



# Department for Transport

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Council Offices, 92 Albert Road  
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Our Ref: 229104  
Your Ref:

12 July 2018



Dear Ms Walsh,

Thank you for your letter of 4 June 2018 to the Rt. Hon Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State for Transport, about GTR timetable issues. Your letter has been forwarded on to the Passenger Services team for reply.

We appreciate you taking the time to share your views on this issue. It may be helpful if we set out some context on the points you have raised.

We appreciate the concerns of Horley passengers in regards to the loss of direct services to London Victoria. In the off peak period, this journey now requires passengers to change trains. In the morning peak, there are now 10 direct services from Horley to Victoria, compared to before the timetable change when there were 13 direct services. However, in the evening peak there were previously 9 direct services from Victoria to Horley, where now there are 11 direct services.

While we accept that the loss of off-peak direct services to Victoria is disappointing for some Horley passengers, the substantial increase in Thameslink services (to London Bridge, Blackfriars, the City, Farringdon and St Pancras) will provide many passengers with an alternative route into the centre of London. Once the full timetable is operating, this will include four off-peak Thameslink trains per hour from Horley, replacing the two trains per hour which previously terminated at London Bridge. In addition, Horley will receive a half hourly Thameslink service during the morning and evening peaks.

In reference to the timetable issues, the Department acknowledges that over the past weeks passengers on Govia Thameslink Railway's (GTR's) Great Northern, Southern and Thameslink services have faced totally unsatisfactory levels of service, and the Secretary of State apologises to passengers that have experienced and are experiencing disruption.

Both the Secretary of State and Minister of State are continuing to monitor the situation very closely and the Department's overriding priority is to restore the reliability of service across the network. We are taking action to resolve the problems as quickly as possible, to

compensate passengers appropriately, and to learn the lessons that will prevent this happening again in the future.

Please be assured that since the introduction of the May timetable, the Department and the industry have been working round the clock to restore the reliability of the service across the network. Hour by hour, Department officials are in contact with GTR and Network Rail to work to improve the service to passengers.

The Secretary of State is deeply frustrated that what should have been a highly beneficial development for passengers, with the introduction of new services, new routes and expanded capacity, has had such a poor start.

This was the most significant timetable recast in a generation - designing a robust, well-integrated timetable that works for the majority of passengers is highly complex and timetabling practitioners have worked hard for more than a year on the challenges involved. We were aware that there may be some disruption in the early days of any new timetable change of this size, however, the scale of the problem has far outstripped any expectation. The Department is determined that this is not repeated in the future.

Network Rail was far too late in finalising planned timetable changes and this must not happen again. GTR was not sufficiently prepared to manage a timetable change of this scale either. The rail industry has collectively failed to deliver for the passengers it serves.

The process of introducing the new timetable was overseen for the last two years by an Industry Readiness Board, made up of Network Rail, Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and the train operating companies and an Independent Assurance Panel. Both of these groups have told the Department that they had been given no information to suggest that the new timetable should not be implemented as planned – albeit with some likely early issues as the timetable bedded down.

Indeed as few as three weeks before the timetable was to be implemented, GTR themselves assured the Secretary of State personally they were ready to implement the changes. Clearly this was wrong, and it is totally unacceptable.

In regard to driver numbers and training, we should explain that GTR does have enough drivers. However, the significant delay in Network Rail agreeing the timetable has directly impacted on GTR's ability to re-work train crew schedules and deliver driver training on the new routes and on new trains.

To give passengers more confidence, GTR are removing more services in advance from their timetable rather than on the day, and reducing weekend services to pre-May levels, which will be in place until a full re-planning of driver resourcing can take place. From 15 July GTR aim to introduce a full interim timetable across their network as the next step to improve reliability and performance for Thameslink and Great Northern passengers. This will allow GTR to slowly build up services to the new full timetable. In the meanwhile, Thameslink and Great Northern have declassified first class on services, to help ease overcrowding on the network. Details of the new interim timetable were published on Friday 6 July.

An inquiry by independent rail regulator the ORR into the May timetable implementation is now underway. The inquiry will consider why the industry as a whole failed to produce and implement an effective timetable. Its findings will be shared as early as possible with the Secretary of State and the rail industry, so that lessons can be learned in advance of

future major timetable changes. The ORR aims to publish the final report by the end of the year.

In the future, the Department will insist on a gradual approach to timetable change wherever possible and not the significant changes that we have seen this past month.

Passengers are encouraged to apply to GTR for Delay Repay compensation for affected journeys. On 4 July GTR announced a special compensation scheme for Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern passengers. The scheme will be designed to refund season ticket holders up to one month where they have suffered severe disruption and up to one week where disruption to services has been moderate.

Further details of the scheme, the passenger categories and stations eligible for compensation will be set out by GTR very soon. We expect the scheme to open for claims in the coming weeks for timetable disruption suffered between 20 May 2018 and 28 July 2018.

The scheme will work in a similar fashion to last year's Southern compensation scheme, and GTR will be implementing administrative processes that worked well for customers and helped make claiming a refund as easy as possible. When the details of the compensation scheme are public, GTR have been asked to clearly communicate with passengers how they can make their claim and ensure the process is straightforward.

We acknowledge that this is small comfort to you when things are not working as they should, but please be assured that the Department will continue to do everything possible to ensure passengers get the service they deserve.

Thank you again for your letter and for raising your concerns with us. We hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely

**Correspondence Team, Passenger Services, Rail Group**

