

Annex

Points Raised in the 'Performance on Southern' Adjournment Debate

Passenger Engagement

Southern holds monthly "Meet the Manager" sessions every month at either or both Victoria and London Bridge. These meetings are also attended by representatives from Network Rail. GTR also hold monthly 'Meet the Manager' sessions at various locations.

In addition to this operators attend events held by local transport user groups and do pay close attention to correspondence and monitor social media to gain further insight into their passengers' experiences.

These operators have also placed great emphasis on improving passenger experience through the use of technology, in particular social media, to communicate quicker, more accurate information to customers.

Fares

We have confirmed the cost of regulated rail fares will be capped at RPI+0% for the term of this parliament from 2016 to 2020. This extends the cap on regulated rail fares put in place in 2014 and 2015.

Currently, train operating companies are able to increase individual fares by up to 2% more than the permitted average increase. From 2015 we will be removing that right.

Rail fares used to be calculated on pure mileage up until 1968. Today, distance is just one factor governing a particular rail fare; other factors taken into account are journey time, frequency of service, the historic volume demand among others.

When assessing overall levels of patronage and setting prices between any two stations, it is also necessary to place them in context against the volume of all passengers between all stations on the whole line of route.

By regulating certain categories of fare, including commuter fares, Government prohibits rail operators from raising those fares by excessive amounts. This protects passengers from large rises at a time when family incomes are already being squeezed.

Each Train Operating Company is a separate entity, and the subsidies given to some are not dependent upon the premia derived from others.

Compensation

Work is already underway on various options to improve compensation arrangements for passengers. Including how improvements to compensation can be made for frequent shorter delays.

Compensation remains an important topic and something we have promised in our manifesto that we will address. We are keen to see the process of improving compensation accelerated for passengers and potentially find interim solutions.

Southern does encourage their passengers to register on line for delay repay to make claiming for compensation easier and not requiring tickets to be posted in. They are making more frequent announcement and displaying information on trains on how passengers can make a claim.

However, we are talking to the industry to encourage them to make it easier for their passengers to claim the compensation they are entitled to.

Technology has an important role to play here and we are pleased to see the innovative solutions which help passengers when claiming compensation.

The trial by c2c starting from early next year of an automated system is very welcome.

This Government also wants to end the frustration endured by millions who currently have to jump through hoops to claim compensation when they are delayed.

We are pleased to see the innovative solutions e.g. phone apps already developed by the market to help passengers claim the compensation they are entitled to. This is in addition to the commercially operated sites that exist to help passengers claim compensation.

Cash Compensation

From Sunday 19 July the new National Rail Conditions of Carriage (NRCoC) has come into force. This which will to allow passengers to claim compensation for train delays in cash rather than vouchers.

The change to allow passengers to claim cash compensation will oblige service providers to pay a refund in certain circumstances (including in cases of delay where the service is not performed with reasonable care and skill).

Such refunds must be paid using the same means of payment as used to buy the service, unless agreed otherwise by the customer

Station Skipping

The skipping of scheduled stops at stations (referred to by industry as 'Skip Stopping'), was raised as an issue.

This takes place when a train is running late and in order to avoid all the trains behind continuing and growing the delay operators pass through stations without stopping in an attempt to reduce the delay for the majority of passengers and recover the service to the normal timetable.

Any train that does not call at all its booked station or that does not complete its full booked mileage will count as a cancellation (full or part depending on the extent of the failure) and as a PPM failure.

Oyster PAYG Extension to Gatwick

The GTR Franchise Agreement set out that GTR 'shall use reasonable endeavours to extend Oyster PAYG to those areas bounded by and including' Gatwick Airport by 30 September 2015. This would include the stations Merstham, Redhill, Earlswood, Salfords and Horley. This would not include Reigate as this station sits outside the route to and from London Victoria and Gatwick.

This will not result in a change to the Travelcard Zone 6 boundary, as this obligation is intended to deliver an extension to Oyster PAYG and contactless payments only. Southern Railways has made good progress on this obligation, ahead of its merger into the GTR.

The Secretary of State will consider the case once an assessment of the business case, specifically looking at affordability, operational impacts and wider implications for smart ticketing and passengers is completed.

Rezoning process

There is an established process for rezoning stations.

The Travelcard map, showing the zone in which each station falls, is set out as part of the Travelcard Agreement. This agreement is made between the Train Operating Companies and TfL. The government is not a signatory.

Any changes to station zones must be proposed by a signatory to the Agreement; the government is not able to do this. The proposal must then be agreed by the remaining signatories.

The Department for Transport can approve or reject the change proposals. This decision is made by the Secretary of State for Transport, on the basis of a business case. If the proposal does not represent good value for money, it would be unlikely to get approval.

The government of course cannot promote or back any proposals outside of this established process.

Future Investment

Southern and GTR have invested heavily in increasing the number of drivers and made amendments to the timetable, both of which have had a positive impact for their passengers such as the re-instatement of the London Bridge – West Croydon services.

From 26 July Southern Railway will be merged into the GTR Franchise. The new franchise will provide a unified operating structure on the Brighton Main line, which should ensure clearer lines of communication both within the industry and to passengers when disruptions do occur.

The franchise will also benefit from two new fleets, one of which will be 108 new carriages to replace the full Gatwick Express fleet that will be introduced from December 2015.

New trains have already been introduced on the Thameslink Brighton to Bedford services and there has been further work done to improve service recovery and information following disruption. The new Thameslink Class 700 trains will start to be introduced during 2016.