



**Promoting Britain's
Railway
for Passengers
and Freight**

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Dear Mike,

Southeastern December 2014 Timetable Consultation

Railfuture is a national voluntary organisation structured in England as twelve regional branches, and two national branches in Wales and Scotland. We are completely independent of all political parties, trades unions and commercial interests, funded entirely from our membership. We campaign for improved rail services for passengers and freight. Whilst pro-rail, we are not anti car or aviation. This reply is a summary of responses from our London & South East Branch and Kent Division membership.

We appreciate the difficulties in trying to work around the major works at London Bridge and accept that this cannot be achieved with significant disruption for the majority of travellers through that station.

We agree in principle with the four objectives :

- To provide the best possible service during Thameslink construction work at London Bridge.
- To try and meet (stakeholders) requests for service improvements put to us during stakeholder meetings and our Meet the Managers sessions.
- For the timetable to deliver the same level of performance as today's timetable, despite the reduction in infrastructure capacity associated with the Thameslink Programme.
- The need to work within Government affordability constraints while still offering the best possible service to passengers.

Additional objectives for consideration :

- Further improvements in the handling of unplanned disruption are required.
- Communication of changes is key
- Flexibility . where planned service changes lead to significant problems, there does need to be flexibility to make further changes to rectify the problems.

We recognize that there has been some significant lateral thinking and the use of Javelins to replace other units on the East Kent Coast and to provide a loop service via the North Kent Coast is the stand-out item. We welcome this response to suggestions we made, alongside Trains4Deal and others in previous consultations regarding the Direct Award Franchise. We also support the approach to DfT to allow the fares at the four listed stations to avoid the HS1 premium. As an incentive to encouraging use of St. Pancras and HS1 in place of London Bridge, it would be useful if this concession was extended to other stations.

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Pattern of service – We support the proposals as identified and welcome the benefits for passengers. However we would also want to support detailed proposals from others to look again at the distribution of services to minimize gaps between services and avoid like-routed services leaving within a short period and an extended gap for the next service.

There is no doubt that this will be a major change for the majority of passengers and it there needs to be a high priority given to :

Communication : Before, during and prior to the Charing Cross platforms becoming available again and Cannon Street ones closing.

Managing Further Disruption : With the amount of change required, there will need to be a step change in the way that Southeastern handle unplanned disruption. A full scenario of possible disruption and alternative/recovery actions should be developed and rehearsed (at least desk based). Clear communication on disruption – cause, recovery actions/timescales and alternatives, will need to be established and kept up to date.

Flexibility : These changes need to be monitored and managed closely so that any unforeseen impacts can be assessed quickly and changes considered and implemented quickly if appropriate.

The timetable consultation does not mention where services will be strengthened. After many years of disruption to many of the routes into London terminals, we do expect a large number of 12 coach services to maximize the seats and overall capacity.

We hope you find these comments useful and constructive.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Fribbins,
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