



Stakeholder Newsletter, July/August 2009

Full speed ahead for high speed services

Thanks to all of you who attended the stakeholder day on our high speed service last month. Representatives from parliament, local authorities, user groups and amenity societies from across our franchise area enjoyed a fast, but relaxed return trip from St. Pancras to Ashford International and the response was unanimously positive. Guest of honour was Transport Secretary Lord Andrew Adonis and it was significant that this was one of his first official engagements in his new role.

The preview service began on 29 June with three peak return services from Ashford and an all day shuttle service from Ebbsfleet. Already the service is proving popular with two peak trains needing to be extended after just a few days to meet the demand.

December timetable

The consultation period for the December timetable is now over and once final approval is received from Network Rail the final document will go "live" on our website within the next few weeks. A small number of revisions have been made primarily in connection with services used by school students.

The general response to the draft timetable from stakeholders has been positive with appreciation for the additional services and recognition that some of the reductions proposed in the original service specification have been reversed following our demand validation survey and negotiations with the Department for Transport (DfT).

However, we recognise that some of you are disappointed that we have not been able to amend the DfT's service specification and the timetable may result in changed journey patterns for you and those you represent. Key to meeting the specification, and in particular introducing high speed services, always meant there needed to be some trade offs with existing services and we hope you understand that our scope for changing the specification was extremely limited. We looked closely at all those services the DfT asked us to withdraw and following our demand validation study, if we thought there was a commercial or operational case to retain them we approached the DfT accordingly, but unfortunately, we were not in a position to please all rail users.

For those who regular commuting patterns may have to change we will be writing to season ticket holders explaining why this has happened and outlining other journey options.

Thameslink

On 22 March this year, the closure of the bay platforms at Blackfriars meant we were able to run direct services from through the station to St. Pancras, Kentish Town West Hampstead and beyond to Luton, St. Albans and Bedford. This offers new journey opportunities and for southeast Londoners in particular, direct access to north London without having to transfer to tube or bus services has been welcomed. There were doubts that the combination of fewer platforms at Blackfriars and potential technical difficulties where trains switch from third rail power supply to overhead cables north of City Thameslink, would affect performance, but we're pleased to say that timekeeping on this route has been unaffected.

The next stage of the programme is the re-modeling of London Bridge station to provide additional capacity through one of the busiest rail corridors in Europe. The station will be rebuilt and as you can imagine it will be challenge for the industry to do this while maintaining current levels of service. To give you an idea of the scale of the task, London Bridge station

has more twice the number of passengers per year than Heathrow airport, and the majority of those are telescoped into two slots at either end of the working day.

Network Rail who is responsible for the work, is confident that this can be done. We will be organising briefing sessions to tell passenger representatives what the industry is doing to ensure that services run as smoothly as possible, and we'll be in touch with further details later this year.

Station Improvements

Many of our stations are now seeing significant investment to create a better environment for our passengers.

Major works are currently underway at Ashford station with £2.4M of improvements jointly funded by Government' through its National Stations Improvement Programme and from Ashford Future.

The works were officially started by local Member of Parliament Damian Green who said:

"Ashford passengers deserve the best facilities at the station to complement the country's best train links. I am delighted that these works will be completed in time for the full launch of the high speed services in December. 2009 will be a historic year for travelers from Ashford – high speed domestic trains and a new station"

The works include:

- Extension of the entrance booking hall to include more seating and a coffee bar
- Two new entrance/exits incorporating automatic doors to the station front
- Improved lighting on the station concourse
- Enhanced access and heated waiting area on platforms five and six

For more details please see our website www.southeasternrailway.co.uk

Safer Stations

We continue to give this high priority and award ceremonies have recently been held at Blackheath and New Beckenham stations where Bridget Prentice MP and Jacqui Lait MP presented certificates to station staff.

You may also be interested to know that that British Transport Police now has a look up tool on its website that tells you how crime is reducing at your local station. Go to the BTP's website at www.btp.police.uk to find out more.

Stakeholder Forum

Our next forum will be on Monday, 28 September between 1800 and 2000. The venue is to be confirmed but it will be in the Medway Towns and as close to a local station as possible. We'll be in touch shortly with further details.

Meanwhile don't forget our Meet the Manager sessions at London terminals which are your chance to raise any issues with our Managing Director Charles Horton and his senior

Management team. The next is at Charing Cross on Thursday, 23 July between 0800 and 1000.

Line Closure between Folkestone and Dover

As some of you may have heard, the line between Dover Priory and Folkestone Central will be closed from 25 July to 3 August. This is to enable Network Rail to carry out essential work on the tunnels between these two stations to allow our high speed class 395 trains to continue to Dover. During the work, replacement bus services will operate between Folkestone central and Dover Priory.

We apologise to passengers for any inconvenience caused but there will be two additional services introduced between Monday to Friday during peak periods, the first from Dover priory and the second from Charing Cross.

Further information on the revised timetable can be found upon our website at www.southeasternrailway.co.uk/index.php/news/news_items/view/102

Must do better!

When we took over the franchise in April 2006 we said from the start that we wouldn't hide bad news from passengers and stakeholders and the results of Passenger Focus' Spring 2009 National Passenger Survey shows a drop in our overall satisfaction score from 80% to 76%.

The period covered by the survey included the New Year fare increase, heavy snowfall in February when services were severely disrupted and a few weeks in January when we reduced the length of our trains without prior consultation. Lessons have been learned, particularly around the need for better communications with passengers and with performance on an upward trend, we are confident of better results in Passenger Focus' Summer survey.

New User Groups?

Discussions around the December timetable resulted in the formation of two new rail user groups representing passengers from Maidstone and West Malling. It's good that more people are getting involved and we look forward to welcoming them at forthcoming meetings and forums.

We are also constantly updating our stakeholder mailing list to ensure that as many local groups as possible receive timetable and other information as well as invitations to meetings and events. If you know of any organisation with an interest in local rail services in Kent, southeast London or East Sussex such as a residents association a town or a parish council who may not be on our mailing list, please ask them to get in touch.

Is my Train on Time?

Results for railway period 3 (31 May - 27 June 2009)

Performance and reliability has remained solid over the past few months although we are not complacent and in partnership with Network Rail always striving to do better. We are particularly focused on "right time starts" at stations as a delay of even a minute during peak periods can have a domino effect on all services on that line.

Mainlines	Target	Period Average	Annual average	Threshold for season ticket discounts
Train service punctuality <i>(percentage of peak hour trains arriving within five minutes of</i>	85.0%	93.0 %	89.6%	82.0%

<i>their advertised arrival time)</i>				
Train service reliability <i>(percentage of the advertised train service actually operated)</i>	99.0%	99.3%	99.3%	98.0%
Metro	Target	Period Average	Annual Average	Threshold for season ticket discounts
Train service punctuality <i>(percentage of peak hour trains arriving within five minutes of their advertised arrival time)</i>	89.5%	93.2%	88.8%	86.5%
Train service reliability <i>(percentage of the advertised train service actually operated)</i>	99.0%	99.5%	99.1%	98.0%

Mike Gibson
Public Affairs Manager
Southeastern