http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=4225&age=&field=file

- 3.8 The performance of GTR shown in the above report is set out in Appendix A.

4 Driver Only Operation (DOO) and Driver Control Operation (DCO)

- 4.1. Services operated as Thameslink and Great Northern have operated DOO for many years using a combination of on station mirrors and on station CCTV. In 2009 (during the First Capital Connect franchise) new trains were introduced that included on-train CCTV. Combined with staff dispatch of trains at busy stations this has been an accepted safe method of operation. Similarly Gatwick Express services have operated in a similar manner for many years, although there was recent dispute in 2015 with the trade union over the use on-train CCTV when trains of 12 carriages in length (240metres) replaced trains of 10 carriages in length (230metres), a difference of ten metres.
- 4.2. Southern 'Metro' area services have been operated under DOO for many years using a combination of mirrors and on station CCTV, and on newer stock (built from 2003 onwards) on-train CCTV, combined with staff dispatch of trains at busy stations. However, longer distance and regional services have until now not used this system. The Department for Transport (DfT) required Southern in the new franchise from 2015 onwards to implement the new method of operation on its' long distance services, called Driver Controlled Operation (DCO). This method changes the overall responsibility for train safety, transferring the responsibility for door closure from the conductor-guard to the driver of the train.
- 4.3. Also as part of the new franchise the role of the conductor-guard on these services was replaced by a new job role called an 'On Board Supervisor' (OBS). The OBS would not have a safety management responsibility and would instead be focused on customer service activities such as ticket sales, assisting passengers with mobility impairments, providing information and helping to enhance passenger perceptions of personal security. Following union representations it was agreed that they would also receive the same railway safety training as given to the existing conductor-guard role over the next few years.
- 4.4. Southern have agreed that any staff transferring to the role of OBS will not be forced into compulsory redundancy or have their salary changed for the remainder of the franchise. The franchise will last until 2021 (unless the DfT take back the franchise earlier) at which point all commitments to have an OBS on trains and all guarantees to staff expire. The DfT has subsequently given guarantees about the further transfer of staff affected to any successor franchise.
- 4.5. Existing staff affected by the removal of the conductor guard role were offered transfers to the new role with current salary and other conditions of service. New staff have also been recruited to the role of OBS, with a view to filling existing vacancies and to expand the area covered by OBS to include some previously DOO operated services in the London Metro area, where it was felt that a greater staff presence on



Figure 1. Class 319/4 train built 1986 operated by Thameslink

trains was now needed, in order to meet franchise commitments (as measured by the National Rail Passenger Survey and other qualitative measures) to improved passenger perceptions of security, better information and to reduce fare evasion.

- 4.6. Transfer of responsibility for overall safety of trains from the conductor-guard to the driver means that operational flexibility is made easier, because it only requires a driver to be present to operate the service, whereas previously the absence of a conductor guard would mean that a train would be cancelled or delayed. This is especially important in times of disruption. OBS staff are now rostered separately from drivers. Whenever OBS staff are not present, the train only operates with one member of staff present, and none in a passenger facing role, compared to the two on all trains at present.
- 4.7. The services that have been changed to this method of operation are operated by class 377/1 -4 and class 171 trains constructed between 2002 and 2005. These were built with in-cab CCTV equipment when new for use by drivers.
- 4.8. The presence of in-cab CCTV is one of a number of possible measures that are required by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) as official regulator before operation in DOO or DCO mode can be authorised. These measures include risk assessment of all stations where the trains will call both in the daytime and at night and require minimum standards of lighting, removal of obstructions that cause blind spots, use of platform staff at busy stations and other measures. The ORR has produced a report on the operation of DOO and DCO on Southern that is available here:- <http://orr.gov.uk/what-and-how-we-regulate/health-and-safety/guidance-and-research/driver-only-operation-doo>
- 4.9. The ORR has concluded that it is satisfied that with the suitable equipment, procedures and competent staff in place the proposed form of train dispatch intended by Southern, meets legal requirements and can be operated safely. However, the report also concluded that not all of the equipment and procedures were currently in place.
- 4.10. The RMT and ASLEF trade unions disagree with this conclusion and their position can be found here:- https://www.scribd.com/document/335859751/Southern-GTR-DOO-Facts#from_embed . The unions may feel members have less protection following the criminal conviction for manslaughter of a Guard on Merseyrail (James Street) who dispatched a train without fully checking that a passenger was clear of the train. Full details of this incident are available here: - https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/410810/121127_R222012_James_Street.pdf
- 4.11. Southern has implemented its proposed method of working for DOO and DCO on the routes and services that were set out in the franchise specification.
- 4.12. The requirement for this method of operation in the franchise is based on:-



Figure 2. Class 377/2 train built 2002-4 operated by Southern

a) the recommendations of the McNulty review and the need for a reduction in industry costs and

b) the forthcoming reorganisation of services in 2018 that would see some long distance Southern services replaced by Thameslink e.g. Horsham, East Grinstead and Littlehampton to London Bridge. These would run through the Thameslink core of central London to destinations such as Peterborough, Cambridge and Bedford.

The Thameslink core requires the use of new class 700 trains that have the ability to run in automatic mode in this section. Existing Southern trains do not have this feature. The class 700's do not however have the facility for conductor guards to operate the doors. This change from previous rolling stock practice was not consulted on with the trade unions at the time the order for the trains was placed.



Figure 3 Class 700 train built 2015 operated by Thameslink

- 4.13. The remaining services operated by conductor guards on Southern are regional services operated by class 171 diesel units on the rural Ashford (Kent) to Brighton route or by class 313 electric units used between Hastings and Portsmouth. These latter trains were built in 1976 and do not have in cab CCTV, and it would be difficult to retrofit to these trains. (Trains of the same class do operate in DOO mode on Great Northern using on station CCTV and platform mirrors, but are due to be replaced by new trains in 2018).

5 Rest day working and driver shortages.

- 5.1. The GTR franchise brought together a number of train operators, each with their own terms and conditions for staff and agreements for how staff are used. A feature of these arrangements for drivers has been that Sundays are not treated as part of the working week with services on this day covered by staff working overtime on a discretionary basis known as rest day working. Rest day working is also used at other times to run services where there is no one else available to drive a train.



Figure 4. Class 313/0 train built 1976 operated Great Northern

- 5.2. This practice has been around since British Rail days and in order to guarantee minimum amounts of overtime, by agreement with the trade unions companies did not always recruit or train the full numbers of drivers that would be required to operate services during normal hours. This was cheaper for the company and benefitted existing staff by guaranteeing overtime payments. However, it was dependent on the voluntary agreement of drivers to work Sundays. This system worked when Sunday services were quite limited, but increasing passenger demand requiring the introduction of new services on this day has stretched the available resources. In recent years, drivers have also at times have 'en masse' declined to work under the rest day working arrangements, particularly when there have been disputes with the company occurring, or on holidays or popular days for family or

other commitments such as the run up to Christmas. This can be at very short notice and be very unpredictable, leading to cancellation of services. Great Northern and Thameslink routes have been particularly affected by this.

- 5.3. It should also be noted that when GTR assumed the franchise in September 2014 from First Capital Connect, that they found that there was a substantial deficit of around 10% of driver establishment over what they had been led to believe from the information provided by the DfT in the 'data room' by the previous operator.
- 5.4. GTR has attempted to address these issues with a change to terms and conditions for new drivers, to include Sundays as part of the working week and to recruit and train new drivers, to reduce dependence of rest day working. In Autumn 2014 they told London TravelWatch of their plans to address this, by what appeared to be good recruitment strategy, and which should have delivered the appropriate staffing levels by 2016. However, the length of time needed to train new drivers, the turnover of existing drivers and the need to train existing drivers on new track layouts and trains has limited the impact of this initiative. The company also did not immediately implement lessons that its owners (Go-Ahead group) had learnt from a previous similar experience, which resulted in Ministerial intervention, at the London Midland franchise between 2007 and 2012 until prompted by London TravelWatch. In addition most of the senior management at the new franchise held similar if not identical positions at the previous franchises and so it is difficult to believe that they were unaware of the problems facing an incoming franchise.

6 Poor infrastructure reliability

- 6.1. Network Rail as infrastructure provider has a major influence on the reliability or otherwise of train operators. Previous London TravelWatch board reports have highlighted major failings on the part of Network Rail that have contributed to the poor performance of the GTR franchise. The level of concern regarding these failings has resulted in both regulatory action by the ORR against Network Rail, requiring improvements and passenger redress.
- 6.2. It should be noted that on many of the lines over which GTR operate there has been a long term failure to invest in improvements and / or maintenance of assets.

7 Impact of new infrastructure, new train introduction and retention of older trains

- 7.1. Similarly to the point made in the previous paragraph, where Network Rail has been building new infrastructure such as in the area between London Bridge and New Cross Gate for the Thameslink programme there have been very large impacts on passengers, not only from the works themselves with extensive closures, but also from consequential effects such as engineering works overrunning and new equipment failing to work properly when combined with older equipment outside of the work area.
- 7.2. There are also big impacts from failures in the planning process, such as underestimating the amount of time required to train drivers on new track layouts and rolling stock: overestimating the capacity of a reduced infrastructure on the approaches to London Bridge from New Cross Gate and South Bermondsey and the underestimation in modelling the numbers of passengers actually using London

Bridge station that led to crowding problems, further delays and extended dwell times at stations.

- 7.3. A further major failing in the planning process was the failure to adopt more mitigation measures such as boosting capacity on adjacent lines prior to commencement of works or reduced timetables. Many of these items were not included in the proposals for the Thameslink upgrade as they were deemed to be 'out of scope' or were discounted as they would have weakened the business case for approving the Thameslink project. In the event, some of these mitigations are in the process of being adopted after the 'disruption event' when it might have been better to have done these beforehand.
- 7.4. The effect of the delays and disruption on GTR has also significantly impacted the operation of other operators notably London Overground's East and West London Line services, Southeastern, South West Trains and Great Western.
- 7.5. The introduction of new trains (e.g. class 700) has also had an impact on reliability because of a) late delivery of the new stock: b) a higher failure rate of new trains as faults are 'shaken out' and staff are less familiar with how to fix problems with them and c) the need to retain older trains beyond the planned for time period for withdrawal from service or major overhaul. This has meant that these trains then suffer more faults and breakdowns.

8 Overall impact on passengers - conclusions

- 8.1. The cumulative effect of all these pressures on this part of the rail network and the passengers that rely on it have been unprecedented in UK railway history.
- 8.2. The impact on regular users has resulted in significant political and governmental intervention including specialist task forces, improved compensation for delays and disruption, and more recently the review by Chris Gibb undertaken for the Secretary of State. Appendix B sets out the information London TravelWatch provided to this review – which was not exhaustive. We understand that some of this issues we have raised have been addressed but he has not been able to share the full results with us.
- 8.3. As a result of this review a further £300million has been committed to fund improvements to the infrastructure used by GTR².
- 8.4. However, it is difficult to see how and when passengers will see a sustained improvement in the operation of the GTR franchise, much before the completion of the Thameslink programme in late 2018 / early 2019.
- 8.5. The lessons for future franchises competitions and infrastructure updates might include:-
 - That the extent and scope of the GTR franchise was unmanageably large
 - That too many changes in railway operating practice, staffing models and rolling stock design were included in the franchise and Thameslink upgrade project.

² <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/feeds/major-funding-improvements/>

- That insufficient weight was given to the need to provide mitigation measures and alternative services before, during and after the Thameslink upgrade on a 'live' railway used by large and growing numbers of people.
- That the Thameslink project has taken too long to implement and its impact on passenger has been too great.
- That knowledge gained elsewhere in other franchises of similar issues was not transferred effectively to deal with issues before they became critical.
- That problems developing at the end of the previous franchises were left or neglected even though the staff making decisions about these issues would be transferring to the new franchise in similar roles.
- That the impact on the quality of life of passengers of such much major disruption was not anticipated in its depth or severity.

9 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 9.1. The operation of Driver Only Operated trains has implications for passengers requiring assistance, particularly if no station staff or on board staff are present to provide it.

10 Legal powers

- 10.1. Section 252A of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places a duty upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) to keep under review matters affecting the interests of the public in relation to railway passenger and station services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area, and to make representations about them to such persons as it thinks appropriate.

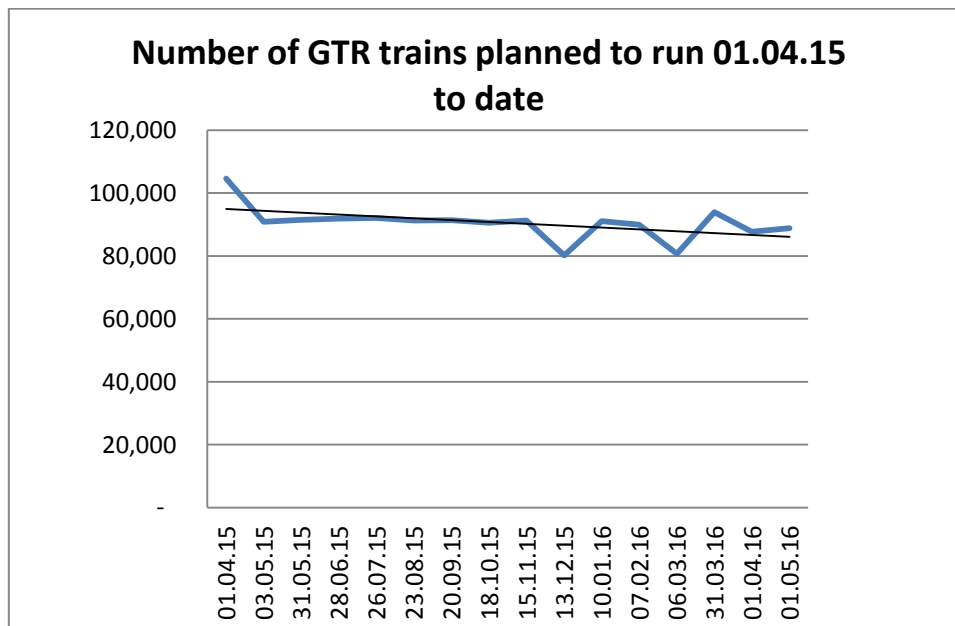
11 Financial implications

- 11.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report for London TravelWatch, although there has been a financial impact on the economy of London and the South East.

Appendix A

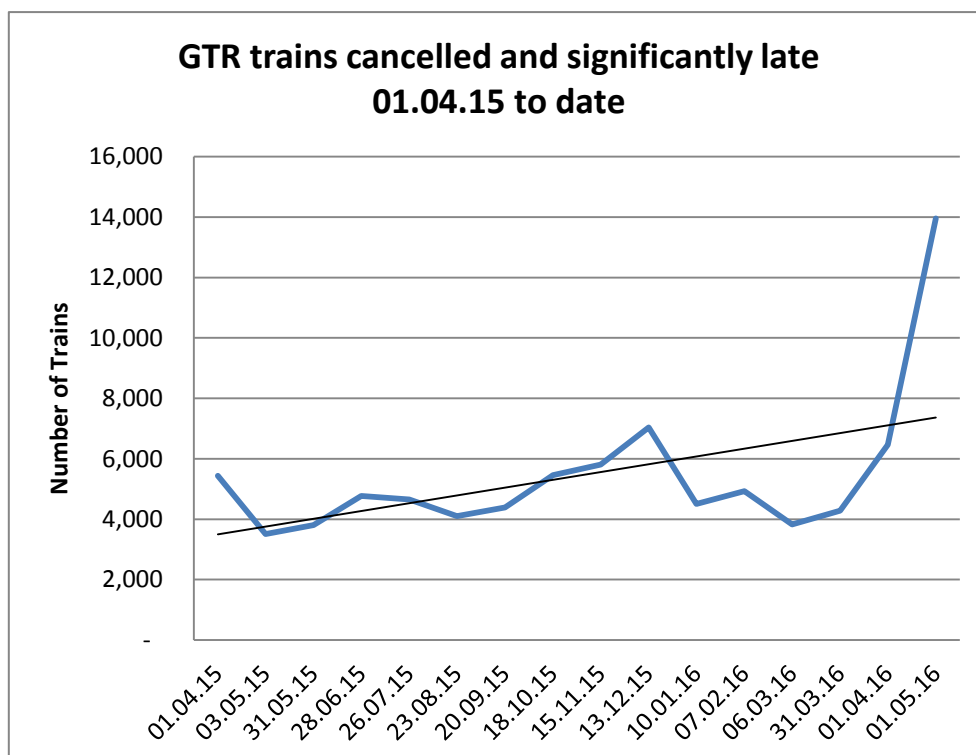
Extract from report to LTW board July 2016

- 1.1 We have extracted from the latest GTR performance data the following four graphs, which show what is happening to GTR performance over the past 15 months. Each graph includes a linear trendline.
- 1.2 The graphs include data on all GTR performance, including Great Northern, Thameslink, Gatwick Express and Southern. While Southern and Gatwick Express have constituted the majority of the poor performance, there have also been issues on the Great Northern route which have not received the same levels of publicity.
- 1.3 Each graph covers a 15-month period, beginning on 1 April 2015. The rail industry measures performance in periods of 4 weeks, with 13 4-week periods in each year. Each date on the horizontal axes relates to the start of a 4-week period.
- 1.4 **Number of trains planned to run:**



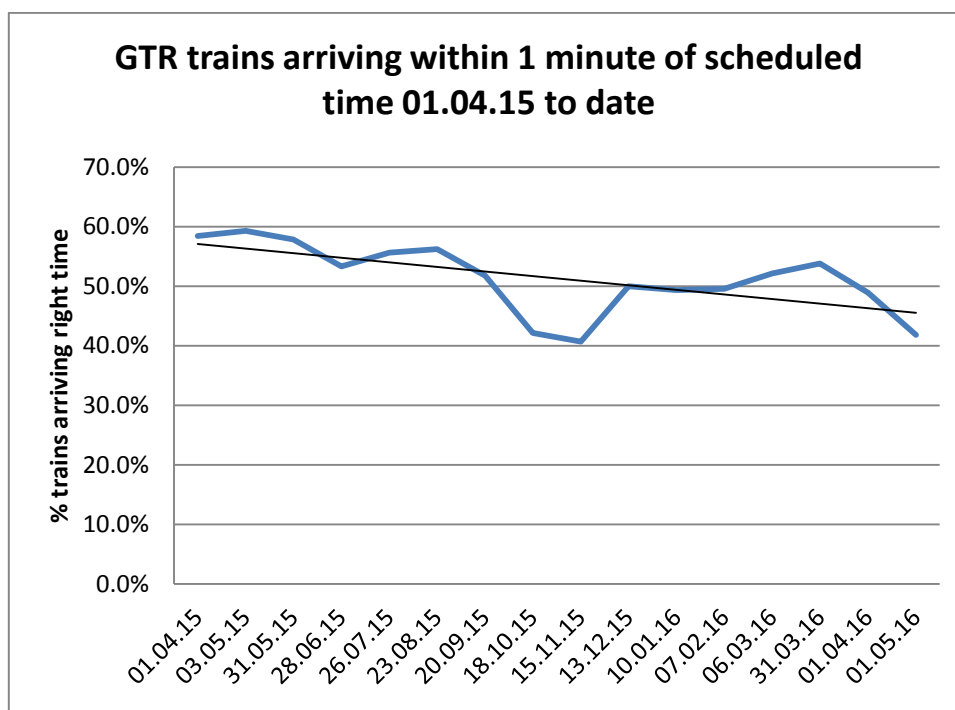
- 1.5 The graph above shows the number of trains GTR planned to run in each 4-week period. Over 100,000 trains were planned for the first 4-week period; this had fallen to below 90,000 for four of the final five 4-week periods.

1.6 Number of trains cancelled or significantly late:



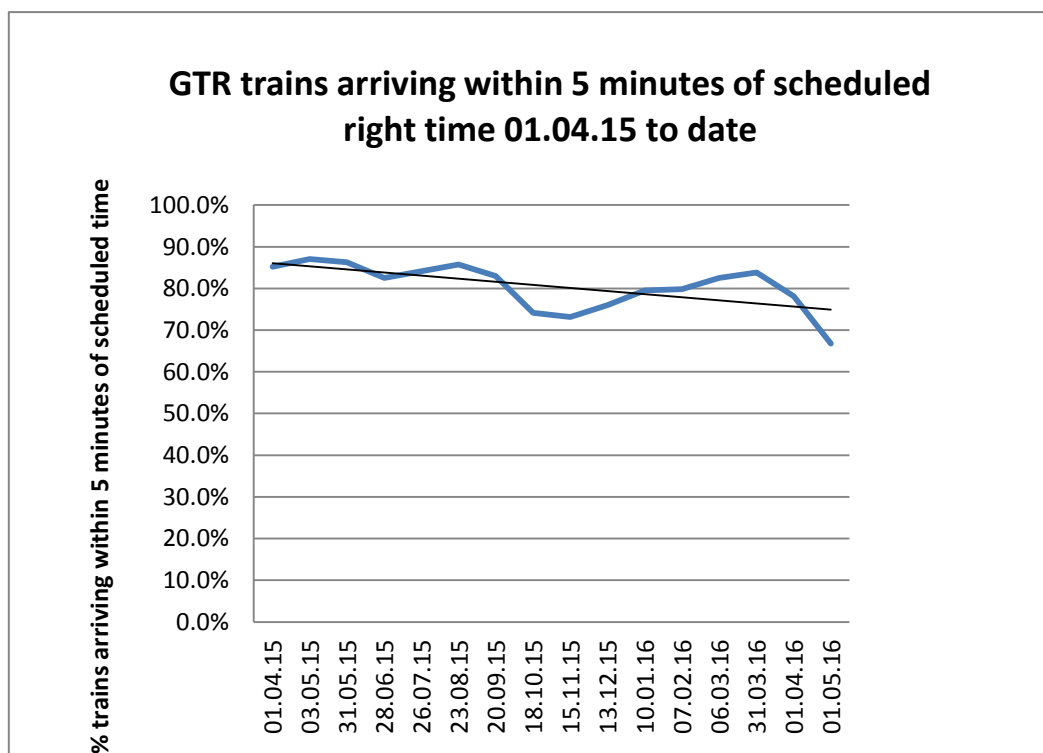
1.7 The graph above shows the number of GTR trains that were either cancelled or significantly late (between 30 and 120 minutes late) for each 4-week period.

1.8 Right time arrivals:



1.9 Right time arrival is a measure of the percentage of trains that arrive at their final destination either on time or early. Right time is defined as less than one minute late (and should not be confused with “on time”, as defined below). The graph above shows the percentage of GTR right time arrivals in each 4-week period.

1.10 Public performance measure:



- 1.11 The public performance measure (PPM) tracks the performance of individual trains against their planned timetable.
- 1.12 Trains which complete their whole route, calling at all timetabled stations, are measured for punctuality at their final destination. Each train is recorded by the automated monitoring system, which logs performance – usually using the signalling equipment. Late trains are banded according to the length of delay in reaching their final destination. In the case of London and South East services, a train is defined as being “on time” if it arrives within five minutes of the planned arrival time. The PPM is the percentage of planned trains which are run and which complete their journeys “on time”. The graph above shows the percentage of GTR trains that arrived within 5 minutes of the scheduled time.
- 1.13 The timetable against which the trains are judged is known as the “plan of the day”. This generally reflects the published timetable as amended for planned engineering works or as a result of major incidents.
- 1.14 The “on time” arrivals should not be confused with the “right time” arrivals set out above.

