

SEVENOAKS RAIL TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

Minutes of Annual Meeting – October 10th 2006

Present: Charles Horton M.D. of Southeastern Railway (SER) and Mike Gibson (Public Affairs Manager);
16 members of the public and 7 SRTA Committee members.

Apologies: Mr. M. Fallon M.P., 3 SRTA Committee members and one member of the public.

1. Chairman's Introduction.

The Chairman, Roger Johnson, in setting out the main issues for the meeting noted that fares would rise by 3% p.a. more than RPI for the first five years of the franchise. He requested SER not to load the Sevenoaks fare increase so that fares rose by more than 3% over inflation. It was unfortunate that the franchise agreement required these fare increases at a time when overcrowding on the South Eastern Main Line (SEML) through Sevenoaks would be increasing until 2009. While SRTA welcomed the prospect of the high speed commuter services to St Pancras, they were unlikely to do more than return overcrowding to 2006 levels. Off-peak we were pressing for at least one train per hour to both Ashford and Hastings.

SRTA welcomed the longer train formations that have been introduced this year and the timetable improvements due in December. These are two extra early morning up fast services from Sevenoaks to London and two additional down evening services; not calling at Sevenoaks, but relieving our services; and additional services which will maintain a quarter-hourly fast service to Sevenoaks until 23.30. He noted that SER was prepared to increase the service at Dunton Green if the development on the Cold Store site proceeded.

Our Stations Group (part of the Committee) had worked on many issues to improve local stations. Including correcting the fares charged by ticket vending machines for some journeys. SRTA regretted that very little of the BT Building Section 106 fund would be spent on Sevenoaks station. SRTA was looking for improved integration of bus and train services to reduce traffic problems around Sevenoaks station and this would be helped by a new relationship that SRTA had formed with Arriva management.

2. Managing Director of Southeastern Railway

The Southeastern franchise is operated by GoVia, a subsidiary of Go-Ahead with Keolis SA as a minority shareholder. SNCF is the majority shareholder in Keolis and has wide experience of operating high speed services, both in France and as a major shareholder in Eurostar. The franchise agreement required the franchisee to raise fares by 3% more than (RPI) inflation for the next 5 years. It also set out the minimum timetable requirements, though if the latter needed to be changed, the Department for Transport was taking a reasonable attitude.

SER was introducing two additional services on the 'shoulders' of both the morning and evening peaks. The object was to encourage commuters to travel earlier in the mornings and later in the evenings to spread the overloading on peak services, as Southern had done, reducing the peak overloading from 11% to 3%. (In the question time, it was suggested that the re-introduction of 'workmen's fares might encourage this shift.) SER would monitor train loading by 'weighing coaches for which they were developing the hardware and software.

The 2007 timetable will incorporate the results of a study of services through London Bridge, particularly to Charing Cross. High speed services will start running to St. Pancras, calling also at

Stratford (for Docklands) in December 2009. SER will take the opportunity to use the stock thus released for shorter distance journeys.

The company was also looking forward to a series of station improvements and would be installing new ticket vending machines for both booking office and self-service sales.

3. Question Time

The questions which followed covered subjects such as:

- Changing the **fare** structure to a zonal basis (rather than station to station fares) was necessary before Oyster cards could be introduced to the 'overground' railway SER would try to remove other anomalies during its franchise.
- SER is putting doors on 25% of its Electrostar stock (that used on the Hastings line) to separate **first class** from standard accommodation. Some passengers who travel 'first' do so to work. Charles Horton acknowledged the need to educate all train conductors up to the standard of the best.
- Mike Gibson will arrange a meeting at Sevenoaks about **ticket vending machines**. People want to be able to buy tickets today to travel tomorrow; want to be able to buy more than one 'railcard' ticket at a time (as the same credit card cannot be used twice) and want the limited time changed for renewing season tickets by a machine.
- It is hoped to speed up the peak 'fast' services from **Otford** to Victoria and Blackfriars in the December 2007 timetable by running these services via Herne Hill. It was requested that the departure times of peak Sevenoaks-Blackfriars services to be changed to improve connections from the Charing Cross-Sevenoaks services for **Bat & Ball** and Otford. Bat & Ball needs CCTV and a display showing train running information.
- There was preference to join Eurostars for Paris and Brussels at Ashford by train or by driving down the M20, which was less prone to traffic congestion than using the M25 for Ebbsfleet.

4. Formal Business

- The Minutes of the 2005 Annual Meeting (13th October) were approved.
- The existing Committee (Drs Houghton, Canet and Johnson, Cllrs Clayton, Parry and Gulliver and Messrs Benford, Dolby-Gray, Everett, Miles and Ryan) was re-elected.
- The Accounts for 2005 were approved.