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For the attention of Phil Hutchinson

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27 July 2017

Dear Mr Hutchinson

## **GTR 2018 Timetable Consultation phase 2**

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.

East Coastway/MarshLink - we refer to our 8 December 2016 response to the Phase 1 consultation question 52. We have to accept that there is no rolling stock solution available for next year to enable continuation of the Ashford-Brighton through service with the all-important increased capacity, and that a clear majority of respondents supported splitting the service, albeit that opinion on where to split it was evenly divided. We therefore return to our original alternative proposal which was and still is to provide the much-needed extra capacity between Brighton and Hastings with a new 4-car electric service, and at the same time to maintain the connectivity vital to the economic, educational, cultural, and social life of coastal and rural communities across the east of East Sussex by continuing to operate the 2-car diesel service from Ashford as far as Eastbourne. The resulting extra train per hour between Hastings and Eastbourne, especially beneficial to St. Leonards and Bexhill, would provide a gain over current capacity on that section of the route of the additional 4-car electric service, rather than your currently-proposed net gain of only 2 cars by replacing the 2-car diesel with the new 4-car electric between Brighton and Hastings. It would also enable an extended market catchment to derive direct benefit from the proposed and most welcome quicker connections at Ashford with Southeastern High Speed services, enable better connection opportunities for Bexhill at St. Leonards Warrior Square with Southeastern services for The City, as well as attract more business to rail, and to the wider area generally, by offering more opportunities to travel by de-congested rail rather than increasingly-congested local roads. In addition and more locally, Ore with its most-welcome all-day MarshLink service, and St. Leonards, would benefit from an additional hourly through journey opportunity further westwards. The later last train to and from Ashford is also very welcome for the cultural and social life of communities along the route, including the new Rye cinema for example; we request that it serves both Winchelsea and Three Oaks in each direction, rather than Doleham which might instead be accommodated in the previous service if necessary.

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[www.railwatch.org.uk](http://www.railwatch.org.uk)

Elsewhere on East Coastway, we welcome the increase of later trains at Southease, and ask for the last train to call there from Brighton to be later than in the 22.41 departure. We note that early-morning services at Southease are very uneven with the first train to Seaford not until after 09.00. Calls in the proposed 06.41 and 07.41 Brighton-Seaford services would be much appreciated, as would a call in the 06.25 Seaford-Brighton service.

On Mainline East we recognise the Cooksbridge conundrum. We do however request that its early-morning links with Lewes for onward connections for local workers towards Newhaven/Seaford and for Falmer and Brighton could be improved with a call in the first available train of the day, the 05.32 service from London Victoria, to connect with the Seaford train departing Lewes at 06.59 and the Brighton train departing Lewes at 07.01.

We warmly welcome and endorse the whole package of proposed Uckfield line services, with its completely-standardised and consistent pattern of operation throughout the entire operational day.

At the opposite end of the network, it appears from the proposed timetable for Thameslink Mainline routes that the Cambridge-Brighton semi-fast services will not start/finish at Cambridge North as had previously been understood. We regard this as a serious omission which should be corrected, or justified.

There appear to be some anomalies in the proposed timetable for the Great Northern Mainline routes in the evening peak, with the 16.31 from St. Pancras and the 16.42 from King's Cross being just 1 minute apart at Royston and Cambridge and with the latter service calling at Ashwell & Morden rather than the generally-expected Letchworth GC; this pattern then repeats every half hour until the 19.01 from St. Pancras and the 19.12 from King's Cross. A particular detail is that the 19.18 from Kings Cross to Peterborough in breaking the preceding regular half-hourly interval will miss a bus connection at Huntingdon for St. Ives; this requires re-examination.

There is a particular issue for Hatfield's connections via Stevenage with Huntingdon and Peterborough. The good connections northbound are not at all reflected southbound so we request that this be re-examined.

On the Bedford route we are concerned about the considerably-extended journey times between St. Albans City and St. Pancras, be they in the non-stop or limited-stop services; as southbound Thameslink non-stop trains are believed to assume priority we ask for this to be addressed, or justified.

We believe that better use than proposed should be made of West Hampstead Thameslink with its Underground and Overground interchange opportunities, with a southbound call at the end of the morning shoulder-peak in the 08.49 from Bedford, and an earlier resumption of northbound calls after the evening peak than the proposed 20.30, which is much later than currently, such as in the 18.51/.56, 19.21/.26, and 19.51/.56 from St. Pancras.

We have a number of concerns about extended/uneven service intervals on the Bedford route. These include early-morning southbound intervals at Harlington and Leagrave which might be addressed by starting some Luton services from Bedford, late-morning peak northbound service intervals at Cricklewood and Hendon, and mid/late-evening peak southbound intervals at Harlington and Leagrave.

We note that the 07.51, 08.41, 08.51, and 09.51 from St. Pancras do not serve St. Albans City, which appears extraordinary in view of its status as a major employment, educational, retail and tourism centre; we trust that these missing links can be corrected, or justified.

Returning to the south of the capital, we have four specific requests to address perceived deficiencies. First, Tattenham Corner services should continue their calls at Norwood Junction to maintain 6tph connections with East Croydon and for easy changes with London Overground. Second, later evening services between central London and the Tattenham Corner/Caterham branches in each direction. Third, reduced gaps in services between Gatwick Airport and Purley, Norwood Junction and Coulsdon South not just for air travellers but no less importantly for airport workers. Fourth, a second train per hour between East Croydon and Watford Junction via the West London line, to add sorely-needed capacity in Zone 2 and connectivity for example between East Croydon and Balham for the Northern line.

We look forward to seeing and commenting on the weekend timetables in the near future.

Yours sincerely

Roger Blake  
Railfuture  
Vice-Chair, London & South East Regional Branch