

21 February 2018

Dear stakeholder,

## **20 May 2018 – the new timetable begins**

In just three months, the first major rewrite of our network's timetable in decades will be implemented. Sunday 20 May will see the start of an entirely new service plan for Gatwick Express, Great Northern, Southern and Thameslink following an extensive public consultation spanning more than two years.

A broad outline of the proposals was first set out in September 2016 and since then there has been a welcome eagerness from stakeholders and passengers to participate in the plans. We have received some 28,000 responses and there have been numerous face-to-face discussions at meetings and events such as 'Meet the Managers' at stations. Our Strategic Planning Team has attended over 160 meetings with organisations across our network to discuss the proposals. Through this process, hundreds of amendments have been made to the original plan, and the final product is a set of timetables that has been shaped by passengers and stakeholder groups.

The new service pattern is based on a thorough analysis and review of the journeys passengers make and we've looked to provide the best options within that. It is part of RailPlan 20/20 – the biggest change to rail in a generation, aimed at modernising this part of the network which is intensively used, on an infrastructure never designed for the demands now being placed on it. Our services have seen exceptional growth with passenger numbers doubling on GTR in 16 years and on parts of Southern in just 12 years.

RailPlan 20/20 focuses on addressing the need for more capacity and for better performance through new trains with extra space for 40,000 passengers in each three-hour peak; through new operating practices to support more trains with a greater frequency; and through new or upgraded track and signalling to underpin these new timetable schedules.

The culmination of the Thameslink Programme means a new layout at London Bridge station, Thameslink trains running through the station again after three years of construction work, and the newly opened 'canal tunnels' at Kings Cross linking the Great Northern route directly to the south. From May, this allows our timetables to provide new journey opportunities, tube-like service frequencies through the core of London between London St Pancras and London Bridge, and much greater capacity for passengers.

Train punctuality has also been taken into account. With extra services and station stops squeezed into the system over the years, inefficiencies and anomalies have arisen leading to the current timetable being too unreliable and fragile, and when there is any disruption on the network it spreads much too quickly. Our detailed review sought to address many of these issues. For example:

- With passenger numbers doubling in 16 years (in just 12 years on Southern), the allocated stop times at many stations are simply too short to reasonably account for those getting off and on - so at 75 locations we've changed the stop time allowed in the timetable.

- Many services currently have very short turnaround times at destination stations, so the slightest delay on the route means they don't start their return journey on time and the delay multiplies - we have increased turnaround times to help with this.
- We have significantly reduced the amount of splitting and attaching of trains at terminus stations such as London Bridge and London Victoria with fixed formation trains in use instead - so services won't have to wait for other train sections to arrive, and trains will be longer all day.
- Train units and crew currently travel on several different lines during the day which means if there are delays then this can mushroom and affect more than one line – we will, where possible, put a unit with the same crew and keep them on a dedicated route which will help limit this.

Undoubtedly, it has not been possible to satisfy every comment made within the consultation, and there will be areas where the new timetables mean that users will need to review their journey pattern and timings, but we aim to provide as much information as possible on why that is, and what the options are.

The discussions we have had with stakeholders have been very valuable and we are pleased therefore to share the outcome of the consultation with you. Attached is a summary of key amendments we have made and we are also putting together a station-by-station overview document noting the main changes, which will be available online for passengers. We will alert you to this when it is available. Detailed timetable information will be in journey planners such as [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk) from next week. We will also be briefing our staff through written communications and internal roadshows over the next few weeks, so that they can assist customers with local information.

In tandem with this, we have triggered a high-impact customer communications campaign across stations, on trains, online and on radio so that passengers are aware of these major changes. They will be sign-posted to [www.RailPlan2020.com](http://www.RailPlan2020.com) for more details.

We would also ask for your assistance in getting this message to your constituents and local residents. We can provide you with relevant information for you to share, including key text you may want to use for enquiries as the details of the timetable become known.

This fundamental rewrite of the timetable requires many changes to our operations in the run up to, and after the start date. We are introducing new trains, changing the configuration of existing trains, amending their start and end points, and adding new train crew locations. With such a major logistical change, it is inevitable that there will be a transition period as we move from our existing timetable to the new structure. Once the transition plan is in place, we will provide you with explanations of what this means for services, it will be published on our websites, and we will use all communication channels to notify passengers asking them to check in advance for any short-term changes.

From May, 70% of the capacity benefits of RailPlan 20/20 will be available to passengers. A phased approach is being taken in this roll out and in December 2018 further changes will be made, with more still in May and December 2019. Work to support the timetable changes will continue and, as you will be aware, there are significant works planned on the Brighton main line over next autumn and winter which will improve the long term reliability of the network, although there will be short-term disruption to services. We are supporting Network Rail in this ongoing programme of crucial works so that the full benefits of the timetable can be realised.

This is a once in a generation project that will transform travel on this network. I'd like to thank you for bearing with us in the lead up to this - it has been some time coming and I hope you will join me in welcoming the positive impacts that the timetable will deliver over the next few years.

Regards



**Nick Brown**  
Chief Operating Officer