

21 November 2017

Dear stakeholder

As you know we are modernising and future proofing the biggest rail network in the country, with new trains operating on new improved infrastructure with new working practices to allow its continued growth.

A crucial component of this is the complete redesign of the timetables for Thameslink, Great Northern, Gatwick Express and Southern - the biggest overhaul of the rail service in the south of England since the sixties - to provide more capacity, new journey opportunities, better spacing of trains, as well as improved reliability.

This is a huge task which has been in progress for a number of years, including a very detailed consultation with railway stakeholders and our passengers. The latest phase of the consultation saw over 10,000 responses which have been reviewed by our dedicated and experienced 2018 timetable planning team. Where we can, we are incorporating suggested modifications to accommodate local wishes whilst balancing these with the overall requirements of the timetable specification. We are also very grateful for the thoughtful input we have had from a range of stakeholders across the network – they have taken a very keen interest and are helping shape the timetables.

While the final timetable details won't be confirmed and available until the new year, I would at this stage like to share some key decisions that have been taken around the phasing in of these service improvements that we expect customers to experience over the next couple of years. This remains subject to the Network Rail infrastructure works being completed across the route to enable the new timetable to be fully operational.

We have been asked by the Department for Transport, in designing our proposals, to consider how best to de-risk the introduction of such a major upgrade. In this respect we have developed the full timetable introduction through a series of incremental phases.

In total the first phase will immediately give passengers 70% of the programme's overall capacity benefits, which include:

- Added capacity into London for 35,000-40,000 more passengers in each three-hour peak across the whole GTR network. As a comparison, 68,000 people travel into London Bridge station between 8am and 9am.
- The full implementation of a new Southern timetable addressing some of the existing structural problems within the current timetable, bringing passengers greater levels of reliability.
- New cutting-edge Class 700 Thameslink trains across an expanded Thameslink network.
- New north-south cross-London connections for Cambridge and Peterborough (via Gatwick), Littlehampton, Greenwich, Dartford, Medway Towns, East Grinstead and Horsham.
- New links to Gatwick Airport, Eurostar at St Pancras and interchange at Farringdon for Elizabeth line Crossrail services across central London (from December 2019).

- Return of cross-London Thameslink services at London Bridge – up to 12 trains per hour in the peak, including Bedford to Brighton services.

Further improvements will then be delivered broadly every six months as part of three additional consecutive timetable changes, adding still more services to the cross-London Thameslink network and, finally, new routes between Cambridge and Maidstone East so that, by December 2019, there will be 24 trains per hour across the centre of London at the busiest times – a tube-like service with trains every 2-3 minutes.

Phasing the introduction of the new timetable in this way allows us to bring benefits incrementally, allowing the chance to embed them before the next timetable change. By de-risking the build-up of new services we will be able to bed down changes both to the service and to the new infrastructure that Network Rail is providing, giving a more resilient service to passengers.

We are busy finalising the details and are briefing our stakeholders about the planned changes, including our user groups, councils, business stakeholders and politicians. As part of this effort, we are also preparing relevant customer communications in order to provide sufficient notice to plan future journeys.

I include below a summary of the currently anticipated phased Thameslink implementation programme:-

#### **May 2018 –**

The expanded Thameslink network will provide the following connections:

- New direct Thameslink routes through London between:
  - Cambridge and Brighton
  - Horsham and Peterborough
  - Luton and Kent Medway Towns (e.g. Greenwich and Dartford)
  - Littlehampton and Bedford
  - East Grinstead and Bedford
- Faster, seamless journeys: Cambridge to Gatwick Airport 20% faster; Greenwich to Luton Airport 37% faster; 10-15 minutes quicker to Canary Wharf and Paddington via Crossrail (Elizabeth Line) at Farringdon
- More spacious trains: new Siemens-built Class 700 Thameslink trains, many the size of 21 double decker buses.

18 trains per hour in the peak between St Pancras and Blackfriars: services from Cambridge to Maidstone East operate between Cambridge and London King's Cross; Southeastern continues to operate Maidstone East to Blackfriars. *This will double the number of trains on the Catford Loop (between Bickley and Denmark Hill, via Catford) and two trains per hour will continue across central London, from Orpington rather than Sevenoaks as today delivering major benefits for passengers.*

**December 2018** – 20 trains per hour in the peak between St Pancras and Blackfriars: additional 1 train per hour Cambridge-Brighton; additional 1 train in peak Littlehampton – Bedford (50% increase on existing service).

**May 2019** – 22 trains per hour in the peak between St Pancras and Blackfriars: Welwyn Garden City – King's Cross trains and Blackfriars – Sevenoaks trains run as joined-up Welwyn Garden City – Sevenoaks services.

**December 2019** – 24 trains per hour in the peak between St Pancras and Blackfriars: Cambridge – King's Cross trains (2 trains per hour) extended to/from Maidstone East.

I am sure you will agree that this plan provides the much needed capacity to, and through London, opening up new journey opportunities to new destinations. The planned timetable is the key enabler to unlocking the benefits of the government's £7bn improvement programme.

The next key milestone for the programme is this Christmas-New Year when Network Rail will complete its work at London Bridge. For three years our trains have been using a diversionary route between East Croydon and London Blackfriars, significantly supressing train performance on the line. The culmination of these major works will allow us to run through the station once again, after all our drivers are re-trained across the route.

I very much look forward to the next couple of years when passengers will gradually see more and more improvements being delivered on their network.

Kind regards,



**Nick Brown**  
Chief Operating Officer