

Dear member



As we all know the Customer Information System on the Thameslink Route leaves something to be desired.

We're sending this email now to let you know that FCC will be upgrading the software that operates this system this week. They comment as follows:

“Dear Neil,

I am writing to let you know that the TL route Customer Information System (CIS) software will be upgraded on Tuesday 8 July to address many of the major faults affecting the system.

The CIS renewal was completed by Network Rail (NR) earlier this year and included installing 146 Customer Information Screens and an automated Public Announcement system at stations on the north TL route. However since the initial installation, a number of software and hardware issues have resulted in many of the screens showing incorrect information and PA announcements happening at the wrong times.

The customer services team has used staff and customer feedback to clarify the issues and has worked closely with NR and the system suppliers, Funkwerk, to make the necessary software changes. Following the upgrade the system should also be able to load amended timetables for planned and unplanned disruption, helping to ensure customers get the accurate information they need to make informed travel decisions.

We anticipate that this will address many of the concerns that Belen and I discussed with you during our recent visits to St Albans and Harpenden and would appreciate any feedback.”

Neil Middleton

6 July 2008

Based on past comments, I expect the upgrade to take place between the morning and evening peaks. FCC have previously commented to me that the current software is slow and difficult to use, so I expect there will be both technical improvements (eg no more cut off messages on the 3 line next departure screens - these will exclusively provide next train information) and administrative improvements (eg presence & position of first class).

The email mentions a meeting I had with FCC. This was a productive meeting; we discussed both the points some of you have made and more generic issues. A key point is which style of indicator to use. I asked about more use of the flat screen TV like displays seen at a number of locations including Farringdon and St Albans. One key point about these is that they are not suitable for locations where sun can shine on them since, in these conditions they can be impossible to read. In these instances, the three line liquid crystal displays are used.

More generally, I lobbied for extra screens where ever possible, aiming to get one that is visible from most points on the platform, concentrating on (a) most used platforms; and (b) on the London bound service.

As before, Larry Heyman at FCC would like to hear about issues with the CIS after 8 July. Please email us at the address on our website.

If the system upgrade is significantly delayed, I will let you know.