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**RE: Getting Passengers Back on Rail**

Dear Neil,

Thank you for your letter of the 26 July 2020 regarding Railfuture's "Getting Passengers Back on Rail" initiative and more than happy to provide more information where we can to the questions you provided as an appendix to this letter. I should start by congratulating you on your new role at Railfuture.

Like you, we warmly welcomed the confirmation from the Prime Minister that everyone can get back to using public transport, and we are keen to promote a positive message through the #Let'sTravelSafely campaign organised through the Rail Delivery Group.

The entire team at Govia Thameslink Railway has worked hard to ensure that our trains are clean and that customers can have confidence in using them. The way ahead will undoubtedly have challenges, but getting people back on trains, buses and making use of active travel like cycling will be essential to cutting car traffic and its unacceptable impact on congestion, accidents, air quality and climate change. As David Brown, Chief Executive of Go-Ahead recently remarked, none of us want the response to one health crisis to only lead to another.

We are working closely with the wider industry on the "travel safely this summer" campaign and are taking extra steps to help customers to travel with confidence as part of our safer travel pledge. We are operating as many services with as many carriages as possible, we have stepped up the cleaning of trains and stations, we are supporting customers to help keep their hands clean and we have added new sources of information to help people to make informed choices.

In turn, we have provided five points of simple advice that customers should follow to help us to make their journey safer. Customers should wear a face covering, use and carry hand sanitiser as well as washing their hands before and after travelling, they should check train services before travelling, use smart ticket methods such as our Key smartcard and make use of the information that we provide to help them to identify quieter times to travel. All of these simple

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steps can help customers to return to travelling by rail.

Over the next few weeks, the team is focused on the wider aim to get students back to school in September. We are putting additional measures in place focusing on stations and routes where we know more students typically rely on the railway. As students return after a potential gap of nearly six months, we know we have a key role to provide reassurance.

Welcoming customers back to the railway, whether students, commuters or leisure travellers is a priority and we welcome the support and input of Railfuture. In this spirit, I hope the information detailed in the appendix is useful and should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Yours sincerely,

Paul,

Paul Codd  
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## **APPENDIX: ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS SUPPLIED BY RAILFUTURE**

### **Q1. What marketing initiatives are you organising to reawaken interest in travelling by train?**

Our marketing team continued to provide support for the destinations across our network even at the height of lockdown. For example, using Instagram to showcase destinations virtually during English Tourism Week in April 2020, to ensure that we kept customers connected with attractions across the network

With the easing of restrictions, we have continued to showcase the fabulous destinations available across the network. For example, in the week of the 10<sup>th</sup> August, the team at Southern promoted the attractions of Ashdown Forest, the shops and cafes of Horsham district and published the guide put together by our partners the Sussex Community Rail Partnership to access the south coast, South Downs national park and towns along the Arun Valley line.

We mix a focus on promoting destinations, with practical advice for travel, so for example our Great Northern social channels have promoted a mixture of a special series of promotional videos commissioned with Michael Portillo to showcase the 170<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the route and its destinations with the latest advice on smart ticketing.

We continue to offer a range of great value fares to encourage customers to travel by train such as £5 advance fares on Southern and Super Off-Peak day returns on Thameslink.

Under the Emergency Measures Agreement, like other TOCs, we require the approval of the Department for Transport on marketing spending. We have made our recommendations to the Department as to the types of campaigns and activities that we recommend and we eagerly awaiting their response. As soon as we have more details to share on upcoming activities, we will let you know.

### **Q2. What promotional activity will you be providing in terms of financial incentives to return to rail?**

To support our existing range of fares, we are pleased to have made enhancements to make rail travel even easier for our customers. For example, we have recently added railcard discounts to KeyGo, our pay as you go product on the Key smartcard.

This means that customers travelling within the KeyGo area, which spans the majority of the GTR network, can simply tap-in and tap-out and will automatically be charged the lowest possible walk-up day fare. We know that making ticketing as simple and as easy to understand as possible is key to encouraging customers to travel by rail.

We also recognise that the nature of travel, particularly for work was changing prior to coronavirus and that this trend has accelerated. Spreading peak-time travel, making greater use

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of spare capacity and appealing to a customer base that is travelling a few times per week will be key to the future of rail.

Prior to the pandemic, the industry made a [set of proposals](#) for a more transparent, simpler to use and modern set of tickets and fares. In addition, through the Emergency Measures Agreement, we have made a set of proposals to the Department for Transport on potential ticketing initiatives to support a return to rail, particularly for flexible commuting.

**Q3. What are you doing to restore the full timetable both in terms of service frequency, reliability and connectivity?**

Govia Thameslink Railway is currently operating approximately 87% of pre-covid weekday services for roughly 30% of our previous customer base with the result that there is lots of space on board for customers.

In September 2020, we will be supporting the wider aim to get students back to school in September, with a set of small changes on key school routes - either by adding a service or by adding stops to existing services. These changes are one part of a wider package to support the return of schoolchildren to the network with information to be provided to schools, and at term start, we'll have additional staff at key stations regularly used by school children, and our 'Step-In' team of volunteer 'office-based' staff, who are deployed to help station colleagues and passengers during disruption or for events, will be out and about to welcome students back. As children return after a potential gap of nearly six months, our Step-In team can help to reassure them, and engage with them about the new approach to travelling by rail.

We, and the wider rail industry have seen a step-change in punctuality and reliability, with for example 84.3% of GTR services On Time (all stations +59 seconds) and 92.7% at PPM (final destination <5 minutes) in Period 4 2020/21 (28 June-26 July). This compares to 69.2% On-Time and 83.3% at PPM respectively in Period 12 2019/20 (2 Feb – 1 March).

This is an improvement that brings major benefit to customers and helps to make the railway a far more attractive proposition for journeys. It is a level of reliability last seen over a decade ago, and while some gain is attributable to performance improvement initiatives, clearly, operating slightly fewer services with less congestion on the railway has had a benefit far beyond the capacity reduced, particularly at a time with fewer customers on the railway.

The customer experience of the railway is the balance between space for passengers (capacity) with punctuality and reliability. Potentially the balance has been previously skewed too far toward capacity at the expense of reliability and punctuality. A future service may involve slightly fewer trains, operating in longer formations to provide similar levels of passenger capacity at a higher level of punctuality and reliability.

In the short term, our ability to increase services substantially beyond what will be operating in September 2020 is constrained by the way coronavirus has resulted in a re-write of our

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operational plan; for example, with longer changeovers at terminus stations to support social distancing, as well as disruption to our driver training plan, again owing to the impact of social distancing on cab-based training. Both factors impact the number of trains that can operate, and for now, we are running close to the maximum that can be sustained.

We will, as passenger demand increases look to build train services and frequencies as needed but will ensure that we do so in a way that builds back better, with train services more reliable and punctual than before.

#### **Q.4 What are you doing to show passengers that they are valued and welcome on your trains?**

Customers are at the heart of our business and we recognise that many may not have used a train service in the past six months and may need additional reassurance before they feel comfortable travelling again.

With the wider rail sector, we are taking extra steps to help make journeys safe from coronavirus. This is captured in our safer travel pledge, with as many train services and carriages operating as possible to support social distancing, increased cleaning focused on touch points within trains and stations, help with hand hygiene in the form of sanitiser units and soap and water, and travel information including information on busier trains to that customers can plan ahead.

In return, we have provided customers with simple advice on how they can help us to help them safe, including:

Plan ahead – Choose to travel at quieter times making use of the information available at [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk) and use smart ticketing options like the Key Smartcard or eTickets where available

Considering others – Remember that it is a requirement to wear a face covering unless exempt, not to travel if suffering from coronavirus symptoms and to remember that not all exemptions will be visible

Stay safe – To maintain social distancing whenever possible, to carry and use hand sanitiser and to wash hands before and after travel.

#### **Q.5 What are you doing to ensure people are paying for their journey? (Anti-social behaviour is a major deterrent for many potential users, and this is frequently related to ticketless travel.)**

We are working hard to adapt to the impact COVID-19 has had on our ability to reduce both fraudulent travel and fare evasion. Currently, we have a number of different trials in place across GTR which are intended to reduce ticketless travel using existing methods in a manner

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that complies with new government and industry guidance, these include:

- Enforcement activity including issuing Penalty Fare and Prosecutions Notices at stations
- Providing a visible presence on-board our train services
- Utilising existing structures such as gatelines at stations to carry out enforcement as needed
- Utilising new, temporary structures at stations to carry out enforcement
- Carrying our ticket checks at ungated stations
- Ensuring our Gatelines are staffed to pre-COVID levels

We continue to work with our industry partnerships to develop and capitalise on evolving methods of Revenue Protection and ensure that fare evasion is kept to a minimum wherever possible.

**Q. 6 In addition to the existing efforts to reassure that stations and trains are clean (and regularly cleaned) to reassure passengers on air quality on trains (eg on the effectiveness of air conditioning in removing droplets containing the virus).**

Early research in Britain and across major European countries into the transmission of COVID-19 onboard trains has had some promising results and the risk appears to be low.

Newer trains have heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems on board so that a comfortable temperature that's set to 21 degrees can be maintained inside the carriages. The system achieves this by taking a regular flow of fresh air in from outside and balancing it with recirculated air drawn through filters. The air then passes over a unit called an 'evaporator' which removes moisture during this process.

The systems are designed to replace the air in a carriage typically every 5-6 minutes which is dependent on temperature conditions on board and outside. Our train doors open at stations across the route, some services more frequently than others and this action will naturally provide an input of fresh air as well.

We work with train manufacturers to ensure we are applying the very latest recommendations to the systems' cleaning regime and filter replacement during regular maintenance at our train depots.

Our engineers are working with others in the industry, across the UK and Europe, to ensure best practice is used in our systems and in the deep cleaning of our carriages, supporting a safe onboard environment for our passengers.

We are, as you are likely aware, working with the industry to commission further research into the risks of transmission on board trains. We know that initial research by the RSSB suggests, even without mitigations such as face-coverings, a very low risk of transmission. Our counterparts in Germany, Deutsche Bahn are reported to have shown no link through track and

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trace data to transmission onboard ICE intercity trains and an infection rate among onboard staff significantly below the national average. This is, in part, attributed to the high air-exchange rate on board trains compared to many other indoor environments. Similar work by SNCF on the ability of their rolling stock to replace air every nine minutes have led to capacity restrictions being removed in both countries. As we as an industry further study and understand any residual risk, we will introduce any additional mitigations as required.

**Q.7 The initiatives to reduce physical touch points, such as auto open doors and water taps using motion detection to turn themselves on.**

There are no current plans to substantially change the number of functions that are automatic, although clearly, as can be seen with the hand sanitiser units fitted at stations, automatic is increasingly the default choice for new installations.

Our cleaners are briefed to focus on door controls, ticket machines and other touch points such as hand rails on trains and stations. Customers can help us to keep them safe by washing their hands before and after travelling and being especially mindful to avoid hand to mouth contact.