



Dear Friend

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I've not fully covered everything in my in-box, but there are various deadlines looming and I wanted to get an edition out. I'll get another update out shortly, this will include Committee updates and more on planned Ticket Office changes.

Thameslink recruiting for their *Access Panel* (deadline: 8 July)

Thameslink are recruiting for their Access Panel, applications must be **submitted by 8 July** and interviews between 21 and 28 July 2016 (inclusive).

The panel will be shared with Great Northern and the comment is:

Regardless of your disability or accessibility needs, the Panel must be able to represent the needs of all of our passengers, including.

- Passengers with visual/hearing impairments
- Passengers travelling with young children
- Elderly passengers requiring assistance when travelling
- Passengers with hidden disabilities
- Passengers with physical disabilities

Ideally, we are looking for a group of people who do not already have a channel of communication with Thameslink and Great Northern to ensure that we engage with the 'everyday passenger'.

More information and an online application form at

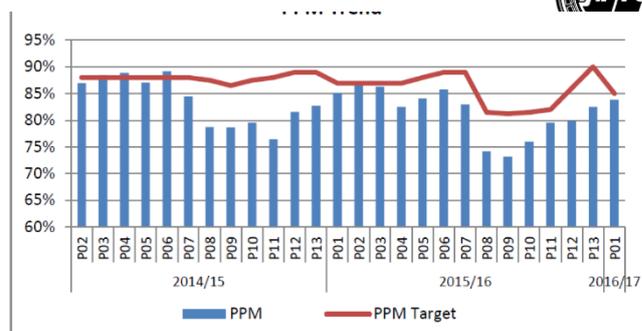
<http://www.thameslinkrailway.com/contact-us/get-involved/access-advisory-panel>.

Performance

Performance continues to disappoint. After a series of improving performance from Autumn 2015, performance has now dropped again significantly (unfortunately I do not have a copy of the slides showing this). Although the graph I have is all brands, Thameslink, Southern and Gatwick Express are all so interlinked that it remains highly relevant.



The main reason for the deterioration is the ongoing staffing issues at Southern, which are having a significant impact on Thameslink. For instance, trains are crowded, extending station stops or platforms are blocked awaiting staff. I see no evidence that Thameslink is being directly dragged into the issue, and such rumours as I do here suggest that this won't change. As you may know, Southern switch to a new temporary timetable on Monday and this will hopefully reduce some of the delays (eg waiting for platforms) - but could increase demand for Thameslink services leading to station delays. The network is highly sensitive to late arrivals from the south at East Croydon and the reductions in service volumes north of there are limited (meaning no meaningful improvement in running times).

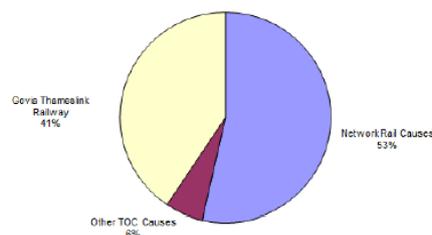


Whilst I see no evidence of links with the Southern issues, I do wonder (subjectively) if there has been an upswing in Thameslink owned failures (like today's train failure at Blackfriars).

On drivers, we have asked for some data on net growth (ie newly trained, less leavers) - all we get is the former. There has been a slight uptick in cancellations recently and we are led to believe this is due to the need for drivers to receive Class 700 refresh training. Sundays remain vulnerable, however as evidence of progress it does seem now to be restricted to special Sundays - recently father's day - and possibly this Sunday (Euro football finals).

Thameslink

Govia Thameslink Railway - Thameslink Route Delay Responsibility (13 Periods) Year ending 28/05/2016



Major incidents that affected performance in P2:

- 2 May 2016: Emergency services dealing with an incident at Luton Airport
- 3 May: Signalling problems at London St Pancras
- 10 May 2016: Overrunning engineering work at St Albans City
- 10 May 2016: Signalling problems at Cricklewood

Update on improvement activities

Our latest briefing from Thameslink highlighted these:

Service Recovery and Command & Control:

This work is about ensuring that we return to normal service as quickly as possible after disruption, whilst minimising the impact on our passengers. We are working on improving response times in the case of infrastructure equipment or train failures. We are also developing our team in our Control room further (where service decisions are taken during disruption), taking into account the large geographical spread of our network. Teams are being aligned and trained to speed up and improve decision making, involving both Network Rail and staff from GTR. Recruitment for key positions to strengthen our ability to respond in times of disruption is underway.

The Basics – right first time:

Last period we started an action team on Gatwick Express, which is working with local teams to uncover issues and address them locally. This is led by the Passenger Service Director, supported by teams from across GTR and Network Rail. Another cross-functional team will focus on addressing issues that prevent us from delivering a punctual service in the early hours, starting with investigations overnight at Victoria.



Network Rail is strengthening the teams responsible for responding to track faults and track circuit failures, with a special focus in the London area. These teams will also enable more rapid response to assets which fail more frequently and cause the largest impact.

Network Rail monitoring showing results

An assessment of the effectiveness of Network Rail's remote condition monitoring equipment on points (part of the signalling system) in the Sussex route area has shown strong results. The equipment is set up on 956 sets of points (the sections of rail where trains can be switched from one track to another) and an alarm will sound if the equipment looks set to fail. This prompts a visit from a Network Rail technician. This proactive approach as seen the number of points failures fall by a third in two years — from 256 in 2013/14 to 169 in 2015/16.

House of Commons Transport Select Committee - Improving the rail passenger experience

The House of Commons Transport Select Committee has been taking evidence on this topic, and like many individuals and organisations APTU made a written submission.

To my surprise (and pleasure) I was then contacted by the Committee to come along and make an oral submission as well. Over their full program of sessions they are interviewing industry insiders and also other stakeholders. At the session I went to, there were two parts - firstly, Campaign for Better Transport, Railfuture and APTU were interviewed and this was followed by Transport Focus, London TravelWatch, the ORR (Office of Rail and Road) and the Consumers Association.

It was definitely an interesting experience; fortunately as we are not service providers, the questioning was relatively gentle. As part of the briefing process, I discovered what I said was covered by Parliamentary privilege - quite probably the only time that will ever happen to me!

You can:

- Read a transcript of my oral evidence: <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/transport-committee/improving-rail-passenger-experience/oral/34255.html>
- Read our written submission: <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/transport-committee/improving-rail-passenger-experience/written/33761.html>
- Watch me in action: <http://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/162d6459-eb93-452c-a9c8-0501b212819c?in=16:03:45>

Luton Airport – Allow extra time for transfers

We have received this:

We have been notified by Luton Borough Council that as part of upgrade works to Luton airport the bus lane from Luton Airport Parkway station to the Luton Airport will be closed for resurfacing from 09:30 Tuesday 12 July – 15:30 Thursday 14 July.

We are advising passengers and airport employees using the shuttle bus to allow up to 45 minutes extra for journeys between the station and airport terminals. This may be longer depending on traffic at busy times of the day.

I would also expect slower car journeys as well.



Class 700s in service

A Class 700 now has been in service on Thameslink North. There was a single off Peak return run from Brighton on Thursday and Friday last week, and we have been told that 3 will be in service all day from this coming Monday (11 July), then growing by 2 in service every 2 weeks. I do not have diagram information.

I managed to be on the first run; my observations read:

Good

Quiet

Smooth

Rattle free

Good acceleration

Good brakes, no brake smells

Good at CTK (but not paying attention - ie a smooth change over)

All information screens working

Thameslink tell me that the “not good” items are in-hand. As regards our historic concerns with these trains:

- Lack of Wi-Fi - now promised as a retrofit, but no date as yet
- Lack of tables in standard class - now promised as a retrofit, but no date as yet
- Lack of power sockets - still under consideration for a retro fit
- Lack of leg room - still an issue
- Seats very close together (width wise) - now further apart - not generous, but now (in my view) in the tolerable zone

Not good

Problem at St Pancras with doors -ie as with Class 377s & 387s

Rear 1st class was 1st class (it is supposed to be reclassified to standard)



GTR Stakeholder Conference

GTR held its annual stakeholder conference on 15 June. This is the ‘all brands’ version; there is a second one for Thameslink and Great Northern only late in the year. The presentation material from this is available here:

www.aptu.org.uk/pdfs/gtrannualstakeholderconference2016.pdf (note: Adobe PDF file: 8.6Mb).

Highlights (perhaps lowlights) include:

1. Revisions to the planned 2018 Thameslink timetable (see below) *Slides 18 - 32 (slides 33 - 36 address consequences to other brands)*
2. Class 700 launch - *slides 58 - 61*
3. Wi-Fi confirmed for Class 700s as a retrofit (slide 79) - see above
4. Pay as You Go smart card launch in October *Slides 93 - 97*



5. Performance *Slides 101 -108*. It is not particularly clear in these slides, which cover the period to 28 April, but performance slides which include May show the impact of the Southern industrial relations issues on both Southern and Thameslink, and show that the improving picture shown in slide 101 has now reversed again.
6. Modernising stations *Slides 109 - 97*. The main changes are:
 - a. A commitment that all currently issuable ticket types can be issued by a station host
 - b. Commitment to a pilot
 - c. Commitment that queueing times will not increase

On Modernising stations see also <http://www.thameslinkrailway.com/your-journey/improving-your-railway/improving-your-stations-public-consultation>. We will continue to be active in this area, as the range of outcomes is wide - from considerable improvement to much worse off.

Thameslink proposed 2018 timetable

Noticeable changes are proposed to the 2018 Thameslink timetable. The full consultation starts imminently, and I will ask for your more formal comments at that point, however, key points to note are:

- The Thameslink off-peak service pattern will increase from 8 to 10 trains per hour, with new two per hour semi-fast service (Luton, stations to Mill Hill Broadway, West Hampstead Thameslink and Central London)
- Dartford and Rainham will be added to the Thameslink network - they will be a continuation of the semi fast services immediately above.
- Opportunities for Radlett, Elstree and Mill Hill to receive 12 car trains as there is now a destination south of the river (Dartford / Rainham that can handle them). There will also be direct trains to London Bridge.
- All Wimbledon loop services will terminate at St Albans (thus Luton, Luton Airport Parkway and Harpenden users will always need to change for stations to Wimbledon/Sutton and Hendon, Cricklewood and Kentish Town)
- Caterham and Tattenham Corner leave the Thameslink Network and will remain part of Southern running to London Bridge and/or Wimbledon. These services were destined for the East Coast Main Line.

The new service pattern looks like it will be:

	Trains per Hour	Fast	Semi-Fast	All Stations	London Bridge	East Croydon + Gatwick	Brighton	Wimbledon loop	Dartford
Bedford - Leagrave	4	4			4	4	2		
Luton - Harpenden	6	4	2		6	4	2		2
St Albans	10	4	2	4	6	4	2	4	2
Radlett - Mill Hill	6		2	4	2			4	2
Hendon, Cricklewood & Kentish Town	4			4				4	
West Hampstead#	8	2	2	4	4	2	?	4	2

The service to Orpington via Catford continues - it is not 100% clear if this will terminate at WHT or Kentish Town



Train Length	12	8 few 12	8	12 & 8	12	8	8 few 12
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National Rail Passenger Survey

The results of the Spring 2016 survey have recently been released. Field work for this took place between 11 January and 20 March 2016 - so do reflect Southern's current problems, but will include the impact of the poor service we suffered earlier in this year. Key highlights:

1. It measures satisfaction with individual journeys - not overall performance
2. Nationally satisfaction is at 80% - the same as Spring 2015- with a 3% increase gained (Autumn 2015) and then lost
 - a. London & South East Trend is 78% > 81% > 78%
3. Thameslink is 70% > 73% > 74%, with the bigger increases coming from handling delays and station staff, and train outside cleanliness and car parking the biggest decreases.
 - a. By service area the Spring 2016 scores were TL North: 75%; Wimbledon Loop: 75% and Thameslink South 72%.

More at <http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/news-events-media/news/rail-passengers-feeling-strain/>; the 'Emotional Tracker Pilot' work provides some additional insight; as it covers those most impacted by the London Bridge works it will not cover Thameslink North.

My view: Thameslink continues to be near the bottom of the rankings, which is a fair assessment of the service. The slight increase is, I think simply a reflection of the low start point, rather than something to be very pleased about; unfortunately I suspect there will be another dip for Autumn 2016 to reflect current problems, in particular the impact of Southern issues on Thameslink services.

Delay Repay – Lack of an account to store details | Time to settle

We followed up members' queries as to the lack of an account facility (to hold unchanging details) - and also processing times and received this:

The average response time varies according to how we are performing operationally and how many claims we receive. We stick within our SLA which is at the furthest extreme 20 working days.

Re the auto population piece - that should be available in the future although customers can use Chrome to assist them now - we carried out a time and motion study and even with limited understanding of the system the average claim takes less than two minutes to submit.

My last Delay Repay took 6 working days to settle, however a key issue is that I did not receive even an acknowledgement for 4 working days. GTR further commented:

A new bit of kit has been installed that allows us to auto process many of the claim we receive. We have started at processing about 25% without manual intervention and hope to build up to about 65%. Ultimately this will mean that claims are dealt with much more efficiently and will wheedle out any duplicated claims to improve our response time and the accuracy of the decision making process.

Bad - and Good News stories on Delay Repay appreciated.

Annual meeting presentations

These are now available:



1. GTR: aptu.org.uk/pdfs/aptuagm2016_gtr.pdf
2. Network Rail: aptu.org.uk/pdfsaptuagm2016_networkrail.pdf

If issues you raised at the meeting are still live and a reply is still needed, please do let me know.

St Albans travellers: A request from a MSc student to complete his survey

We have had this request:

My name is Max Hemmerle and I am currently writing on my Dissertation for my MSc course in Transport Planning and Management at the University of Westminster, London.

In my dissertation, I want to identify travel behaviour and mode choice patterns for travellers using the train from or to St Albans City Station. A passenger survey which will be conducted in form of face-to-face interviews at St Albans City Station as well as online via a link on distributed handout cards forms a substantial part of my research. I would like to contribute to the transport developments in Hertfordshire and am happy to share my results with all participating institutions.

Larry Heyman, who kindly gave me the permission to conduct the survey on station premises, mentioned that you would be prepared to distribute the link to members of the Association of Public Transport Users between Harlington and West Hampstead.

Any member using St Albans City Station, be it regularly or only occasionally; resident of St Albans or traveller to St Albans, is welcome to answer the survey. It would be great if members could forward the survey to their friends and family who use the station.

The online survey can be found under the following link: <http://tinyurl.com/SACstationsurvey>

I am also very happy about feedback or questions regarding the survey. My email address is maximilian.hemmerle@web.de.

Many thanks for your help in advance, and to those individuals who take their time to answer and forward the survey.

Kind regards,

Max

Live in Central Bedfordshire? – Bus provision consultation closes 12 July

If you live in Central Bedfordshire and/or use buses in Central Bedfordshire, you may wish to comment on the Council's consultation - see centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council/consultations/passenger-transport-strategy/overview.aspx - be aware of this comment "Our current approach is no longer affordable so we need to rethink how bus transport is provided".

Regards

Neil

Neil Middleton

7 July 2016