



Promoting Britain's
Railway
for Passengers
and Freight

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GTR December 2015 timetable consultation

Railfuture is a national voluntary organisation structured in England as twelve regional branches, and two national branches in Wales and Scotland. We are completely independent of all political parties, trades unions and commercial interests, funded entirely from our membership. We campaign for improved rail services for passengers and freight. Whilst pro-rail, we are not anti car or aviation.

We welcome the opportunity to take part in this review and would be keen to engage further as necessary.

This response was gathered from affected branches and coordinated by Keith Dyll in his role as Railfuture TOC Liaison for the GTR Franchise (email keith.dyll@railfuture.org.uk, 26 Millway, Mill Hill, London, NW7 3RB).

December 2015 - Thameslink

Bedford to Gatwick Airport and Brighton

Q1 What do you think about these proposals noting that it is not possible to serve both London Bridge and London Blackfriars stations from Preston Park, Hassocks and Wivelsfield until 2018 when the Thameslink works are completed?

A This specific change may be undesirable but appears inevitable. See also our response to Q11.

Q2 Do you support the new journey opportunities between Brighton, Gatwick Airport, Central London, Stevenage, Letchworth and Cambridge?

A Yes. A major improvement in connectivity by bringing the Brighton and Great Northern routes together in the expanded Thameslink network.

Q3 Do you support faster journey times for passengers for overnight journeys travelling from stations between Bedford, Luton and London

A Yes, but it seems that improvements are to be made for outer passengers at the expense of shorter distance travel, and Luton now appears to do better than Gatwick for passengers and staff. As London Underground will be opening Kentish Town and West Hampstead stations for the new all-night Northern and Jubilee line services, all Friday and Saturday night trains should call there.

Q4 In order to achieve this [the] existing calling pattern will have to change and Radlett, Elstree & Borehamwood, Mill Hill Broadway, Hendon and Cricklewood will be served by a new Luton to London service. Do you support this?

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A This will be essential if the above proposals are carried out. With the withdrawal of the through overnight service from Gatwick from these stations it is essential that the two services should be timed for minimal connectional delays.

December 2015 - Gatwick Express

Q5 Do you support the integration of the Gatwick Express into the wider Brighton mainline?

Yes, we welcome the extension of alternate Gatwick Express services to/from Brighton, but we object strongly to the premium fare. It is an artificial distortion of the passenger travel market, having an adverse effect on the revenue of the service by dissuading passengers from using it when other services are available. That cost deterrent then has the effect of adding to crowding of people and luggage on those other services, many of which take barely any longer between the airport and London. A premium fare for what is in reality very little more than a standard service is an anachronism. New trains, little different from other Southern trains calling at Gatwick, will still not attract airport passengers if the price differential is perpetuated. There is no premium fare on Stansted Express even though it is the monopoly airport rail service with London, while Heathrow Express is indisputably a premium service.

December 2015 - Southern

Brighton Main Line

Q6 Do you support the above proposals?

A Yes, we support the Victoria-Brighton semi-fasts. There will however be fewer trains between East Croydon and Brighton, with longer journey-times. Those who use suburban services to Clapham Junction to connect with fast Brighton services will lose out.

Mainline West

Q7 Do you support our plans to reduce the journey time between London, Horsham, Chichester, Portsmouth Harbour, Southampton Central and Bognor Regis by omitting the call at Redhill?

A Yes but only if equivalent Crawley-Redhill-London service levels are provided.

Q8 Do you support our plans to reduce the journey time between London, Hove, Worthing and Littlehampton by omitting to call at Preston Park and placing the calls at Portslade and Lancing into one train?

A Yes but we would like to see an end to splitting/joining at Haywards Heath.

Mainline East

Q9 Do you support our plans to reduce the journey time between London, Lewes, Eastbourne and Hastings by placing the calls at Wivelsfield and Plumpton into one train?

A Yes but we would like to see an end to splitting/joining at Haywards Heath. We would also wish to see an improved level of service at Cooksbridge, for example by inserting calls in the same slower service which will call at Wivelsfield and Plumpton. Specifically, improved connections with Falmer/Brighton could be achieved from a Cooksbridge call in the early-morning Haywards Heath-Seafood service, bearing in mind that there is a market for non-London-related travel and particularly focussed on the city region of Brighton.

Redhill

Do you support:

Q10 The reduction of journey time between London, Reigate and Tonbridge and the change of London terminal from London Bridge to London Victoria?

A On the Horley-East Croydon corridor timetable changes for some stations are neutral but others eg Redhill and Coulsdon South are worse off viz.

1 – Coulsdon South-London journey time increased to 43 minutes from 27;

2 – Coulsdon Town also loses Tattenham Corner shuttle;

3 – trains already full when arriving at Redhill

4 – do the Gatwick Thameslink trains serve Norwood Junction, Purley, Coulsdon South and Merstham? Will connections with FGW trains be adversely affected?

Redhill is the 10th busiest station on the Southern network yet rail users feel it is becoming the outer end of a suburban service. We propose that one of the Arun Valley trains runs fast and the other via Redhill in each hour.

Q11 The introduction of new off-peak Thameslink services between Redhill, Merstham, Coulsdon South, Purley and London Blackfriars, City Thameslink, Farringdon and St. Pancras International earlier than planned?

A There are doubts about the wisdom of this because it creates a distorted Gatwick Airport service from Bedford and Luton. For stations north of East Croydon there will be two trains arriving at and leaving the airport within a few minutes of each other, so that effectively there will be only two journey opportunities per hour to and from Central London and the Bedford route.

Q12 Removing the Redhill stop from London Victoria to Portsmouth Harbour, Southampton Central & Bognor Regis via Horsham services?

A See Q10 response above.

Coastway West

Rail could play a much stronger role in the local travel market by accelerating some Brighton services, for example by skip-stopping.

Coastway East

Q13 What do you think of more trains calling additionally at Southease during the week noting that there will be a slight increase (2 minutes) in journey times to/from Seaford to accommodate the call?

A We would welcome this improvement, particularly into the late-evenings, and wish to see it extended to weekends as well.

Q14 What do you think of Sunday trains calling at Three Oaks and Winchelsea alternately every two hours on Sundays noting that there will be a slight increase (2 minutes) in journey times to/from Ashford International to accommodate the calls?

A We wholeheartedly support this most welcome proposal, for which we have been campaigning in support of the local user groups MLAG and THWART for some time.

Oxted Route

We with local stakeholders wish to see the first train to/from Uckfield on Sundays start an hour earlier, similar to Three Oaks/Winchelsea to support the visitor economy in Uckfield line communities as well as enable longer days out by rail from them. We also support local groups who believe they have identified a spare path for an additional up morning peak service.

South London Metro

We wish to be reassured that the Tattenham Corner-London Bridge and shuttle trains will be even-interval. Some shuttles are well-used and would generally be so if more broadly advertised and with an even service interval on the branch. The shuttle also needs to run during the peaks when it is most needed, and when services are disrupted with no through trains operating. There were no questions about this service being withdrawn in the DfT's franchise consultation.

West London

There is sufficient demand on this route to warrant a regular minimum of two Southern trains per hour.

December 2015 - Great Northern

Great Northern [Inner]

We warmly welcome the planned all-day/every-day services to and from Moorgate starting this December.

Great Northern [Outer]

Q15 Do you support the new journey opportunities between Brighton, Gatwick Airport, Central London, Stevenage, Letchworth, and Cambridge?

A Yes, as Q2 we support the new journey opportunities after 2018 by bringing the Great Northern routes into the Thameslink network.

Further comments

Q16 Do you have any further comments not covered in this consultation which you would like to raise for possible future consideration?

A We should much appreciate an opportunity to comment on the final draft timetable produced as a result of this consultation. We should also appreciate an opportunity to comment on the weekday peak and evening and weekend timetables before they are finalised.

We should very much appreciate opportunities during next year to share passenger feedback on this December's timetable as it is to be the basis for the 2018 timetable. Furthermore we should appreciate early opportunities to share in the development of the 2018 timetable.

Connections at Tonbridge, Redhill and Gatwick: the numbers of passengers making cross-Tonbridge connections are low because the opportunities to do so are virtually non-existent; the absence of a summary CIS at the Redhill end of the platform at Tonbridge doesn't help either. In the absence of through services the timings of connections at Redhill to/from Gatwick are the more important. The official 10-minute connection time prevents feasible connections at Gatwick with Tonbridge and Reigate services. There is an example of a London Bridge-Gatwick stopping service which connects with an FGW service from Reading at Redhill but arrives Gatwick at the same time as, and therefore not connecting with, a service for Lewes/Hove.

We are concerned that there will be fewer trains from Norwood Junction to London Bridge.

Generally there is growing demand for earlier start-up of services on Sundays.

On similar reasoning as the changes proposed for Three Oaks, Winchelsea and Southease we request the addition of a Sunday service at Norman's Bay, even if initially only on a 'summer-only' basis [cf the success of the Norwich-Cromer/Sheringham service]

We note that South West Trains have seen improved performance since they have increased their driver/conductor buddying, and recommend that Southern/GTR do likewise.

A key driver of passenger dis-satisfaction is how operators handle delays; one way of responding to this is for passengers to be clearly informed of where to change during times of disrupted services.

We would appreciate information on which stations the new class 700 trains will not be able to call at on their regular routes.

As new, and in some cases lost, opportunities for interchange emerge from the new timetable it will become ever-more important for good information to be available at all platforms and on all stations where 'inter-lining' between services is possible. All platforms at every station need CIS indicating as a minimum the next two, preferably three trains, and all platforms at any station where any form of interchange is possible must have clearly-visible CIS showing a summary of all services departing from any platform. This is generally important to avoid passengers inadvertently missing readily-available connections, and is especially important during times of disrupted services when unfamiliar options may be available.

The enclosed map in your consultation suggests that the all station inner service on Thameslink North will except in the high peak be cut back to St Albans this will severely inconvenience people who travel to Harpenden, Luton and the airport with luggage. Likewise people who live in Luton and Harpenden will not be able to directly access other services via West Hampstead and Kentish Town. All will have to change at St Albans. If this is a correct interpretation can we suggest a review of this.

Yours Faithfully



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