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please reply to:
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For the attention of Phil Hutchinson

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Dear Mr Hutchinson

GTR 2018 Timetable Consultation phase 3

Railfuture is the UK's leading independent organisation campaigning for better services for passengers and freight. A voluntary organisation to which many rail user groups are affiliated, the organisation is independent both politically and commercially.

This consultation response is made on behalf of Railfuture with the full support of its London & South East and East Anglia regional branches, and some affiliated rail user groups. The comments made are not confidential and we are happy for them to appear on your website. We would also be happy to enlarge on any of the points made below if that would be helpful.

TL5 – On Sundays the initial service of 1tph to/from London via the Core we consider is inadequate; we should like to see the proposed 2tph introduced immediately.
Late night: While we welcome the late last train ex-London we note it is after a 2-hour gap. The Tube will still be running and the gap should be filled to keep those taking part in the late-night economy on the move rather than sitting around stations and their environs.

TL7 – On all days of the week, GTR must work with Network Rail to provide a solution to the poor capacity available at Cambridge North. TL7 stopping train services should terminate at North station. Already there is evidence of modal shift to rail between local stations and Cambridge, and those new users who will have to change trains at Cambridge for North station will soon be lost back to road.

GN1 – The evening off-peak 'fast' King's Cross-Ely-King's Lynn services are long-distance services that become all-stations at their northern end. They must continue to run non-stop to Cambridge to enable journeys to the Fens to be as fast as possible; they are already proposed for considerable slowing for single line issues and other reasons.

GN1/TL6/TL7 – On Saturdays, all three service groups are good but overcrowding is a real problem north of Cambridge on the GN1 4-car services; mitigation must be sought until all trains move to 8 cars.

www.railfuture.org.uk www.railfuturescotland.org.uk www.railfuturewales.org.uk
www.railwatch.org.uk

GN1/TL6 - The initial Sunday service Cambridge-London is disappointing. The proposal is for 1tph TL6 and 1tph GN1 departing Cambridge 6 minutes apart. For the huge Sunday Cambridge - London market this has the usefulness of 1tph. 2tph TL6 semi-fast services should be run from day one, to give Cambridge two well-spaced trains an hour plus the 1tph GN1 service. Royston-Baldock-Letchworth will also benefit from 2 fast tph from day one.

Standard departure times 7 days a week, and the Ely “Sunday problem”. We advocate moving the GN1 King’s Lynn Ely-King’s Cross service to the weekday off-peak departure timings. This would solve the acute problem at Ely where currently the three trains per hour leave for Cambridge within 10 minutes of each other, which provide Ely with in effect just one service per hour to Cambridge. This is a very long-standing problem and now is the ideal time to solve the problem. The aim must be to provide 7-day standard departure times. Note that the Cross Country Trains element of this service is fixed on a 7-day timetable.

TL5/6/7 – late Sunday morning start of services through the Core. We object to the proposal that trains on Thameslink cannot not run until after 09.30 on Sundays. This is an unacceptable solution to Network Rail’s problems after the huge investment in this project and in planning for a very long time. Trains must run to/from the airports as per Saturdays with the normal rules for engineering and maintenance obtaining. We suggest that Core Saturday overnight through services be withdrawn pro tem after midnight for works and services resumed at 06.00 from Gatwick northbound and early morning starts from Cambridge and Peterborough.

TL7 – we wish to see the link between Cambridge and Maidstone with stopping services established through the Core from the outset. The addition of Kent destinations to the Thameslink network has been a most welcome development but now to have them put to the back of the queue in the extended phased implementation is a major retrograde step.

GN4.1 – we urge GTR to yet again impress on the DfT and Network Rail the vital importance of resolving the provision of the Stevenage terminating platform in the shortest possible timescale, to enable the restoration of full services between Hertford North and Stevenage.

SN4.2 – we especially welcome the earlier first Sunday trains to and from Uckfield.

SN9.4 – we reiterate the principle which we were the first to advocate in our response to the phase 1 consultation, in our answer to Q52 dated 8 December 2016, and developed in our response to the phase 2 consultation dated 27 July 2017. From our work in the intervening period with the six local rail user groups together with their stakeholder contacts, and two local MPs, we have every reason to believe that truncation of the hourly Ashford service at Hastings now commands no significant support, while its extension to Eastbourne is very much and increasingly the favoured option. In conjunction with a new and complementary hourly electric service between Brighton and Hastings, a winning combination of increased capacity along East Coastway and improved connectivity for it and the MarshLink service, over and above the publicly-consulted proposals, can be provided.

We must particularly repeat our point first made last December - “For passenger familiarity it should operate all week with a consistent service pattern”; this principle must now be applied specifically to the weekend services. With one principle being to provide an overlap between Eastbourne and Hastings between the two legs of the split Ashford-Brighton through service, the second principle is for Saturday services to be the same as weekdays but without the peak period services, and Sunday services the same as Saturdays albeit without some of the first and last services. This 7-day railway would then reflect modern 7-day society and support reviving coastal economies with a consistent, user-friendly train service pattern.

10 a, b, c – the 00.31 all week/00.32 Sundays from London Blackfriars should, as now, serve Coulsdon South, Merstham and Redhill; connections from Farringdon upon Crossrail opening increase the case for this.

10 a, b – Purley and Horley seem to have been omitted from London Blackfriars departures, which we trust is no more than an oversight.

10 n – we wish to see the 00.31 from London Bridge extended from Norwood Junction to East Croydon for a late-night ‘metro’ service.

10 o – we wish to see the 23.31, 00.01 and 00.31 from London Bridge extended from Norwood Junction to East Croydon for a late-night ‘metro’ service.

10 r – we wish to see the 00.10, 00.25 and 00.40 from London Victoria extended from Norwood Junction to East Croydon for a late-night ‘metro’ service (in addition to or at least instead of 10 n and 10 o above).

For King’s Cross and St. Pancras Thameslink stations we should like confirmation that planning is underway for their concourse Customer Information Screens to show joint TL and GN departures from both stations. In order to improve passengers’ overall journey experience we advocate a user-friendly way of making the stations’ train services information into a “one station” best practice exemplar.

Yours sincerely

Roger Blake
Railfuture
Vice-Chair, London & South East regional branch