

GTR December 2015 timetable consultation

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Thameslink

Great Northern

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Introduction

GTR (Govia Thameslink Railway) has exciting plans that will transform travel in London and the South East, maximising the investment by the Government sponsored Thameslink Programme. At the heart of this is a brand new timetable which will improve performance and support the new journey opportunities being introduced in phases between 2015 and 2018.

This is a huge, once in a generation undertaking and GTR is consulting with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure the December 2015 timetable and beyond meets existing and future passenger needs of as many people and communities as possible. Due to the complexities of the timetable and interaction of different operators and service groups, it is never possible to deliver the perfect timetable for everyone but we have listened to people's comments and made what changes and improvements we can. The proposed changes for December 2015 will build the foundations for a new timetable in 2018 when an expanded Thameslink network will be introduced.

1. The Consultation Process

1.1. Why consult?

To ensure planned train services match passenger and stakeholder requirements as much as possible, GTR consulted on proposed changes to **off peak** services for the December 2015 timetable.

The 2018 timetable will be consulted on at a later date.

1.2. Who we consulted with?

We engaged with a range of stakeholders including rail user groups, MPs, businesses near key stations, members of the Southern Passenger Panel, and Southern and Gatwick Express on-line customers.

1.3. How did we consult?

The 12 week consultation process started on Friday 7 November 2014 and closed on Friday 30 January 2015. The consultation document was available on Thameslink, Southern and Gatwick Express websites and an email sent to over 400 stakeholders to alert them of the process and document. An email was also sent to 20,000 Southern and Gatwick Express passengers.

A hard copy of the document was made available on request.

A press release was issued to the media.

A social media campaign was also used to ensure a wide coverage.

The document comprised 15 questions covering key areas of the proposed timetable and a "catch all" question of "any further comments".

Targeted reminder emails were sent to stakeholders, members of Southern passenger panel, Southern and Gatwick Express customers during the week commencing 12 January 2015.

Reminder tweets were sent week commencing 19 January 2015.

Individual meetings were arranged with stakeholders on request.

Responses were accepted via email or hard copy.

1.4. We have received over 2500 responses. The vast majority of these were from individuals and the remainder from organisations such as rail industry stakeholders, local authorities, MPs, special interest groups and passenger interest groups. Further information about the organisations that responded to the consultation can be found in annex B (formal responses) to this document.

1.5. Having considered the responses to the consultation, GTR made recommendations to the Department for Transport.

2. Respondents' Views: Key Themes

2.1 The responses to each of the 16 consultation questions within the Consultation document are summarised in Annex A.

Below are the key themes.

Overall there was broad support for the proposals.

Not all responses contained an opinion on each question.

2.2 Theme A: Preston Park (Q8)

There has been a high response rate in relation to Preston Park (nearly 2,000 signatures were collected on a petition) where many respondents were concerned at the loss of all train services between Preston Park and Coastway destinations and those to London Bridge.

Whilst London Bridge is being rebuilt, it will not be possible to provide both a direct service to London Bridge and direct services to London Blackfriars and beyond to St Pancras International, St Albans, Luton and Bedford. Since January 2015 a train service has been provided between Brighton and London Bridge however this suffers from poor time keeping because of short turnaround times at Brighton and London Bridge. This means that any delay can easily make the train lose its slot in the timetable for the return journey which then makes the delay even greater and affect many other services.

The timetable changes in December 2015 will address these issues but, in order to achieve this, stops at Preston Park have been transferred from London Bridge to Bedford trains. It must be stressed that London Bridge services will be reintroduced during 2018 when the rebuilding of London Bridge is complete.

Regarding the Coastway services, the intention was to provide a faster journey to and from London Victoria where most passengers travel. In comparison, the number of through journeys between Preston Park and Coastway destinations is low. In light of the local concerns, we have now reviewed the plan and will retain a stop at Preston Park in the London Victoria to Littlehampton services to the same level as enjoyed today. This will mean, however, a journey time improvement between Preston Park and London Victoria will not be possible and the journey time will remain the same. There will be no impact on the proposed reduction in journey times for the other trains. The proposal affecting Portslade and Lancing did not generate a significant response therefore these proposals will be incorporated into our plans to enable a reduction in journey time between London, Worthing and Littlehampton.

2.3 Theme B: Cooksbridge (Q16)

There is strong support locally for the introduction of more regular weekday and weekend services at Cooksbridge. This has been backed by petitions organised by the local station partnership group and other stakeholders suggesting access to a regular train service would be welcome.

However at this time an hourly off peak stopping service cannot be provided mainly because there is insufficient time to include a stop due to the limited turnaround times at Eastbourne. It was suggested that a regular service may be provided by splitting stops between Plumpton and Cooksbridge so each station would receive a two hourly service. However, this was deemed unacceptable with local stakeholders who GTR met during the consultation period. We shall continue to liaise with local stakeholders on this issue. However it is not possible to implement any changes in December 2015.

2.4 Theme C: Arun Valley, Reigate, Tonbridge, Redhill and Coulsdon South (Q7/10/11/12)

There have been a significant number of responses in connection with our proposals to alter off peak services which currently serve Redhill and the surrounding routes. The services changes proposed in this area are designed to support:

- Performance improvements throughout the route
- Provide adequate capacity for the Redhill route
- Introduce new journey opportunities between Redhill and St Pancras International in advance of 2018
- Reduce journey times between Tonbridge, Reigate and London and retain existing journey times between Redhill and London.

There have been a number of common themes raised, these are addressed below:

1. Turnaround times at Reigate and Tonbridge

There have been particular concerns raised regarding proposed short turnaround times at Reigate and Tonbridge. To address this legitimate concern, we propose to swap the origins of trains operating towards London Victoria which means that there will be a much improved turnaround time at both Reigate and Tonbridge of around 30 minutes.

2. Loss of direct off peak journey opportunities between Coulsdon South and Reigate and introduction of a new service to London Victoria

Whilst we understand the concerns of Coulsdon passengers regarding the off-peak changes we will be introducing in December 2015, the aim is to meet the existing and future passenger needs of as many people and communities as possible. It is never possible to deliver the perfect timetable for everyone, but during an extensive consultation period we listened to people's comments and made changes where possible while at the same time laying the foundations for 2018 when an expanded Thameslink network will be introduced.

Coulsdon is affected by the off-peak changes we are making to Arun Valley and Redhill services. Arun Valley services will no longer call at Redhill to provide faster journey times. To maintain a fast Victoria service at Redhill, Reigate and Tonbridge services which currently run to London Bridge and call at Coulsdon South are diverted to Victoria running non-stop between Redhill and East Croydon. This will also improve performance, increase capacity at Redhill and reduce journey times between Tonbridge, Reigate and London.

Coulsdon South still retains four trains an hour to London. There will continue to be two trains an hour to London Bridge and to replace the Reigate and Tonbridge services there will be two Blackfriars services every hour. Until 2018 these services are unable to call at London Bridge. Coulsdon Town retains two trains an hour to London Bridge. We accept that this is not the outcome passengers at Coulsdon wanted, however our research when constructing the timetable showed that the number of people who would be adversely affected by this change is far outweighed by the numbers who will benefit.

3. Loss of direct off peak train services between Redhill and Chichester, Portsmouth and Southampton

As part of developing our proposals, we analysed current levels of journeys and passenger numbers levels (as at 2012 and again in 2014) and listened to stakeholder views when writing our bid to ensure we developed a train service which matched most people's travel patterns. In particular from Redhill, the number of people who would be affected by this change is low at just over 200 passengers per day compared with those who would directly benefit which is far higher at 20,000 passengers per day. In addition the number of passengers connecting with Kent services at Redhill, whilst important for some passengers, is also extremely low.

The same number of trains will be provided from London (split between two London Victoria, two London Bridge and two Thameslink route trains from Bedford serving several Central London stations). In addition the same number of trains will be provided to Reigate, Tonbridge, Gatwick Airport and Three Bridges. Trains beyond Three Bridges towards Horsham will be reduced to two trains per hour (from four) and those travelling beyond Horsham towards Bognor Regis, Portsmouth and Southampton will be required to change trains.

It is for this reason our proposed changes have been designed this way. We do recognise for those passengers who are directly affected a change of train is inconvenient however for the vast majority of users the change will be beneficial.

To provide more connection opportunities, it is proposed that the new Bedford to Gatwick Airport services are extended to and from Three Bridges to provide enhanced connectivity with other train services and other modes of transport whilst avoiding the need to always change at Gatwick Airport.

4. Calls for regular direct train services between Redhill and Brighton

It is not possible to introduce regular train services between Redhill and Brighton beyond those already in place without compromising the integrity of the timetable, creating a significant risk of delays and undermining the benefits proposed. We do accept that there are a number of passengers who travel between these locations however the level of service will remain as it is at present.

5. Withdrawal of Tattenham Corner to Purley shuttle trains

Following poor performance of London Bridge services after the introduction of the January 2015 timetable, the Tattenham Corner to Purley shuttle trains were withdrawn with the Department for Transport's agreement, from 19 January 2015. These trains were introduced in 2008 and passenger numbers have been very low.

As a result, the Department for Transport did not specify these trains as part of the Franchise Agreement and will not be reinstated.

3 GTR Response to the Consultation

Objective for the consultation

- 3.1** The key objective was to ensure the proposed December 2015 timetable meets the needs of our passengers (existing and potential) and stakeholders as much as possible, in December 2015 and beyond.

Next steps

- 3.2** This report has been shared with the Department for Transport with recommendations from GTR.
- 3.3** The Department for Transport is supportive of the timetable introduction with the service patterns developed prior to and following the consultation.
- 3.4** An update was provided to stakeholders in August. This document was made available on our website in September.

Working with stakeholders

- 3.5** We will continue to work with stakeholders to identify opportunities and improve our service proposition for the respective area.
- 3.6** Many comments called for additional services beyond our current plans. These ideas need to be considered to ensure they are operationally and commercially sustainable and would need to be approved by the Department for Transport.

Annex A: Responses to the consultation questions

This chapter summarises the consultation responses provided for each of the 16 questions asked in the GTR consultation document.

A summary of the responses for each question is provided. This encapsulates the full range of views, which reflect the interests of the broad spectrum of stakeholders consulted.

1. What do you think about these proposals noting that it is not possible to serve both London Bridge and London Blackfriars stations from Preston Park, Hassocks and Wivelsfield until 2018 when the Thameslink works are completed?

A petition in connection with proposed Preston Park changes generated nearly 2000 signatures calling for the same level of service to be provided. With the ongoing infrastructure works at London Bridge until 2018, it will not be possible to maintain direct off peak journeys to and from Preston Park, Hassocks or Wivelsfield with both London Bridge and London Blackfriars.

The current London Bridge to Brighton off peak service introduced in January 2015 has, so far proved difficult to provide a reliable and consistent service due to insufficient turnaround time at both London Bridge and Brighton to recover from minor delays. On many occasions trains have terminated short of destination at East Croydon or missed stops to recover from delays. Our proposed timetable changes retains an off peak service between Brighton and London Bridge with improved turnaround times at Brighton which will help address reliability issues and provide a more consistent service for passengers. It is therefore our intention that the proposed changes will be implemented to support the wider improvements across the route.

In 2018 it is our intention that trains between Brighton and London Bridge will be extended to and from Cambridge.

2. Do you support the new journey opportunities between Brighton, Gatwick Airport, Central London, Stevenage, Letchworth and Cambridge?

The overwhelming majority of respondents agree that a through train between Brighton and Cambridge in 2018 will be highly beneficial and should feature as part of the final expanded Thameslink network. This new direct journey opportunity is one of the key benefits of the Thameslink Programme. To fully realise the benefits of this new service, changes need to be made to the timetable in 2015 to prepare for this new link.

As part of these changes the current Three Bridges to Bedford trains will be making more stops (Redhill, Merstham, Coulsdon South and Purley) in both directions providing new direct journey opportunities to central London stations (London Blackfriars, City Thameslink, Farringdon and St Pancras International). This will mean that upon departure at Gatwick Airport this trains will arrive almost simultaneously as the “faster” Brighton to Bedford trains. We will be working with stations to ensure this is effectively

communicated to passengers. Thameslink trains between East Croydon, London Blackfriars, London St Pancras, St Albans and Bedford remain 15 minutes apart.

3. Do you support faster journey times on overnight services for passengers travelling from stations between Bedford, Luton and London?

The majority of respondents support in principle the idea to create faster journey times on overnight services between Bedford and Gatwick Airport. It is therefore planned to implement an hourly fast train between Bedford and Three Bridges which will not stop at stations between St Albans and West Hampstead Thameslink and one hourly stopping service between Bedford and Three Bridges subject to agreement from the Department for Transport. The additional hourly overnight service is for a trial period of three years.

4. In order to achieve this, the existing calling pattern of overnight services will have to change and Radlett, Elstree & Borehamwood, Mill Hill Broadway, Hendon and Cricklewood will be served by a new Luton to London overnight service. Do you support this?

The majority of respondents support in principle the idea to create faster journey times on overnight services between Bedford and Gatwick Airport. It is therefore planned to implement an hourly fast train between Bedford and Three Bridges which will not stop at stations between St Albans and West Hampstead Thameslink and one hourly stopping service between Bedford and Three Bridges subject to agreement from the Department for Transport. The additional hourly overnight service is for a trial period of three years.

5. Do you support the integration of the Gatwick Express into the wider Brighton mainline?

The business case for the new trains for the Gatwick Express is dependent on the amalgamation of the service into the wider operation of the Brighton Main Line. On average, less than 100 passengers use daytime dedicated services between Gatwick Airport and London Victoria. It is therefore essential that both the infrastructure and on train capacity is used to its best advantage. The extension of Gatwick Express trains half hourly replacing existing Southern Brighton Express trains between London and Brighton is key to both releasing this capacity and also improving route performance and delay recovery. Our proposals address this and therefore our proposals will incorporate the Gatwick Express trains being extended to Brighton throughout the daytime during Mondays to Saturdays. New Class 387 trains will be introduced on these services in 2016.

A number of respondents queried the pricing arrangements of the new extended Gatwick Express. To clarify, the premium fare will apply between Gatwick Airport and London Victoria only. For travel between Brighton and Gatwick Airport or Brighton and London Victoria the normal fares principles apply.

6. Do you support the above proposals? (Changes to Brighton Mainline stopping patterns to facilitate the London Victoria to Brighton Express Extensions and changes to the fast/semi-fast London Victoria services)

There is support for the proposed changes to the current pattern of off peak services provided by Southern and Thameslink on the Brighton Main Line. To provide a more evenly spaced timetable, with longer turnaround times improving our ability to recover from delays, the calling patterns of the current Thameslink services south of Haywards Heath will be amended as detailed in our proposals. Therefore the current Bedford to Brighton services which currently only call at Burgess Hill south of Haywards Heath will become all stations and the current London Bridge to Brighton services which call at all stations after Haywards Heath will become nonstop services to Brighton south of Haywards Heath with the exception of one train per hour which will call at Burgess Hill. Balcombe will be served once per hour by the London Bridge to Brighton trains. This change will facilitate the introduction of a new direct train between Brighton and Cambridge which many respondents support. Changes to Southern services are linked with the incorporation of the Gatwick Express services into the wider Brighton Main Line service patterns, both of which are supported by the majority of respondents.

7. Do you support our plans to reduce the journey time between London, Horsham, Chichester, Portsmouth Harbour, Southampton Central and Bognor Regis by omitting to call at Redhill?

Please see key themes section which addresses this particular issue.

8. Do you support our plans to reduce the journey time between London, Hove, Worthing and Littlehampton by omitting to call at Preston Park and placing the calls at Portslade and Lancing into one train?

A petition with nearly 2000 signatures was received in relation to this particular question as many Preston Park passengers were concerned at the perceived loss of all train services between Preston Park and Coastway destinations. The intention was to provide a faster journey to and from London Victoria where most passengers travel. In comparison through journeys between Preston Park and Coastway destinations is low. In light of the local concerns, we have now reviewed the plan and will retain a stop at Preston Park in the London Victoria to Littlehampton services to the same level as today. This means a journey time improvement between Preston Park and London Victoria will not be possible and the journey time will remain as now. There will be no impact on the proposed reduction in journey times for the other trains. The proposal affecting Portslade and Lancing did not generate a significant response therefore these proposals will be incorporated into our plans to enable a reduction in journey time between London, Worthing and Littlehampton.

9. Do you support our plans to reduce the journey time between London, Lewes, Eastbourne and Hastings by placing the calls at Wivelsfield and Plumpton into one train?

We are pleased that our proposal for the reduction in off peak journey times between London, Eastbourne and Hastings is supported but recognise there is a desire for a further reduction beyond the five minutes planned. It is hoped that during the franchise term, further improvements will be made to the route between Brighton and Ashford International with some increases in line speed which will enable a further reduction of journey time. In the meantime, our proposals for these services will be implemented.

10. The reduction of journey time between London, Reigate and Tonbridge and the change of London terminal from London Bridge to London Victoria?

Please see key themes section which addresses this particular issue.

11. The introduction of new off peak Thameslink services between Redhill, Merstham, Coulsdon South, Purley and London Blackfriars, City Thameslink, Farringdon and St Pancras International earlier than planned

Please see key themes section which addresses this particular issue.

12. Removing the Redhill stop from London Victoria to Portsmouth Harbour, Southampton Central & Bognor Regis via Horsham services

Please see key themes section which addresses this particular issue.

13. What do you think of more trains calling additionally at Southease during the week noting that there will be a slight increase (2 minutes) in journey times to/from Seaford to accommodate the call?

There is clearly support for additional services to support local needs however this is on a very low patronage base. Therefore this will not be implemented. However additional stops will be made to evening services throughout the week.

14. What do you think of Sunday trains calling at Three Oaks and Winchelsea alternately every two hours on Sundays noting that there will be a slight increase (two minutes) in journey times to/from Ashford International to accommodate the calls?

The vast majority of respondents support the idea of stopping Brighton to Ashford International services at Three Oaks and Winchelsea on Sundays to support local tourism. It is our recommendation for services to call at these stations on a two hourly basis (similar to weekdays and Saturdays) starting with the December 2015 timetable change.

15. Do you support the new journey opportunities between Brighton, Gatwick Airport, Central London, Stevenage, Letchworth and Cambridge?

The vast majority of respondents agree that a through train between Brighton and Cambridge in 2018 will be highly beneficial and should feature as part of the final expanded Thameslink network. This new direct journey opportunity is one of the key benefits of the Thameslink Programme. To fully realise the benefits of this new service, changes need to be made to the timetable in 2015 to prepare for this new link.

16. Do you have any further comments not covered in this consultation which you would like to raise for possible future consideration?

This question provided an opportunity to comment and raise issues not directly asked in the consultation. A varied range of requests were received which will be reviewed and items will be considered for future timetable changes.

Annex B: List of Formal Respondents

Amber Rudd Member of Parliament for Hastings & Rye
Association of Public Transport Users
Barking and Dagenham Council
BBM Sustainable Design Limited (Local Business)
Bedford Commuters Association
Beechwood Hall and Rural Park
Bexhill Rail Action Group
Brent Borough Council
Brighton & Hove City Council
Burgess Hill Town Council
Cambridgeshire County Council
Chuka Umunna - Member of Parliament for Streatham
Collyer's College
Consortium of East Coast Main Line Authorities
Cooksbridge Station Partnership
Coulsdon Councillors
East Coulsdon Resident Association
East Surrey Transport Committee
East Sussex County Council
East Sussex Rail Alliance
Eastbourne Borough Council
Eastleigh Borough Council
Edenbridge and District Rail Travellers Association
Edenbridge Town Council
Forest Hill Society
GATCOM
Gatwick Airport Ltd
Greater London Authority
Gregory Barker MP for Bexhill and Battle (at the time of responding)
Guesting Parish Council
Hamsey Parish Council
Herne Hill Society

HG Dodson (Local Business)
Hitchen Rail Users Group
Horley Town Council
Horsham District Council
Huntingdonshire District Council
Kent County Council
Lewes Constituency
Lewes District Green Party
Lewes Footpaths Group
Local Societies
London Luton Airport
London TravelWatch
Loughborough Junction Action Group
MarshLink Action Group
Marshlink Community Rail Partnership
Network Rail
Norman Baker MP for Lewes (at the time of responding)
North London Transport Partnership Forum
Old Coulsdon Resident's Association
Passenger Focus
PPC Croydon South Liberal Democrats
Purna Sen - Labour Parliamentary Candidate for Brighton Pavilion
Railfuture
Reigate Sixth Form College
Reigate, Redhill and District Rail Users Association
Richard Ottaway MP for Croydon South
Rodmell Parish Council
Salfords and Sidlow Parish Council
South Downs National Park Authority
South Downs Society
South Hampshire Rail Users' Group
Southeast Parish Meeting
Southern Passenger Panel
Southwark Council
St Leonards and Hastings Rail Improvement

Team London Bridge
The Dulwich Society
The Fen Line Users Association
Three Oaks and Winchelsea Action for Rail Transport
Three Oaks Parish Council
Tonbridge Line Commuters
Transport for London
Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee
Uckfield Town Council
Varndean College
Wandsworth Town Council
Wessex County Council
West Hampstead Amenity and Transport
West London Line Passenger Representatives
Withdean Brand Labour Party

Annex C: Full GTR Franchise Map

Figure F.1

TSGN Franchise Map

July 2015

