

The Rt. Hon. Patrick McLoughlin
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Our Ref:
Your Ref:

16th January 2015

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Dear Mr McLoughlin,

Performance of Thameslink, Southern, Great Northern (TSGN) Franchise

I am writing to follow up a short conversation I understand you had with our Chief Executive Janet Cooke at an event on Wednesday evening.

As you know, London TravelWatch is the statutory body which represents rail users in and around London. We have been very concerned at the exceptional and on-going level of disruption that passengers travelling on the Thameslink route have experienced since the start of the new franchise in September 2014. Southern passengers have also had similar experiences. These problems pre-dated the recent highly publicised disruption at London Bridge.

The performance figures which are available for this period confirm for example that only 53.7% of services operated by the TSGN franchise arrived on time in the period between November 9 and December 6 2014, which fell drastically short of the ORR target of 89.9%. We are concerned that performance within the London 'metro' area is likely to be even worse than this average, with improving performance on the Great Northern route masking even poorer performance on the Thameslink route

Performance on the Southern services was worse still with only 40.9% of trains arriving at their destination on time during period 9.

We highlighted before Christmas our concerns about the poor performance of the TSGN franchise in its first few months. We were subsequently assured by Peter Wilkinson in the Office of Rail Passenger Services that the DfT is fully aware of the problems. Since then many of the Southern passengers have suffered further because of the well publicised problems associated with the engineering works in and around London Bridge.

We recognise that urgent work is now in progress within the industry to review the causes of these major performance shortcomings. A prime objective has to be to ensure that the system is much more resilient and that passengers can use (and indeed plan their lives around) advertised services with confidence. It is however of the first importance that:

1. any revisions to timetables and any withdrawals of service are on the basis of strict necessity

2. there is a commitment to restore the full timetable as soon as possible
3. there is effective, properly monitored and up to date information for passengers, and
4. that palliative measures (eg bus shuttle services) are in place where these would help.

If these requirements are not met, the drastic erosion of trust that has occurred in the last few weeks will be sure to continue.

A second objective is to ensure reasonable compensation for the problems passengers have been experiencing. Charles Horton, Chief Executive Officer of Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) has written to us to acknowledge the scale of the problems and will offer enhanced compensation to passengers travelling on the Thameslink and routes in accordance with its Passenger Charter. He has also confirmed that Southern will make similar compensation available to its season ticket passengers from the start of the current railway reporting period. However the problem remains that:

- i. This compensation is only available to season ticket holders
- ii. The two days' extra travel on offer are not a sufficiently proportionate response to the problems that passengers have endured
- iii. The compensation is only available in respect of delays of more than 30 minutes, which is very difficult to reach on journeys of 15-20 minutes, and
- iv. The compensation will not help Oyster and Contactless card users

We have already made these points informally and will be responding formally to Charles Horton very soon and will keep the DfT informed of progress in this matter.

We think the compensation issue raises some very important issues for London passengers, who pay a higher per mile fare for their journey yet experience delays which represent significant proportions of their total journey time. We have urged GTR to consider these issues further, and hope you and your department will similarly press the case for all passengers to get a fair deal.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Locke
Chair

cc. Baroness Susan Kramer
Claire Perry MP
Robert Goodwill MP
Boris Johnson
Sir Peter Hendy CBE
Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM
Anthony Smith

Baroness Susan Kramer, Minister of State, Department for Transport, Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DR

Claire Perry MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Transport, Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DR

Robert Goodwill MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Transport, Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DR

Boris Johnson, Mayor of London, GLA, City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London, SE1 2AA

Sir Peter Hendy CBE, Transport Commissioner, Transport for London, Windsor House, 42-50 Victoria Street, London, SW1H 0TL

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM, Chair, Transport Committee, GLA, City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London, SE1 2AA

Anthony Smith, Chief Executive, Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London, EC4Y 8JX

Charles Horton
Managing Director
Govia Thameslink Railway Ltd.
Hertford House
1 Cranwood Street
London
EC1V 9QS

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Dear Charles,

Poor performance of the Thameslink Southern Great Northern franchise

Thank you for your letter of 13th January 2015 in response to mine of 22nd December 2014.

We completely understand that this period is proving to be exceptionally difficult for Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) as an operator. It is helpful to have the details set out in your letter of the problems you have been experiencing. It is also helpful to have your recognition of the impact that poor performance has had on passengers over an extended period.

However I do not think that the compensation measures you are proposing are either proportionate or sufficiently comprehensive.

Regular users of your services have been suffering delays and cancellations virtually as a matter of routine – and after a while this starts to have a significant and material effect on people's daily lives. Delays and cancellations on the scale that has been experienced can lead to major problems at work arising from consistent lateness; they mean missed business, health and other appointments; they causes disturbances to family arrangements such as collecting children from child care. The result is real, and continuing, consumer detriment, through serious inconvenience, extra costs and even damage to employment prospects.

Our second concern is that the structure of the proposed compensation package does not effectively compensate passengers who do not use season tickets. This applies particularly to people in the London area, who are more likely to be using Oyster pay as you go or Contactless payment methods. Their journeys are likely to be shorter but the impact of delays and cancellations proportionately larger than those for longer distance travellers. We think GTR should now make a concerted effort to compensate Oyster and contactless users as well as season ticket holders, by opening up discussions with Transport for London (TfL), who have told us that such a scheme is logistically possible. This is likely to be more effective than a system based on individual claims, and would be publicly be more acceptable. It would also help to do something to restore public trust in GTR, which I have to say has taken a serious battering in recent weeks.

Our third concern is that the enhanced compensation only takes into account delays of over 30 minutes. With many journeys being in the 15-25 minute duration in the London area, it is near impossible to be delayed by more than 30 minutes on 12 occasions in a reporting period. With consistent delays from 10-20 minutes on a 20 minute journey, the enhanced compensation will never be applied, but significant and sustained disruption to passengers will accrue. We would like to see consideration made of reducing the threshold for applicable delays to 15 minutes or more for journeys within the Metro area.

London TravelWatch is keen to play a constructive part in resolving these compensation issues. We would also like to contribute to the process of providing a credible and more resilient solution for passengers over the period of the Thameslink works. We would therefore welcome the opportunity to discuss with your staff (and with the DfT and other operators) how the passenger interest can be firmly embedded in any recovery plan that you are required to provide.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Locke
Chair

cc. Dyan Crowther, Chief Operating Officer, Govia Thameslink Railway,
David Scorey, Deputy Managing Director, Southern Railway,
David Statham, Managing Director, Southeastern Railway.
Anthony Smith, Chief Executive, Passenger Focus

Dyan Crowther, Chief Operating Officer, Govia Thameslink Railway, 1st Floor 4 Matthew Parker Street, London, SW1H 9NP.

David Scorey, Deputy Managing Director, Southern Railway, Go-Ahead House, 26-28 Addiscombe Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR9 5GA

David Statham, Managing Director, Southeastern Railway, Friars Bridge Court, 41-45 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8PG

Anthony Smith, Chief Executive, Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London, EC4Y 8JX