

# southeastern.

## Briefing note for Sevenoaks Rail Travellers AGM 9 October 2012

### 1. Over view of the year

In the main it's been a good year with average performance over the last 12 months of 91.9% and for the last four weeks of 95.5%.

This is the best ever achieved on this network since records were begun by the former British Rail in the early 1990's, better than our sister TOC, Southern, better First Capital Connect and on a par with to South West Trains. This is an achievement given that Southeastern, operating services into five London terminals on lines with historic infrastructure constraints is widely recognized within the industry as being the most challenging network to operate.

This has been achieved as a result of a combination of factors. First, Network Rail's asset management record is much improved. Through what is known as "alliancing" we now work much more closely with Network Rail and this has produced tangible benefits in the form of improved performance.

Second, by focusing on the basics such as "right time" starts and better depot discipline (to ensure trains are in the right place at the right time at the start of the working day).

Finally our engineering teams have revised maintenance procedures, introduced a new shift system to ensure train fitters are on hand when most needed and have piloted a new diagnostic system to look for faults.

Taken together these measures have improved performance. Of course, we are not complacent and a small percentage of trains still do not arrive on time. We are looking closely at this and our Right Time Railway project is working to ensure that trains arrive at their advertised time rather than within the five minute "window". However, we hope you will agree that the position has improved since this time last year.

### 2. Olympic and Paralympics

There was an expectation amongst some sections of the media that Southeastern, as the train operator most affected by the Games with nationally one in 10 spectators travelling to the events on our services (and locally in Kent and south London one in four) would not be able to cope.

Despite the increased numbers of spectators, performance was excellent with 98%+ achieved on many days and positive feedback from spectators, athletes who used the Javelin service and the media.

Regular commuters heeded advice to avoid the busiest stations at peak times and in the main, journeys to and from work was largely unaffected.

In the rum up to the Games all maintenance work on trains was brought forward to ensure maximum stock availability and in the coming weeks there will be some catching up to do. Network Rail is in a similar position as its infrastructure maintenance programme was brought forward to ensure minimum disruption during this critical period and similar circumstances apply. We'll do our best to keep disruption to a minimum by carrying out as much of the work as possible at night and weekends, but its only right we flag this up with passengers now.

### 3. Winter preparations

The third rail network in the Southeast is very vulnerable to snow and ice. The SRTA will recall the severe winter of 2010/2011 when services were badly disrupted during December and January and the company was justifiably criticised for its poor performance and failure to keep passengers informed.

We and Network Rail have subsequently invested heavily in improvement measures which include:

- Conductor rail heating at over 120 locations in Kent and east Sussex
- Ensuring that eight NWR rail treatment vehicles and two NWR snow and ice treatment trains are in place.
- Fitting 20 Southeastern 375 electrostar with de-icing tanks.
- Working with KCC to ensure station approach roads gritted.
- Ordering 16 motorised snow clearance vehicles for larger stations and depots
- Ensuring contingency timetables in place to give passengers a realistic idea of the level of service we are able to run.

Save for a few days in early February, last winter was relatively mild and performance held up well.

This year, Network Rail has expanded its conductor rail heating programme and we are hopeful that in the event of below freezing temperatures, that services can be maintained. However, if there is severe, sustained and heavy snowfall, we cannot guarantee that services will run as normal.

#### **4. Communications**

This is perhaps the area which attracts most complaint from passengers.

Following the justified criticism of the industry's failure to keep passengers informed during the winter of 2010/2011 a lot of time and effort has gone into improving communications including Longline PA at stations, a new Blackberry Application for front line employees and Workmate social network site to improve internal communications, more robust industry processes and systems for timetable upload to feed journey planners and Customer Information System screens at stations, improved access for employees to information changes to service and better training and briefing for front line staff.

We are keen to use social media and earlier this year we launched a Twitter data feed, automated email alerts and i-phone App. Later this year our call centre team will be resourced to answer individual tweets.

#### **5. Fares**

Fare increases continue to generate controversy amongst passengers and we can appreciate that particularly in the current economic climate no one likes paying more.

As SRTA members will know, the increase in regulated fares (season tickets and peak returns and singles) is regulated by Government. The policy of this and the last Government is to move the balance of paying for rail services from the tax payer to the passenger and the increase was set at RPI + 3%. Its important to point out that two percent of the revenue raised by TOCs from this increase was to have been remitted back to the Department for Transport making us, in effect, the Government's tax collector.

Last weekend, the Prime Minister announced that the increase would now be RPI + 1% and given that the RPI was 3.2% in July (the month used to determine the next year's fare increase), this equates to an average fare rise of 4.2%.

We are currently awaiting a formal letter of confirmation from the DfT.

This will be average increase and some fares may rise by more, some by less.

## **6. Franchising**

The Southeastern franchise expires in the spring of 2014 and the DfT began its consultation process with stakeholders earlier this year. Our owning group (Go Ahead) wished to bid again for the Southeastern franchise and work was well advanced.

Following the Secretary of State's decision to cancel the award of the West Coast Main Line franchise to First Group, the award of other rail franchises is on hold pending two Government reviews.

This has caused some uncertainty and we are currently awaiting clarification from the DfT.

We will keep the SRTA and other stakeholders updated once firm information is received.

## **7. Station Improvements**

We hope you have noticed some improvements at our stations over the last 12 months

At Sevenoaks, as part of the National Stations Improvement Programme (NSIP) works include:

- Extending the booking hall area with new tiled flooring
- Installing a new ticket office
- Refurbishing the toilets
- New CIS screens
- Replacement of platform shelters
- Replacing overbridge flooring
- Internal decorations.

All works are near completion and we are currently looking at applications from prospective tenants for the retail units.

There have also been representations from the SRTA about the location of the ticket vending machines and this is currently under consideration.

At Swanley, also under the NSIP programme, the station has benefitted from:

- Installation of a DDA compliant toilet
- Refurbished waiting rooms
- Installation of lifts
- Re-painting

Work will shortly begin on improvements to the ticket office.

Once all works are completed at Sevenoaks and Swanley we will be inviting local MP Michael Fallon to a short ceremony to mark the occasion and an invitation will be sent to the SRTA once a date and time have been arranged.

## **8. Christmas and New Year Engineering works**

As a result of the Thameslink programme, this Christmas and New Year, we're afraid that engineering works will affect the majority of our train services.

Most of the works take place at Tanners Hill (near Lewisham and St Johns) and involve doubling the fly-down lines, allowing more fast trains through New Cross and beginning to separate tracks for Charing Cross, Cannon Street and Thameslink.

These changes are key steps in preparation for the full launch of the Thameslink Programme (in 2018) which will provide more services and reduce congestion.

On the mainline, the Cuxton Road bridge at Strood will be rebuilt, providing new track and a better, more reliable structure.

Full details are on our website, but below is a summary of how each line will be affected between Monday 24 December – Tuesday 1 January:

### **8.1 Metro**

All metro services will run a Saturday timetable, apart from Tuesday 25 December (Christmas Day) and Wednesday 26 December (Boxing Day) when there will be no service; and, Sunday 30 December and Tuesday 1 January when a Sunday service will be in place.

Lines to Cannon Street and Victoria will be affected on certain days.

On Sunday 30 December, passengers for Orpington and Sidcup lines will take a train to Greenwich and then a bus replacement service to Hither Green where connecting trains will meet them.

St Johns station will be closed from Sunday 23 December until 0400 on Wednesday 2 January, when normal service resumes.

Trains will be strengthened to full capacity where possible.

### **8.2 Mainline**

All mainline services will run a Saturday timetable, apart from Christmas Day and Boxing Day when there will be no service; and, Sunday 30 December and Tuesday 1 January when a Sunday service will be in place.

Additional peak Cannon Street services will be provided on weekdays to help get commuters to work in the City.

On Thursday 27 and Sunday 30 December, certain services will be diverted.

Trains will be strengthened to full capacity where possible.

Although arguably of no relevance to Sevenoaks rail users, High Speed services will run as normal apart from Christmas Day (no service) and Boxing Day when a half hourly shuttle service between Ashford and St Pancras (calling at Ebbsfleet and Stratford).

A passenger communication campaign will begin shortly through station and train announcements, posters and flyers, our website and Twitter feed.

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