

# *Improving performance on Southeastern*

southeastern



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## Introduction

Southeastern operates on one of the busiest railways in the UK and is responsible for over 170 million passenger journeys every year. We know that a punctual and reliable service is vital for the communities we serve and we are wholly focused on delivering just that.

Over the past 18 months however, our services haven't at times, performed as well as you or we expect. Last year there were an unusual amount of external factors affecting our services. The winter storms caused severe damage to the infrastructure, such as the landslides that closed the Hastings line. We also suffered from the effects of broken rails at two key locations including at Lewisham – one of the busiest parts of the network, and the closure of Cannon Street Bridge and signalling problems at Cannon Street.

All these incidents impacted our ability to run the service we expected to deliver.

The Thameslink Programme works at London Bridge have also had a big impact on journeys. The closure of two of the busiest platforms in Europe meant that we had to re-write the timetable and you have had to change how you travel as a result.

In January when we introduced the new timetable, we immediately saw a direct improvement in train punctuality and reliability. The timetable works well and, when there is disruption, we can get the service back to normal far faster than before. In the last six months there has been a 2% improvement in our performance overall.

The benefits the Thameslink Programme will bring in 2018 are enormous – your services will be much more reliable with far fewer delays caused by trains having to wait outside the station, easier connections and a much improved London Bridge station.

But we know there is much more we need to do to improve the service we offer you today and that's why Southeastern and Network Rail – the owner and operator of Britain's railway infrastructure such as track and signaling – are working together to improve the passenger experience.

This plan sets out our priorities for the next year and what we are doing to ensure we improve our performance to meet yours, and our expectations of delivering a good service for our passengers that we can all be proud of.

We have agreed this joint, proactive plan to tackle all the areas that have contributed to the fall in our performance over the past 18 months. We are fully committed to it and have already begun to implement it.

We hope that these plans and through investing in these improvements that you again experience a better train service that you can rely on. We won't rest until we get it right.



David Statham, Managing Director,  
Southeastern



Alasdair Coates, Route Managing Director,  
Network Rail

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## About Southeastern

Southeastern is responsible for the delivery of the train service. This includes train service performance and punctuality and the timetable.

Southeastern is also responsible for the day-to-day management of stations including staffing, ticket sales, cleaning and general maintenance. Southeastern operates 166 stations and our trains serve 176 stations. We see around 640,000 daily (weekday) passenger journeys on our network, which in turn represents 178 million passenger journeys per year – making us one of the busiest national rail operators in the UK.

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## About Network Rail

Network Rail is the not for dividend owner and operator of Britain's railway infrastructure. It is responsible for the maintenance and reliability of all track, signalling, bridges and power supply in which trains operate on.

With funding from the government and commercial property income – it is responsible for all railway investment including enhancement schemes. It owns all stations on the network and is responsible for major repairs and improvements including the provision of lifts. It directly manages what are known as the major stations which on our network include London Bridge, Charing Cross, Cannon Street, and Victoria. It is also responsible for lineside management including fencing, litter and graffiti removal and vegetation clearance.

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## A joint performance strategy

We have agreed a performance strategy that takes into account all the factors that affect our performance and sets out how we intend to rectify or improve them.

We aim to be more proactive, anticipating where and when problems could arise and intervening beforehand to keep the service running reliably.

We have set realistic targets and will publish three-monthly updates on our website to keep you informed of our progress.

### **Our key aims for 2015**

- Reach our target of 90.5% PPM MAA by no later than September 2015
- Maintain or exceed this target throughout the autumn and winter of 2015/16
- Reduce the number of trains running more than 30 minutes late to no more than 0.27%
- Consistently run our trains with the scheduled number of carriages
- Reduce the impact of incidents on the running of our services
- Reduce the effect of autumn and winter on our services



### How we measure performance in the rail industry

The standard method of measuring performance in the rail industry is called the public performance measure (PPM). This measures the percentage of trains that arrive at their destination within 4 minutes and 59 seconds of their scheduled arrival time, having called at all the stations booked in the timetable.

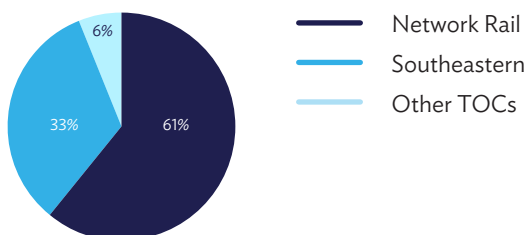
However, in order to iron out any uncharacteristic or seasonal variations, the moving annual average (MAA) for each four-week period takes an average of the performance for the whole year. For example, the figure for May 2015 will average out our performance from June 2014 to May 2015.

### Turning our performance around

The graph of our performance over the past year on the next page illustrates clearly that the work that we have done to fix infrastructure problems. The removal of speed restrictions has helped to improve our performance in the last four to five months.

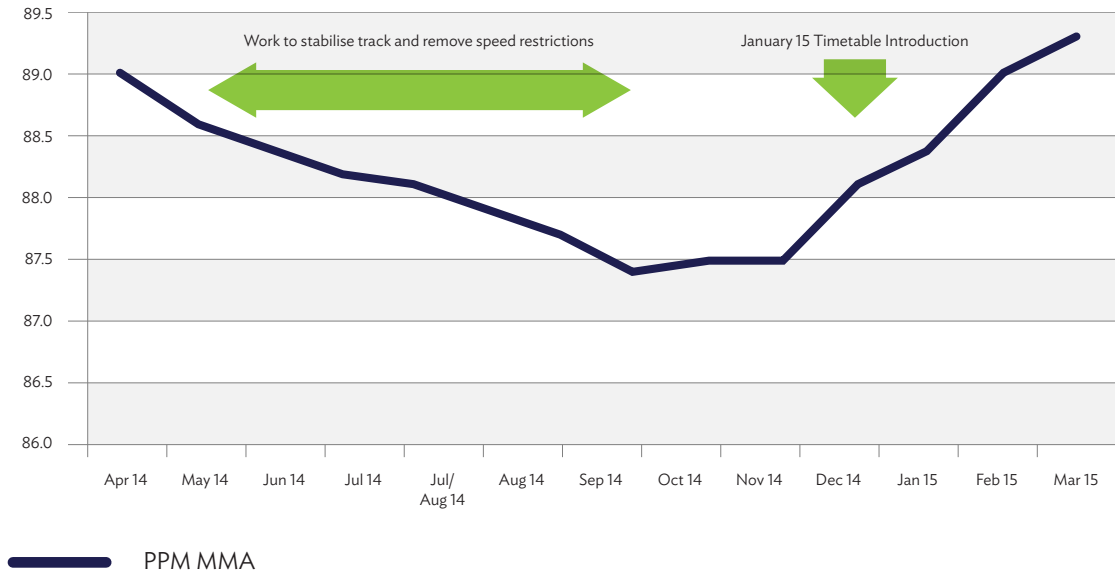
### Responsibility for delays to our service 2014/15

In the rail industry it is standard practice to distinguish whether delays to the service are caused by Network Rail or train operating companies (TOCs). This table reflects the proportion of delays caused by Network Rail, Southeastern, and other train operators.

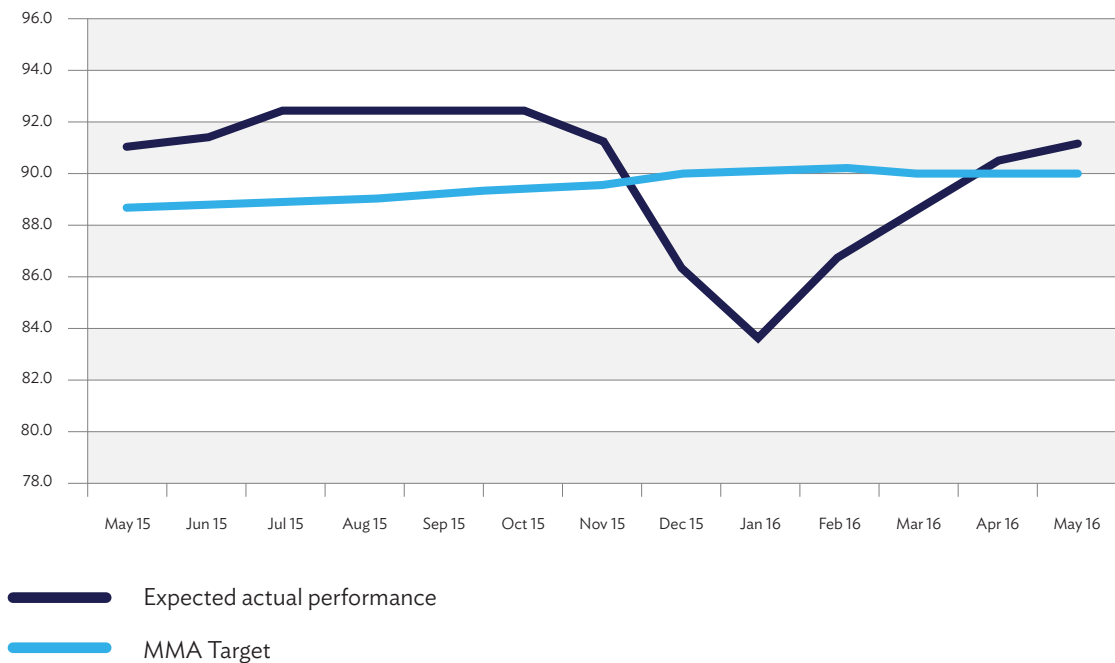


## Punctuality

Southeastern's performance between April 2014 to March 2015



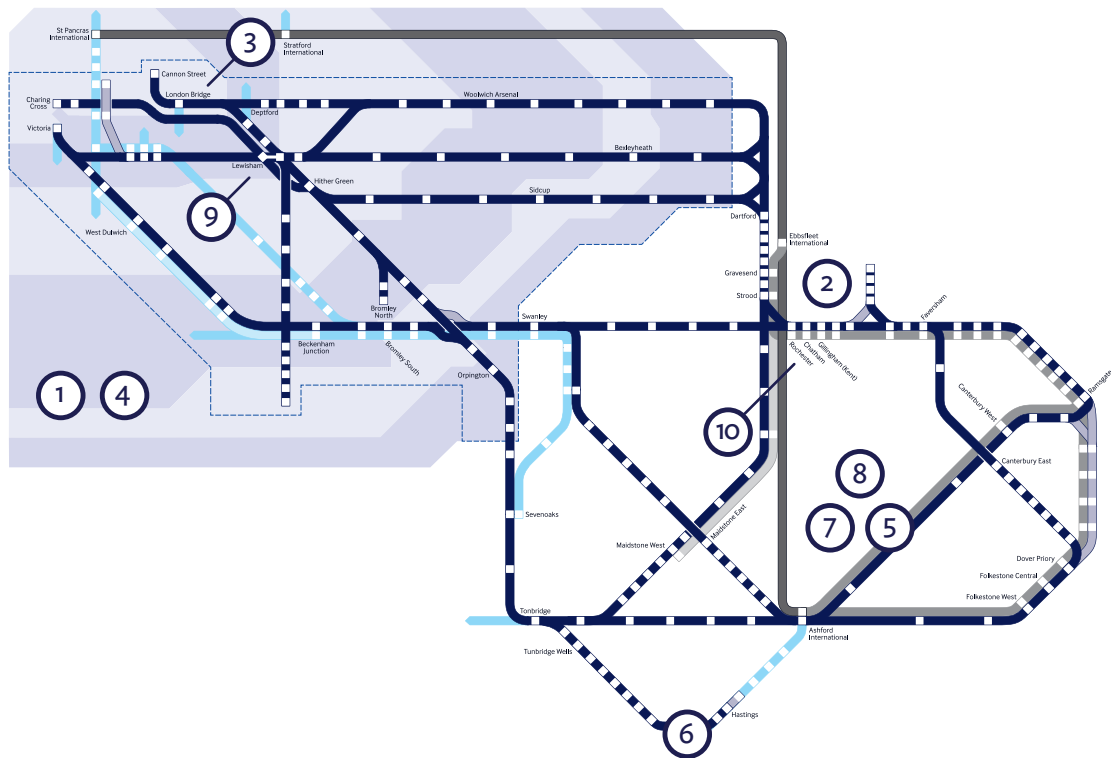
## Our performance targets May 2015 to April 2016



### Autumn and winter drop in performance

All train companies experience a drop in performance in autumn and winter – the amount depends on the severity of the weather. Mild weather causes fewer problems but adhesion problems develop in autumn when fallen leaves stick to damp rails and passing trains compress them into a slippery layer that reduces grip on the rails. Extreme cold and icy conditions can lead to slippery rails and affect the ability of trains to draw power from the conductor rails.

## Investing in crucial initiatives throughout our network



- ① Timetable changes
- ② East Kent signalling upgrades
- ③ £6.5bn Thameslink Programme
- ④ Renewing track circuits and points
- ⑤ Reducing number of speed restrictions
- ⑥ Digging out wet ground
- ⑦ Strengthening embankments
- ⑧ Safer level crossings
- ⑨ Extra staff at interchange stations
- ⑩ New station at Rochester

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## Timetable

Southeastern's services run on one of the largest and busiest networks in the country, with nearly 2,000 trains each weekday serving 176 stations. We run 1922 passenger trains on weekdays, 1690 passenger trains on Saturdays and 968 on Sundays.

If something goes wrong with one train, it can impact not just on those following it, but also on services throughout the network. The key to running a reliable service is a timetable that meets your needs and is also resilient enough to cope with unexpected incidents.

It is our aim to provide the best timetable for our passengers, delivering the optimum combination of both fast, direct and stopping services in order to benefit the greatest number of passengers across the network. However, all timetables are a compromise between the service specification set by the Department for Transport (DfT), the rolling stock and infrastructure resources available, the conflicting, but equally legitimate demands of passengers from all stations served and this year, the loss of capacity at London Bridge.



The timetable we introduced in January 2015 has already brought a noticeable improvement to our performance. And we further refined it in March and May this year, with more changes to come in December to boost reliability and capacity for those particularly busy trains.

One of its features is that we can return faster to a normal service after disruption. In order to speed up trains on the approach to London stations and reduce the effect of queuing to enter the platform, we have provided you with more boarding time at key stations, such as Lewisham, Waterloo East and London Bridge and have allocated more time between trains.

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**The changes include:**

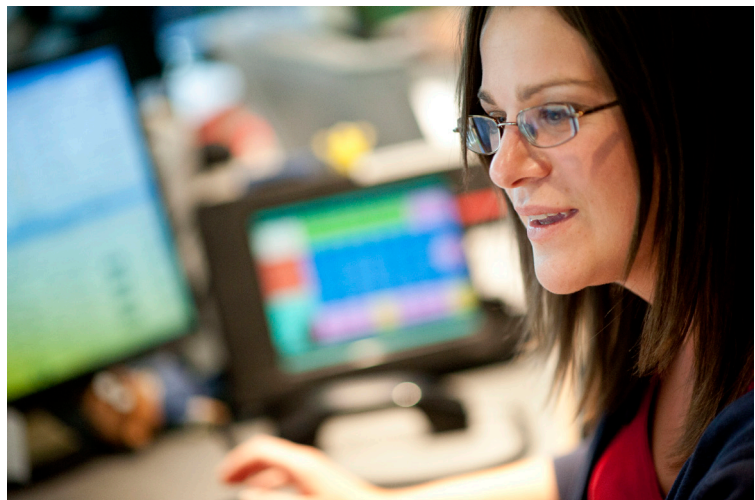
- Two-minute intervals between all trains, rather than some running with only 90-second gaps
- Trains stop for longer at our busiest stations
- Standard turn-around of nine minutes at London terminals, some used to be seven minutes that increased pressure on the service as a whole
- Removing some coupling and decoupling of trains at stations

We have increased the number of trains made up of multiple units on our Metro services, as these are more reliable than those formed of single units. We also have more Metro trains operating in the peak periods that ever before, and now have 12-carriage trains on some services.

All of our trains are in use during peak periods, except those undergoing long-term maintenance. We have changed our maintenance regime to allow as many trains as possible to operate in the peak periods. We are running more trains now than at any other time in the history of the network.

We review the loadings of individual trains regularly and we're collecting passenger feedback about particularly busy services. We need to give careful consideration to any changes before they are implemented because any action to make one train longer will involve making another train shorter, as we don't have spare rolling stock. This will have a knock-on effect for passengers on the train that is made shorter to provide the stock for the change.

In March 2015 we made further timetable changes to increase the amount of seating on exceptionally busy services, and we are now working on new timetables for December 2015 and August 2016.





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## Infrastructure

Much of the UK rail infrastructure is now around 150 years old. To ensure we have a modern infrastructure that we can rely on now and in the future, Network Rail are investing in an extensive programme of upgrades of our signalling systems, tracks and stations.

But we also believe that we should be as proactive as possible in anticipating infrastructure problems and how we manage them. We have introduced an individual maintenance regime for each piece of critical infrastructure, such the Parks Bridge Junction near Lewisham that routes trains to either Cannon Street or Charing Cross. There are around 20 of these vital areas on our network and if they fail they can cause severe delays to your journey.

We have also invested in new, innovative technology that allows us to monitor the condition of tracks and fix problems before they cause delays.

In addition, we are increasing the number of track maintenance teams and now have two extra technical teams at London Bridge to help us react faster when there is a problem.

### **Our extensive programme of infrastructure upgrades includes:**

- Upgrading critical junctions
- Replacing key components of points and tracks in London
- Strengthening embankments and flood-prone ground
- Improving drainage systems to reduce flooding
- Testing new information boards that tell drivers when they are clear of restricted speed areas
- Replacing the 1950s signalling system through the Medway towns with a modern one controlled from a new centre at Gillingham
- Installing technology that detects obstacles at seven level crossings to make them safer
- A new station at Rochester



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## Work on the wider railway

The work at London Bridge, part of the government-sponsored £6.5 billion Thameslink Programme, means that one of the four approach tracks is currently out of use and platforms are being demolished and rebuilt. This inevitably has an impact on our services and we have had to make some changes to our timetable to ensure we can run trains on time, given the restrictions.

But when it is finished in 2018 you will have a much more reliable train service. There will be fewer delays caused by trains held outside the station waiting for a platform. You will be able to go to a greater variety of destinations with a single change at London Bridge, and the new station will have step-free access to all platforms.

In addition, the current work on Crossrail affects the eastern parts of our London routes. It includes rebuilding Abbey Wood station, relaying some lines and renovating Plumstead Tunnel. This will be completed in 2018.



### Managing the impact of major works

Following the problems in April 2015 at London Bridge, which were caused by the overrunning of Network Rail's engineering work, a central engineering control point for major weekend works has been set up. This means we can fully coordinate all areas of work and give you up-to-date, accurate information.

We will have additional staff on duty the morning after engineering work, such as train crew controllers, signallers and maintenance staff to make sure there is as little impact on our services as possible. And we will have extra station staff to give you information and help.

The work on our extensive upgrade programme in East Kent will take place at night and weekends, so minimising any disruption to your regular services. And on some lines we will start work at 2300 rather than 0100 or 0200 one day a week, which allows us to do far more basic maintenance than before and also cuts down on weekend maintenance work.

We will always make sure that we tell you in good time when work is happening and any potential effect on your service.

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## Our trains

A well-maintained train fleet is vital for good performance, the more trains that are out of service due to faults, the more pressure it puts on our service. So Southeastern is changing how we manage and maintain our fleet in order to reduce the number of failures by 5% year on year.

We are introducing quality control engineers at depots to improve the identification of faults and the quality of maintenance. And we are giving our skilled systems engineers more advanced training to further improve their maintenance work. We are improving the system our drivers use to report problems on trains, so that we can fix faults overnight wherever possible.

Our ongoing programme of renovating our trains will make them more reliable and your journeys more comfortable. We are replacing the remote condition monitoring system on all our Class 375 fleet. This gives us a lot of live information about the trains so we can track any faults as they develop and resolve them as quickly as possible.

We are also giving the Class 375 trains a mid-life refresh – at the rate of one a month. You will find them much more comfortable, with all seats given a deep dry-clean and new seat bases, new carpets, more standard class seating on some trains as the amount of First Class seating will be reduced and situated in one carriage only, better toilets, and a total repaint of the outside of the trains.

We are upgrading the accessibility features on our Networker trains, which means there will be a disabled toilet and some seating removed to provide more space for wheelchairs.



### Drivers

While we have a full complement of drivers, it takes up to 18 months to train a driver so we are continually recruiting to make sure we always have enough drivers. We are currently recruiting for and training 110 drivers in preparation for the new timetable in August 2016, with 45 ready to join our team over the next six months.

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## Managing day-to-day operations

Our employees on the front line, whether on stations or in our control centre, play a critical part in managing our service on a day-to-day basis.

It is crucial that you are able to get on and off trains with minimum delay so trains can leave promptly and run on schedule, and our station staff play a key role in managing this. So we are investing in 21 extra employees at interchange stations and have already deployed extra employees at London Bridge and Cannon Street.

Employees from both our organisations work side-by-side in our control centre and we have a set of standardised procedures. This means that when there is an incident they can agree quickly on how to deal with it in order to minimise its effect on your journey.

We are also moving our engineering planners to our control centre so that when there is serious disruption they can minimise the impact of trains being displaced and make sure trains are in the right place for the following morning's peak service.

We are working to reduce delays caused by external factors such as trespassers and crime, and have strong working partnerships with the British Transport Police and the Land Sheriff Organisation.

We have also employed an extra 75 employees at our ticket gates as we know this reduces ticketless travel, vandalism and anti-social behavior.



### **Seasonal weather conditions**

Autumn and winter weather causes delays across the UK network. Ice forms an insulating layer on the conductor rails, which are the rails that power trains. And leaves can become compacted, creating a slippery coating on the rails, making it necessary for drivers to brake earlier and drive more cautiously.

We are working hard to overcome the problems this creates on our routes. We have recently completed our installation of conductor rail heating. This autumn we will invest in more specialist trains that treat the rails with high-pressure water jets and gel. And we continue to ensure we have training in place for drivers to increase their confidence in adverse conditions.

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## Improving our communication with you

We have recently started publishing information on the availability of seats for each service on Southeastern's website. This means that, if you can be flexible about the time you travel, you can choose a train that has more capacity.

We are distributing more than 1,600 tablets to our onboard and station staff, so you can rely on them for up-to-the-minute information on how your service is running.

We have installed 20 additional customer information screens at bigger stations to give you up-to-date information on any delays. And we are installing more screens to provide drivers and crew with up-to-the-minute information on track conditions in autumn and winter.

Our Twitter feed is now staffed 24-hours a day, every day, from our central control centre so you have constant access to accurate, live travel information. And we are continually improving our website and app 'Southeastern On Track'.



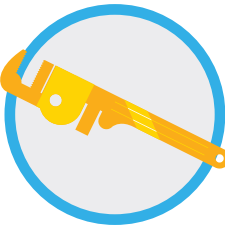
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## Our main initiatives to improve performance



### Timetable

- Major changes in January 2015 Regular intervals between trains
- Reduced coupling and uncoupling of trains at stations
- Multiple-car trains



### Infrastructure

- East Kent upgrades
- £6.5bn Thameslink Programme
- Strengthening embankments and flood-prone ground
- Reducing the number of speed restrictions
- Innovative monitoring technology



### Our trains

- More skilled engineering staff
- Better monitoring for faults
- Train upgrade and renovation programme



### Drivers

- 110 new fully trained drivers

### Managing day-to-day operations

- Coordinated procedures in our control centre
- Extra station staff
- 75 additional staff at our ticket gates



### Autumn and winter

- Conductor rail heaters installation
- Additional specialist trains to treat rails
- Additional gel applicator machines
- Additional training for drivers



### Communicating with you

- Seat availability information on Southeastern website
- 1,600 tablets for front line staff
- 20 additional passenger information screens
- 24/7 Twitter feed

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## **Next steps**

We understand that getting you to your destinations on time is of the utmost importance. We remain committed to improving performance across the network and although we are pleased that in the last six months we have seen improvements, we also know there is still more to do, and the measures outlined here demonstrated our commitment delivering a better service.

We are also committed to keeping you informed on the progress of our plans. Every four weeks we will publish information on our performance on each line of route and how that compares to the targets we have set ourselves; we will tell you how busy your service is and how many seats are normally available; and we will keep you up-to-date on all our initiatives through Southeastern's customer magazine.

In the meantime, you can visit our websites and follow us on Twitter @SE\_Railway for more information.

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**[southeasternrailway.co.uk](https://southeasternrailway.co.uk)**

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