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11 July 2018

Dear Marcus

20 May timetable crisis: impact on passengers

Thank you for seeking input from Transport Focus to the 'impact on passengers' strand of the Glaister Inquiry into the 20 May timetable crisis. You have asked that, as far as is practicable, we concentrate on the immediate post-20 May period. We will be writing separately in response to Daniel Brown's letter about the crisis as a whole.

There are essentially three points to make about impact on passengers:

- The service was not the improvement passengers were promised; it was not what they had paid for
- The service was unpredictable; for many passengers it was a lottery with practical and emotional impacts
- The crisis has affected people's work life and their home life; for example, being late for work, missing appointments and not getting home before children go to bed.

Appendix A gives a selection of comments Transport Focus has received from passengers talking about how they were impacted. However this one sums up a number of the themes:

"18/06/18 Welwyn Garden City to Kings Cross: Train was delayed yet again so late into work and had to make the time up this evening which meant I missed picking my children up on time."

It is reasonable to assume that the crisis has eroded trust and consumer confidence in the railway, potentially more widely than the directly-affected train companies. We know from the National Rail Passenger Survey that Thameslink satisfaction had been on an upward curve; that improvement has almost certainly been nipped in the bud. The railway will have to work doubly hard to demonstrate to existing and lapsed passengers that it is again safe to rely on the train.



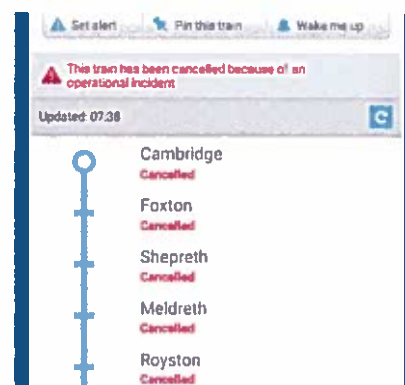
A number of different issues caused the impact and we discuss them below.

Failure to warn passengers in advance

The late realisation by Northern and Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) that they could not operate the full timetable clearly played a part. For example, as late as 16 May GTR said (Appendix B) all was looking good apart from on the *“Thameslink and Great Northern routes [where] there will be a gradual deployment of a small number of services to provide a smooth transition to the new patterns”*. Even though it was clear at that date that *“it will take a few weeks until we reach normal operation in the off peak between Luton and Rainham, Luton and Orpington, and Peterborough and Horsham”*, communications failed to warn of the true implications. On 18 May Northern said (Appendix C) *“we do expect some localised service disruption, which could happen at very short-notice whilst the new timetable beds in.”* The communication from both operators seemed to suggest a short delay in bringing about improvements; and gave little warning that existing, broadly-OK services were about to become unreliable.

Lack of openness

Having failed to warn passengers before 20 May, in the days following the timetable change the industry was slow to acknowledge that there was a serious problem, explain why and be open that it would not be fixed quickly. Instead, Northern and GTR passengers faced a period when they were, in effect, promised a service the industry knew full-well it could not deliver. The idea that this was just teething problems which would be resolved within a week or two was allowed to persist. This is likely to have damaged trust. Lack of openness extended to the explanations given online, at stations and on trains. GTR’s continual use of the phrase “due to an operating incident” was one example, an explanation normally used for instances of a ‘signal passed at danger’.

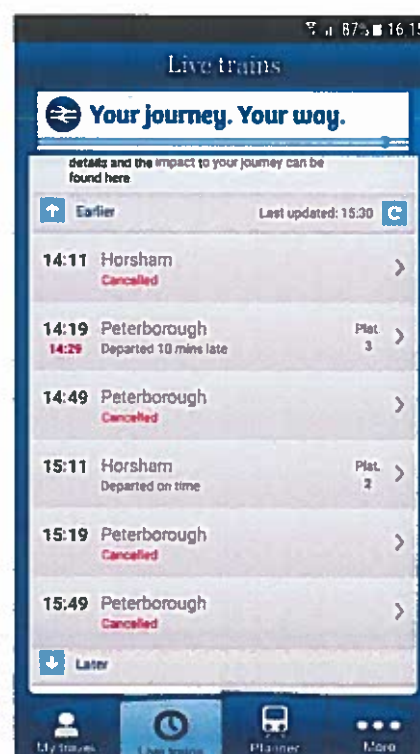


Cumulative impact

Passengers can generally cope with the odd ‘bad day’ that affects any mode of transport. The difference following 20 May was that every day was affected, with an unpredictable service and poor information. The unpredictability made it very difficult for passengers to work around the railway’s problems. Some Northern passengers, including those using Blackpool and Windermere trains, had experienced weeks of cancellations and bus replacements before 20 May; the wider crisis occurred when the railway had already burned through passengers’ tolerance and goodwill. The cumulative impact on passengers’ work and home life should not be overlooked. One passenger contacting us cited the crisis as the ‘final straw’ that caused her resignation from a job she loved at Great Ormond Street hospital.

High impact locations

Many passengers experienced a worse service after 20 May, but some were especially hard-hit. This included those travelling from/to Blackpool, Bolton and the Lake District and from/to stations on the East Coast Main Line north of Hitchin. The Oxenholme to Windermere line had its trains withdrawn entirely and replaced with buses. Transport Focus carried out work here to understand the impact on passengers: our report is included as Appendix D. At stations like Huntingdon and St Neots the new Horsham-Peterborough trains provide the entire off-peak service in the new timetable: this is one of the routes GTR struggled to operate. As a result there were long gaps between trains, as illustrated by three successive northbound cancellations on the live departure board for Huntingdon on 6 June.



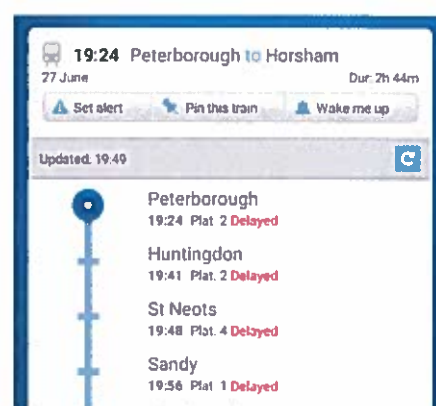


Reliable journey planning was impossible

Communication of cancellations, train alterations and information about replacement buses was poor. Passengers could go to bed thinking a particular train was running, only to get up and find it was not – and in some cases vice versa. The timetable was amended in two different ways. Particularly on GTR, some trains were cancelled in advance (known as ‘P Coding’) and some were cancelled on the day, despite being advertised as running. Replacement buses did not appear in journey planning systems for some weeks – and then only after pressure from Transport Focus. Northern moved faster than GTR, but it is surprising that train companies did not determine more quickly which trains would not run, or were at high risk of cancellation, and publish a formal amended timetable. It may have meant fewer trains showing, but those advertised would have been markedly more reliable. In short, the way cancellations and other changes were made contributed to the lottery; perhaps making the unpredictability worse than it might have been.

Poor information ‘on the day’

The management of Darwin, the national real-time running database, has often been poor. Trains were left showing “delayed” long after they had in practice been cancelled, as illustrated here on 27 June. Also, trains making extra stops or not making their scheduled stops were not always ‘amended’ in information systems, making them invisible to journey planners and causing confusion to passengers on the trains. Appendix E gives a selection of comments we received from passengers about poor information, but this one sums things up well *“11/06/18 Elstree and Borehamwood to St Pancras: Because the train arrived TEN minutes early: skipping Hendon, Cricklewood and Kentish Town. Which suited me but not I imagine everyone else who wanted a stopping service. Train indicator boards at stations and the App all still saying calls at all stations...”*



Ticketing arrangements

The industry was slow to make a decision – and communicate it effectively – that during the crisis passengers could get on any operator’s train, including those on which their ticket would not normally be valid. The delay in putting passengers’ interests above ‘the rules’ only underlined the sense that train companies were not on passengers’ side. The impact was uncertainty and worry – in normal times there can be dire consequences if you are on the wrong train. Could a Northern only ticket be used on a TransPennine Express train? Could a Thameslink only ticket be used on a Gatwick Express train? Passengers did not know what was permitted. They did not know if they needed to pay extra or risked being fined just for trying to get where they wanted to go. Although it should have been faster and expressed more clearly, from 13 June the National Rail Enquiries website said: *“If you have a ticket to travel on Northern, Thameslink, or Great Northern train services and are unable to complete your journey due to delays or cancellations on the recent published timetable changes, valid tickets are being accepted by other train companies on reasonable alternative routes at no extra cost until 29 July [except on Southeastern High Speed]”*. This is positive, but more proactive reassurance through all information channels, on trains and at stations would have been helpful.

Weekends

Passengers travelling at weekends have also been affected. We understand that, before the decision to defer timetable changes in December 2018, Network Rail had been broadly on track with its Informed Traveller T-12 recovery plan – with the significant exceptions of GTR and Great Western Railway. Timetables taking account of engineering works have not been published more than a week or two ahead for GTR, if that. As a consequence, journey planners showed incorrect, or potentially incorrect, information until very late. This made knowing what service will run very difficult for passengers: it was impossible to know if the information presented was wholly correct, wholly incorrect or partially correct. The railway needs to recognise that people have to get to work at the weekends, too – see Anthony Smith’s blog on 4 July, Appendix M.



Compensation

Although compensation over and above that required by the relevant Passenger's Charter took too long to announce, GTR was commendably quick to make clear that Delay Repay compensation would be assessed against the time passengers would have arrived if the intended May timetable had been operating properly. They did not seek to argue that it should be assessed against the 'plan of the day' which had numerous trains removed. We were critical of Northern for not making a similar unequivocal commitment. Transport Focus will comment further about compensation in our wider response to the Inquiry.

Wider impacts

It is important to note the following wider impacts on passengers:

- Passengers will wait longer for improved services. The understandable deferral of timetable changes in December 2018, as a direct consequence of the May crisis, means passengers must wait even longer for promised, much-needed improvements.
- Passengers continue to be affected by failure to publish accurate timetables 12 weeks ahead. The key reason it was necessary for Network Rail to temporarily abandon T-12 Informed Traveller was to release staff to complete the May 2018 base timetable, in particular for Northern and GTR. Passengers suffered as a result, but the objective was not achieved. And there is a double whammy for passengers: as a result of deferring December 2018 timetable changes, T-12 will be sacrificed for longer and the industry "hopes to [restore it] by May 2019".

In addition to the appendices mentioned above, I have attached the letters we sent to the train companies concerned and to the Department for Transport during the crisis; a copy of our regular website updates; and a copy of our Chief Executive's blogs in the period concerned.

Yours sincerely

Guy Dangerfield
Head of Strategy

Encl.

Appendix A

A selection of comments Transport Focus received from passengers talking about how they have been impacted by the timetable crisis.

11/06/18 Swinton to Manchester Victoria: Train was 29 minutes late and was unable to get on that or the next one. Had to get a bus. I have a yearly season ticket and have paid nearly £40 out on bus journeys since the new timetable due to cancelled, delayed and overcrowded trains. I have paid for a service and am not able to access it! I am unsure as to whether or not it is worth me renewing my season ticket in July.

13/06/18 Chorley to Manchester Piccadilly: Daily stress travelling to work. Never know if the train will be on time and have all its carriages. I have a disability so not being able to find a seat or worrying about packed trains causes me stress. I had to be home at a certain time today and left work early to catch an earlier to ensure I made it. 13/06/18b Royston to London Kings Cross: I now have to leave my house around an hour earlier before as each day services I use either disappear or get cancelled and number of stops and length of journey changes each day. I lose time at home and then a long wait for a train that may or may not turn up.

13/06/18 St Albans to St Pancras: Thameslink journeys have been utterly unpredictable so it's nerve-wracking as well as frustrating. Will there be a train with room to squeeze on? When will I arrive? How late will I be? (Not will I be late as I know I will be) Should I just give up. After 25 years using the route I've no idea what the timetable is supposed to be. Online information is no use as allegedly on time trains simply disappear between setting off for the station and getting there.

13/06/18 Rose Hill Marple to Manchester Piccadilly: The new timetable means the train I used to catch is 5 minutes later starting but as it never arrives on time at Manchester I'm late for work. This has meant catching the earlier train, that is now even earlier than previously. Meaning I have to leave for work 30 minutes earlier and arrive likewise at work. ALSO, The trains are STILL only 2 carriages at peak times and now often with no available bicycle stowage.

13/06/18 Huddersfield to Urmston: The TPE train from Hudds was booked to travel via Manchester Victoria, Oxford Road and Piccadilly. Only after passing through Stalybridge (where we turned left instead of right) were we informed that it would be going direct to Piccadilly, missing out the other stops. This meant I missed my connection at Oxford Road.

14/06/18 Kings Cross to Welwyn Garden City: Left work early as it was my husband's birthday. The first train was cancelled, the second train did not run as there was no driver and the third train was packed and late. I could have left work at my normal time and I would have got home at the same time.

18/06/18 Welwyn Garden City to Kings Cross: Train was delayed yet again so late into work and had to make the time up this evening which meant I missed picking my children up on time.

20/06/18 Mill Hill Broadway to Denmark Hill: There is no certainty in the timetable and again today I had to leave half an hour earlier than I would otherwise needed. Today also made me realise that going earlier meant a higher fare (i.e. peak) so having to cope with the uncertainty is leading to some people having to pay peak fares rather than off peak if the trains were running properly.

Appendix B

16 May 2018

Dear stakeholder,

New timetable introduction – from 20 May

With the biggest timetable overhaul in decades fast approaching, on Sunday 20 May, my teams are focusing on making essential crew, fleet and maintenance plan arrangements to facilitate as smooth a deployment as possible. We are also doing a final push to raise awareness and remind customers to plan ahead for their journey.

Last week, highly visible installations were revealed on concourses at Victoria, Brighton and East Croydon stations, supplementing customer messages already in place. This week, a final press release is being issued today - <http://www.mynewsdesk.com/uk/govia-thameslink-railway> new material is being displayed at stations and on trains, and we are handing out a further 25,000 leaflets and sweets at Victoria, London Bridge, Blackfriars, Brighton and Finsbury Park - high footfall stations on our network. These high impact activities are a final drive to raise awareness and encourage customers to check their travel details. In order to provide extra assistance and help customers on their journey, we are re-deploying many back office colleagues at stations for the first three weeks of the timetable to help people during that transition period.

We have done our utmost to raise awareness over the past few months and I'd like to thank you for your help in sharing the messages, we have greatly appreciated it. If you haven't already done so, I encourage you to display the attached poster at your place of work and to share it with your internal and external contacts to ensure nobody is caught out by the timetable change.

On Southern routes, the timetable will be introduced as planned on 20 May, on Thameslink and Great Northern routes there will be a gradual deployment of a small number of services to provide a smooth transition to the new pattern. The relevant routes are as follows:

- Luton, Rainham, Orpington and Horsham routes

In order to form this entirely new timetable many train carriages must be moved to new 'home' engineering depots across the network, and over 400 of our 1,900 drivers are being relocated to new depots. On Southern we are moving towards more, longer, fixed-formation trains so a large number of trains need to be moved around, remarshaled and new maintenance schedules established.

This is a significant logistical task. It will take a few weeks until we reach normal operation in the off peak between Luton and Rainham, Luton and Orpington, and Peterborough and Horsham. For those lines, we expect the full timetable to be in place from 8 June, with the expectation that each week, there will be more units in the correct place. We are keeping the changes to an absolute minimum, at quieter times of the day wherever possible. Specific details are available at www.railplan2020.com/tintro.

- Bedford – Brighton, Gillingham – Rainham services


With Network Rail's publication of their national rail timetables being significantly delayed this year, we have had to recast our baseline assumptions for the Thameslink route, re-plan the driver allocation as well as our train stabling and maintenance requirements. In addition to this, more engineering access time has been requested by Network Rail. To mitigate the overall impact that this is having, we have a number of plans to protect the timetable. For example, our surplus of drivers allows us to reallocate some drivers to new routes - they are now undergoing an accelerated training programme on these new routes. While we complete this work there will be a limited short term implication at night, Monday to Friday, when a small number of services will not run. The selected trains are those with low patronage and those where alternatives e.g. bus replacement services can be made readily available. These services will be introduced early in the summer. We are in the process of updating our website with specific details at www.railplan2020.com/ttintro.

My team and I will keep a close eye on service operation, which we will be reviewing daily with colleagues from Network Rail and other train companies. We are planning sessions for stakeholders, including rail user groups, over the summer to capture feedback.

Passengers will of course be able to continue to contact us through our normal channels e.g. www.southernrailway.com/contact-us. To help deal with expected enquiries as efficiently as possible, and to provide a direct line of sight between customer feedback and the strategic planning team, we have set up a dedicated team in our customer services department reviewing timetable comments.

Following the many years of infrastructure work and timetable planning, I am pleased that we are a few days away from introducing the new service to your route. I'd like to thank you in advance for your support and understanding while we deploy the new timetable.

Regards,



Nick Brown
Chief Operating Officer

Appendix C

From: Northern <connections=northernrailway.co.uk@mail20.sea61.rsgsv.net> On Behalf Of Northern

Sent: 18 May 2018 10:07

To: Jordan Sargeant <Jordan.Sargeant@transportfocus.org.uk>

Subject: Northern Update May 18

[View this email in your browser](#)



18 May 2018

Northern Update May 18

As you may be aware our plans for modernisation are not all being delivered in the way we want. This is hugely frustrating for everyone that works at Northern and I know that this is causing some customers significant disruption and inconvenience and I'd like to apologise for this.

Sadly, Network Rail has not delivered all the improvements to the railway that they were supposed to and the biggest improvement project is now two years late. We are working hard with them to fix this as quickly as possible.

This work is essential so that we can start running our new £500m fleet of trains and so that we can phase out very old trains like the Pacers. This will mean that we will be able to deliver the extra and better services our customers deserve and expect. We are doing everything we can to get things back on track as quickly as possible for our customers across the North.

Northern's modernisation plan

Northern is committed to modernising rail travel across the north with new or refurbished trains, removal of Pacer trains, better stations and 2,200 extra train services a week by 2020. These modernisation plans depend upon the on-time delivery of new or upgraded rail infrastructure by Network Rail. The increase in these train services are delivered each year during May and December when national timetables change across the UK. For Northern, the May 2018 timetable change was planned to be a key milestone in delivering more services.

Service improvement delays

Frustratingly, Network Rail announced in January 2018, a further delay to the biggest infrastructure project necessary for Northern's modernisation, the electrification of the Manchester to Preston route via Bolton. This brings the delay to completion of this project to two years and, in the short-term, severely impacts our plans to increase services and capacity across the network. This is because we are unable to run electric trains along the Bolton corridor (until electrification is completed) and therefore we are having to reallocate diesel trains from elsewhere to continue to be able run these

services, rather than them being available to enhance services elsewhere. As a result, whilst we will be delivering an increase of 1,300 new services a week from May 18, disappointingly for customers, 900 new services a week will not be delivered until December 2018.

For Northern's train planners, the electrification delay was also a major set-back, leaving them less than four months to fully re-plan our May 18 timetable, less than half the normal time required. Unfortunately, due to this condensed planning time some routes will see a deterioration in timetabled services. This also means that opportunities for resolving last-minute train scheduling problems have not been available. Therefore, we are not able to make even minor changes to train times for several months, whereas a normal timetable process would have allowed for this.

May 18 timetable change will see around 90% of our services change and an extra 1,300 train services introduced across our network, the biggest change to local rail for many years. This is a significant operational challenge, and given the late nature of the planning for this, we do expect some localised service disruption, which could happen at very short-notice whilst the new timetable beds in. We will continue to do everything we can to ensure we minimise any service disruption and keep customers informed. Over the last four weeks we have been focused on ensuring our customers know that timetables are changing with a 'check before you travel' message across stations, trains and online channels.

Driver availability

Northern has 1,529 trained drivers, 180 more than when we started the franchise in April 2016. However, availability of drivers to operate timetabled services has been an issue over the last few weeks in some locations for two unexpected reasons.

Firstly, the completion of the electrification of the Blackpool to Preston line by Network Rail was delayed at the last minute, by three weeks, which meant that driver training became a real challenge. Before trains can operate on new lines, drivers have to undergo essential safety related route training, and for Blackpool this meant training 400+ drivers from all depots who operate this route. This means that some drivers are unavailable for their normal train driving duties whilst they are undergoing this training.

Secondly, we have been unable to ask our drivers to work on their Rest Days for the last three months. Rest Day Working is a normal industry practice adopted when there are short-term training requirements, which enables us to absorb those exceptional or last-minute training needs, and provide additional flexibility for train driver rosters.

The combination of these two factors has meant that we have faced a shortage of available drivers in a number of locations which has, unfortunately, led to a far higher level of delays and cancellations to train services. We're sorry for these delays and cancellations and we are working hard to complete our driver training. We are also working with our colleagues and ASLEF with a view to getting Rest Day Working reinstated, which in turn will further help improve driver availability.

I hope this update provides you with a good overview of our current position.



For more information or to stay up to speed, visit:

northernrailway.co.uk



Lakes Line disruption – June 2018

Background

Passengers on the Lakes Line, between Oxenholme and Windermere in Cumbria, have faced significant disruption in 2018. This disruption began before the May timetable change, with an unprecedented number of trains cancelled in April and May. After the 20 May timetable change and widespread disruption across the Northern network, on 4 June Northern implemented an emergency timetable.

This timetable replaced all train services on the Lakes Line with buses, initially for two weeks, later extended to four weeks with an announcement on 7 June. Northern's stated aim for the bus replacement was to avoid further late notice cancellations and provide passengers with a more reliable service.

West Coast Railways train service

On 18 June, after two weeks with only a rail replacement bus service, at short notice West Coast Railways (a heritage/charter train operator) began a train service following lobbying by local MP Tim Farron and local rail users. This train service ran alongside the rail replacement buses until Northern's train service resumed on 2 July.

Objectives

Transport Focus wanted to understand the impact of all these changes. We took a 'passenger-eye view', using observations and informal interviews on 21 and 22 June to provide a qualitative snapshot of the passenger experience on the line.

Conclusions

- Northern's rail replacement bus operation was generally efficient and effective, keeping passengers moving, supported by friendly and helpful staff.
- The West Coast Railways train service was very well received, with the heritage character and sense of occasion felt to be in keeping with the area.
- The late notice addition of the West Coast Railways service meant access to platforms on previously closed stations was required. It also changed passengers' information needs, requiring explanation of the options available. During fieldwork dates the information about the train services was limited making passengers more reliant on staff for information and support.
- Local passengers were very concerned about the disruption and impact on the community and tourism. Northern will need to work hard to rebuild trust.



Lakes Line Disruption to services

June 2018

Background and objectives

The 'Lakes Line' Northern service has been temporarily replaced with rail replacement buses



On 18 June a heritage operator began at short notice to run a rail service following lobbying by the local MP and user groups



Transport Focus and Transport for the North want to understand the **impact** of the changes on the Lakes Line to passengers



- Awarded the franchise to run the 'Lakes Line' from Oxenholme to Windermere in 2016
- In 2018 there have been significant disruptions to service, including numerous cancellations
- On the Lakes line, in June 2018 the rail service was removed and replaced with a temporary bus service
- The stated aim is that the train service will be reinstated in July 2018

[The Lakes Line in the news](#)



- An online survey was distributed, however, there was not a high response rate
- Qualitative research and observations were therefore undertaken on the 21 (a strike day on Northern) and 22 June 2018 amongst passengers using the train service and the bus service. This was also supplemented with conversations with staff and local people not using the line.
- Results from this are summarised in this report

How the research was conducted

Researcher visited Lakes Line for 2 days (21 June, 22 June) and conducted observations, intercept interviews as well as travelling on the options available



Observations of passengers and staff at stations and in areas designated for the rail replacement bus services



Informal intercept interviews amongst passengers and staff at stations, on rail/ bus services. These were at different stages of the journey process, so ranged from someone traversing the station to board a service, to someone not travelling on the day but looking for information for another day, to someone making a journey



6 bus journeys (both the whole line and shorter parts)
5 train journeys (both the whole line and shorter parts)



Oxenholme ● Kendal ● Burneside ● Staveley ● Windermere
All stations and bus areas visited



21 June 12.30pm to 7.30pm
22 June 7.30am to 3.20pm

June 2018

Range of opinions included

Researcher talked to a range of travellers and staff at all destinations...



Younger people

Tourists

Business
travellers

Older people

Rail enthusiasts

Rail
replacement
bus staff

Overseas
visitors

Local
people

UK
visitors

Commuters

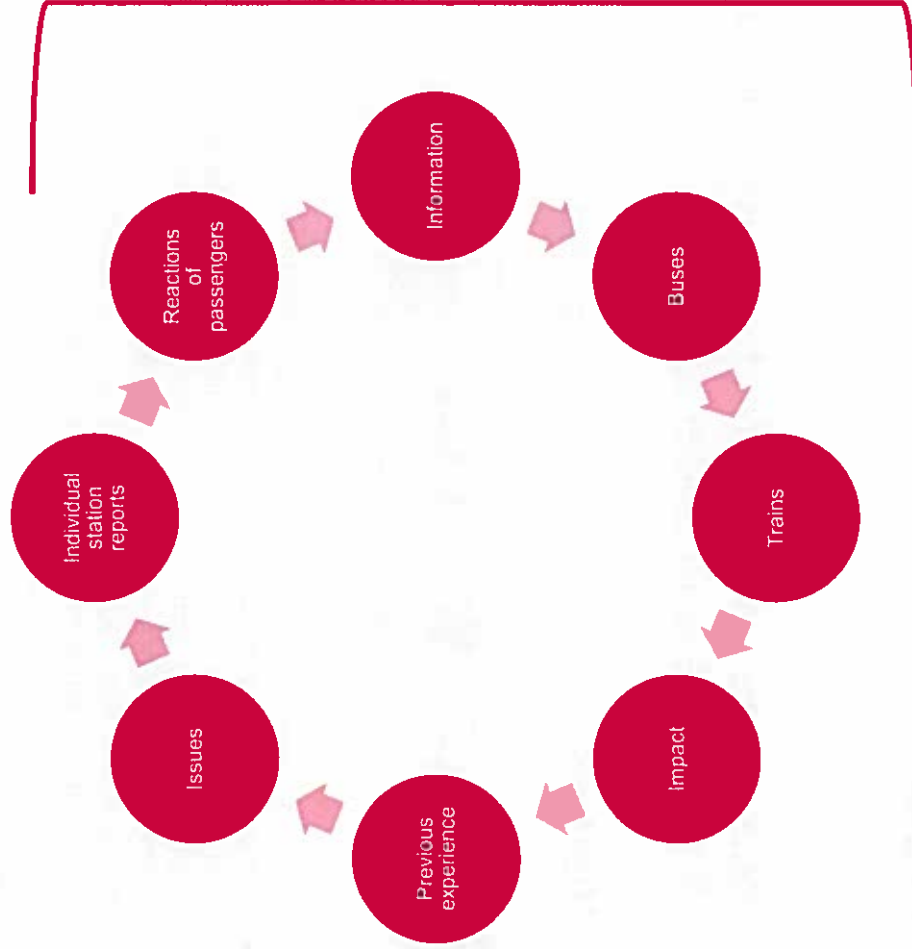
Station
staff

English
as an
additional
language

Students

Local
journeys

What is in this report?



Key questions to answer

- What is it like 'on the ground'
- Are there any learnings/ improvements for this line/ other lines?
- What is the impact of the changes on passengers

Context

Passengers come from all directions, with all kinds of luggage and with all sorts of knowledge and understanding

Visitors



- Travelling from other countries, cities, and other parts of the Lake District via train
- Not all visitors to the area come via Oxenholme, they might travel to Windermere and then holiday and then depart to Oxenholme
- Some may be walking and arrive at stations on the line such as Staveley or Kendal

Locals



- Commuting to/ from work
- Business travel – often going to Oxenholme for onward connections
- Holiday homes
- Days out/ walking (not just visitors that do tourism)
- Visiting friends and family

Awareness of changes to services

- Not aware
- Seen on news
- Local discussion
- Checked on National Rail
- Saw at station
- Email
- From Airbnb host

NB: passengers may have awareness of disruption to services but not specifically that all services are cancelled on Lakes Line

Some had issues on the way to Oxenholme with delays or being told to change trains at Preston unnecessarily

Oxenholme: on the ground

Oxenholme Station is managed by Virgin Trains

A very straightforward process for most people, especially if they arrive when the train service is soon to depart – when it works, it works well

Incoming train may announce available options (bus/ train) and times for continuing journey

Announcements are made on the platform about the next bus/ train departures

Trains and bus departures are listed on the information screens and platform displays (station staff said they had to do this manually).
Nothing in ticket office.

Although on the second day the trains were not listed at the start (West Coast Rail staff said they had to call Manchester and had a 'moan')

There are staff available on the platforms and touchpoints with them are always positive

Rail replacement buses leave from the short stay carpark. There is signage in the station to indicate its location, but it's subtle and not present on platform (see section on information)

Area to wait for bus is well provisioned (including decorations and water) and was observed to be well organised. Staff are helpful and pleasant. They give advice about what service to take including the train if they think that this is a better option for the passenger (although this is them making the judgement).

Its not the normal train but its going to Windermere and that's all I care about



Whilst Oxenholme is the most organised transition, things can go wrong if staff are not available

Oxenholme

Oxenholme Station is managed by Virgin Trains

Buses and trains were on electronic displays. Rail replacement bus area comfortable and clean

Platform information at Oxenholme



Displays not showing trains on the second day at all times



Rail replacement bus waiting area at Oxenholme



Area set up in short stay car park for rail replacement services

Kendal: on the ground

Kendal station is managed by Northern

Unmanned station with little information available at platform level. Relying on rail replacement staff outside station to direct passengers

At the station itself (a short walk up a steep hill from the road) there is **very little visible information** as to how passengers should make their journey. Information about the bus available by the entrance to the station

A **member of the rail replacement staff** should be present at all times at the stop next to the station. They stop people who are walking up to the station and periodically check there is no one there waiting

The **staff member** has a bus timetable however, there is limited information at the bus stop itself otherwise

There is **no information about the train service** at the station except for the electronic display and this does not give information about all services, only the one next to arrive

Buses leave from the road nearest the station on the **opposite side to the station entrance**

It is **not particularly obvious or easy to see the bus stop** – it doesn't stand out and there isn't much seating

Unlike Oxenholme and Windermere no translated information available (that I could see)



There was **no way of purchasing tickets** as the machine was newly installed and not yet working

Its not just tourists – locals were also arriving and some were confused

Kendal

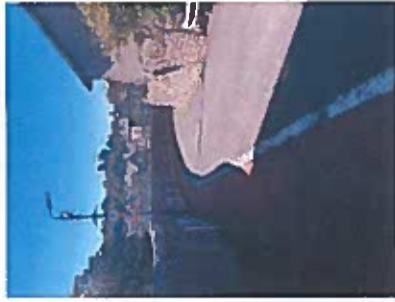
Kendal station is managed
by Northern

Images show the dearth of information at platform level or about the train

On the station



Just outside the station



Bus
information



Rail replacement area



Burneside and Staveley

Both are managed by Northern

Unmanned stations with some information about the bus, but little about the train

At both station entrances there is signage, some quite subtle, about the change to services with regards rail replacement buses

These are unmanned stations therefore there is a risk people could wait on platforms for some time unaware of the bus

The rail replacement bus stop at Staveley is some distance from the station itself. To get there you need to follow a 'trail' and it is not always very clear where your next 'sign' will be

There is timetabling information at the rail replacement stop. When I used these stations, the services were running to time



Burneside and Staveley

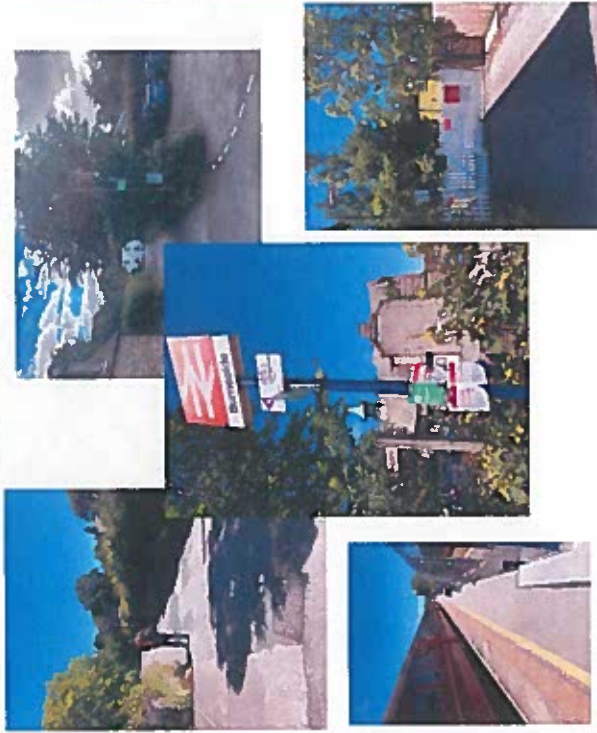
Both are managed by
Northern

At Staveley there was quite a walk required to find the pick up point in the village centre

Staveley



Burneside



Windermere: on the ground

Managed by
Northern

Busy station, and at times slightly muddled. Lots of rail replacement staff. Information available but limited for trains.

As you arrive at the station you are greeted by, as many as, at times 6 staff with high vis.

There are also 'A' signs outside the station entrance and posters about the rail replacement service. One of these was translated. It would be difficult to miss that something was going on.

There was a sign with the train times listed outside a shop which is next to the station – Booths but not in station or next to station itself

1 member of staff in the ticket office when asked claimed to be unaware of the times of the trains because they were 'not Northern services'

'High viz' team are contractors employed for rail replacement guidance however there is a member of Northern staff and they do check tickets

The area to get the buses from is not delineated and there is very little seating. There are also scheduled bus services running from the area as well as access to other vehicles such as taxis. This means that coaches can only pick up just before they leave and that it is therefore less easy to guide people in the right direction. Bottled water is available (as it is at Oxenholme and Kendal).

I observed staff advising about trains, e.g. *'and you can take the fancy train if you like it will leave at 3.30pm'* however, they were not announced in the same way as in Oxenholme.

There is almost too many staff in the front of the station, its not particularly clear who is doing what and why. But they are pleasant and try to be helpful

The lack of a departure board hampers information flow and makes everything reliant on staff

Windermere

Windermere station is managed by Northern

A busy and more difficult area to manage than at Oxenholme.
Information sharing could be more effective

On the station



Trains are busy arriving at Windermere

Information sharing



Lots of staff to help passengers

Information is often through staff

High reliance on staff, particularly at stations other than Oxenholme. Printed information at Oxenholme lacks stand out on platform

On the platform at all the stations there was not a great deal of signage. This could lead to confusion. A clear sign indicating that services are disrupted and what to do **next** would ease this

Clearer signs directing passengers to rail replacement bus service would be useful at Oxenholme – at the moment it relies on asking staff or leaving the platform where there are more directions

Colour and logo is subtle and could be missed. Especially where there is a 'trail' to follow as is the case at some stations. In the case of Staveley the trail is long!

The rail service needs a printed timetable at the stations. People are going there to check the times and they are not able to do so. It would also help situations when the information boards are not working

Having rail information available at Windermere would ease confusion in what is an already very busy area

More easily available printed information would help people who want to make their own decisions rather than rely on advice from the bus replacement staff

There is translated information available but not everywhere

Not everyone is aware of the changes in advance of making the journey, even those who purchased their tickets online – a missed opportunity

- System relies on staff to give the right information and to be available
- Issues can arise if staff aren't available or as present (like in Kendal, Staveley and Burneside)
- Not everyone likes talking to staff or having to adapt on the day (ie people with anxiety/ ASD)

It's confusing for tourists. Locals are getting used to it now. Good info is not easy to get



Buses experience often good

Buses were clean, often relatively punctual and frequent. No significant evidence of detriment with using the service

Many buses observed to be very quiet or empty. One driver said he had never had a passenger on the last stopping service from Windermere. However frequent users say they can be busy at times but **not as busy as the regular scheduled train service.**

Although the posters do stipulate that there should be no bikes or items that do not fold, or animals, Oxenholme staff suggested they would **accommodate anything they could.** Bus passenger was observed carrying a dog

They are friendly, professional, doing what they can



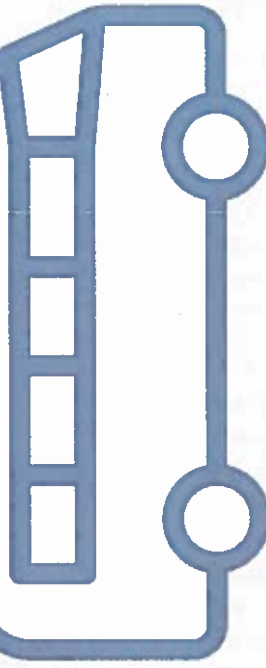
Brilliant service. Better than what was there previously – more reliable and more frequent



There seems to be **excess capacity and flexibility.** The controller at Windermere uses National Rail to try and match demand

Buses were **not always strictly on schedule** or expected by staff but there is a steady stream

One passenger was put on the **wrong bus** at Windermere so the bus driver had to make an unscheduled stop. When I asked regular passengers about this however, they said this was unusual and that they had not noted this occurring.



Passengers were **mostly calm** boarding and leaving the services. One lady was slightly agitated because she had been told that the bus was going to Staveley station when it does not actually stop there but some way outside. She had a long walk and a big bag

The general issue with the buses which applies to rail replacement services in general is that there is more **UNCERTAINTY** ... see next slide

Attitudes towards the buses

Most are not enthusiastic about them but good experiences exist



or



General feeling of **unreliability** but this does seem to fade with those who regularly use and who find the service to have been as / more reliable than the previous rail service

Uncertainty – of how long it will take, what time it will get there, where it will go from, how to find out information is a common niggle. It is not that people think its impossible to navigate, rather it's an added complication they would rather avoid if possible

Time taken – feeling that journey will take longer and that there is less guarantee about the time it will take due to traffic and other potential delays. Locals in particular have this concern

Comfort – travel sickness, space, ability to move around are issues. Comfort thought to be compromised on a bus rather than train

These concerns will be a **barrier to use** for some – particularly if they have had a bad previous experience and/ or have a choice in the matter (i.e. a car)

For most however, these do not translate into a feeling of outright negativity however they may still prefer to wait longer for the train to avoid the bus

Some locals refuse to use the bus services or are very angry about their use on their line.



Good experiences – pleasant staff, smooth transition, meeting a connecting service, getting there

Its usually a dreaded word (RRB) but its gone very well.



Some people will take the bus if they think it will get them to their destination more quickly

NB: Perhaps due to the introduction of the rail services, however no buses were seen to be crowded/ difficult to board and it is these circumstances which can lead to passengers reporting previous detriment

Trains are well received



Heritage coaches and engine delight passengers.
It also attracts people to visit so pleases locals

Lots of interest in the trains – photos being taken and rides and days out for locals and rail enthusiasts who have heard about the train

Service punctual, clean and mood on the train is jovial and celebratory. Trains are busy with lots of luggage and buggies/ prams, taking the pressure off the buses

Service has the 'right feel' and is popular amongst many locals who are angry about the issues that have been happening with the service

But... it's a bit ambiguous where it all fits. Bus staff might be feeling that they should not be suggesting the train...

Possible element of friction with some Northern staff about replacement of staff reports of poaching passengers'. However, at all stations I observed trains being suggested to passengers at times

Awareness of service existing, but lack of information can mean people are waiting for a train without knowing when it is coming/ potentially getting one going in the wrong direction

More easily available printed information would help people who want to make their own decisions rather than rely on advice from the bus replacement staff. Some may think its just the normal timetable and so need to be aware it is not

He said to me 'I probably shouldn't be telling you this but there is a train service to Oxenholme leaving in a few minutes'



I wasn't expecting it to be here to be honest!



I initially thought this new train service had replaced the bus

We saw lots of people taking photos at every station. It must be something special'



What happens to visitors

They seem to muddle along and get to where they need to go

- Staff approach people who look lost and unsure – this is true for station staff and rail replacement staff
- They tend to say the name of their destination and get pointed in the direction they need to go in/ put on the right bus or train. They do not necessarily understand what is going on
- Staff might try to please tourists 'I said to him, do you want to get the Harry Potter train? I've got a bus, but there is a train...'
- It can be confusing – they might not understand why they have to catch a bus or be worried that they don't have the right ticket to use the bus. However no one visibly distressed, although one German couple looked very annoyed and would not talk to me!
- Leisure travelers are often quite relaxed and so changes to their journeys do not phase them as they often factor in time and are more forgiving (in 'holiday mode') than if it was their regular train service. However, when there are crucial connections to be made, issues can be stressful

I just rolled with it. I am from New York so its not a surprise



I was worried. Stressed about it initially when I heard about it. Travelling makes people anxious



[About bus] I am not worried, I have plenty of time. As long as it comes at 10.30. It's a free ride also



There was no one around [at Oxenholme]. We were told to go to the wrong side. Then at Windermere we were told the wrong bus times and nearly missed our connection



Who is running the train

Of those who are aware it is a different service, Tim Farron gets a lot of credit

Northern

Don't know/
care

Tim Farron

Gets a lot of
credit/ name
checks

Heritage rail
service/ West
Coast
Railway

Volunteers

DfT

Service is
staffed very
professionally

Keep the old train and get rid of
Northern!



I'd love to know who is funding it. I
know its free but someone has got to
pay for it



Reason for the changes

Strikes, engineering works and a shortage of drivers thought to be the reason for the change to the service. Locals are more likely to have a historical viewpoint

They are all trying their best, somebody thought it was a good idea, but it didn't work out



Engineering works



It's to do with strike action which is a good thing. Why can't they just pay their drivers decently?



It's just generally confusing about Northern (member of staff at Oxenholme)



Timetabling issues – something to do with guards on the train



Problems recruiting drivers



There has been no drivers, no train, I have no idea what is going on



They told me when I bought the tickets. They said that the strike was the cause



It's a tricky line. Its had a lot of money spent on it but the last bit has been cancelled



Drivers have to be trained on new routes – I am skeptical if that is true



Not everyone understands why the disruptions are taking place or knows when they are scheduled to finish

June 2018

Huge range in reactions

When the service(s) work well, there is **no detriment** and may not even be noticed as a change to scheduled service. However, if there is a hiccup then it can be a stressful experience for passengers

Not aware of difference

Passengers who use rail service but are either not aware that there was a rail replacement or who were but think that there has been a change and the regular service has been reinstated

Aware but no inconvenience

Passengers who use the rail service or who use the bus service but find it very smooth and have no issues with it. This may include locals.

Aware and some inconvenience

Passengers who use the bus service but have to negotiate this with bags or have some difficulty in finding where they need to go and what they need to do

Aware and frustrated

Passengers who have had a problem with using the rail replacement service or passengers who are frustrated about the issues that have meant it is in place

Avoiding using service

Locals who have other means of transport that have either found the service before the buses unreliable or do not wish to use the buses because they are perceived to be slow and unreliable

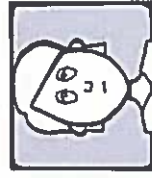
Emotions of passengers

The train often makes people happy because it is easier and it is a special train. Reactions to bus sometimes better once used the service

Rail replacement bus reactions....



Relaxed



Indifferent

More frequent experience



Happy



Frustrated

Less frequent experience



Worried



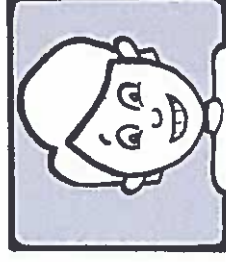
Stressed



Frustrated

Initial reaction for some

Train



Happy

Particularly if expecting bus

Impact on passengers

For some, the service changes have no impact. Conversely, some locals claim there is a big impact

Visitors

Positive

Train service adds a lot of value and character

Bus connecting services are better

Staff on hand/ helpful

May not be aware of any changes to services

Having to travel further with bags/ no help to get to rail replacement bus area/ from area to station

Confusing/ information not clear/ received wrong information

Not what they were expecting/ don't want to travel by bus/ not what you want at the end of a long journey

Delays to their journey/ waiting in the wrong place

Neutral

Locals

Train service adds a lot of value and character

More reliable/ at least you know what is going on

Plenty of services on the line

Its no better/ worse than before

Buses are slower than the train/ get delayed in traffic

Buses often run late (comuter)

Buses are quiet/ people are staying away/ perceived impact on economy ('tourism – dead')

Lack of trust in the service

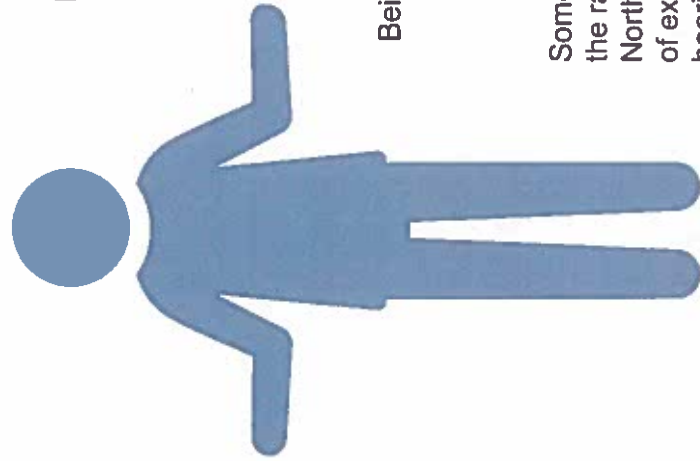
Negative

June 2018

Previous Lakes Line experience

Before the rail replacement timetable locals refer to many issues on the line. Some find it more consistent now

Unexpected cancellations



Buses rather than trains

Last minute changes

Being stranded at stations



Some do not place their trust in the rail replacement services or Northern in general, as a result of experiencing these issues or hearing of others doing so

You hear stories about people needing to get a train but there being no train. If people need to travel, they will go another way



Everyone is hopping up and down about it! Lots of complaints about it. Its been bad for a while, Northern are unreliable

Can't afford to turn up at Windermere and lose your onward connections

We were relieved there was a bus service as there have been problems

Frustrating to expect to catch a train - to arrive and find it has been cancelled at the last minute

Who is using the train and why

A mixture of curious locals, rail enthusiasts and visitors and many are keen for it to remain in service

It's a boost to the local economy



Locals are saying about the West Coast Railway – can they stay?



Its [the rail service] got worse I wouldn't usually bother – I am waiting for the special train

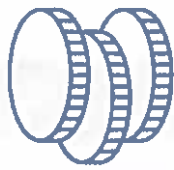


- There is going to be some element of the train being able to exceed expectations because they are not high at present and because there are regular bus services which take a lot of capacity
- A lack of information and the scheduling of services are not criticised as the rolling stock and service itself has a novelty value
- There is no doubt it attracts a lot of interest and pride
- A fair amount of passengers are those who are choosing to use it to make a trip/ visiting the area specifically to use the service

Locals feel very passionate about the Lakes Line (not just the new train). They frequently express opinions based on many years of experience. They don't want to lose it and feel its very important to the local area

Issues

There may be some issues with the system at the moment (which will apply to other rail replacement services) and although the rail service adds **so much** it does have complications...



- Passengers question how much it is costing Northern to run the services. They link it with the industrial dispute and also the perceived lack of investment on the line
- if the train service is free are people paying for it when they shouldn't be? Bus staff think it is not free.
- Are people paying for Northern tickets when using the buses (perhaps not consistently).
- People are not sure if their tickets are valid on the train/ bus.

Who pays?



Its different

- Its great people are having such a positive journey on the train
- However there is a risk, because the train times/ schedule/ not that easy to get hold of that people just turn up and don't leave enough time
- They may think that the train times are the same as before the revised timetable
- It might be better if people were aware that things are different, and that's not apparent to everyone at the moment



Who knows?

- Passengers were not all aware of the rail replacement service being in operation even if they had purchased tickets online
- This is a perhaps missed opportunity
- National Rail Enquires was referred to be those who were aware
- Some know there are issues with Northern from the news or local knowledge
- Planning a journey is really important for some people, for example those with disabilities



Enough info?

- There are potentially gaps in where information about **what to do next** could be missed
 - If no staff around
 - If staff around that do not have the fullest picture
 - If talking to staff is difficult
 - If there are no announcements/ can't understand or hear announcements
- There is not much information **on the platforms themselves**

Conclusions and suggestions

There are a lot of services and there is choice available at the moment. People get to where they need to go but it could all be a bit clearer

Conclusions

- On days and times of fieldwork people got to where they needed to go.
- There were options available.
- The special train service was felt to be a huge success and had a sense of occasion and joy.
- Many people reported a good bus journey.
- There was a mix of experience in terms of how easy and orderly the transitions and journeys were
 - Oxenholme could be seamless (but stories of issues at other times)
 - Windermere more chaotic but there are plenty of people around
 - Kendal station needs some more information
 - Burneside and Staveley have no staff and limited info, particularly about the train
- There is a strong sense for many in the community that the disruptions are damaging and this is why they relish the publicity and interest that the chartered service brings
- Rail service is a great addition but it adds a layer of complexity for passengers and this presents some snags

What could work better?

- Send an email before the journey
- When people get off at a station or arrive at a station there should be something that grabs attention and alerts people that there are changes to services and what those options are
- All staff should have all information** about services including the train
- Train service should make clear that this is a replacement service and not the regular scheduled service and that passengers should check times for return trips
- Windermere could benefit from more structure and designated waiting area
- Information should be accessible to passengers to be able to determine what option is best for them



Lakes Line Disruption to services

June 2018

Appendix E

A selection of comments about poor information which Transport Focus received from passengers

03/06/18 Earlswood to London Bridge: Today's timetable had no fewer than 5 trains from the May timetable removed between 9.45 and 10.21, and then the 9.45 was cancelled. This meant a gap in service northbound from East Croydon of no less than 50 minutes. The 10.21 was then exceptionally delayed and I did not arrive until around 11.30 - a total delay of 1 hour 15.

14/06/18 Mill Hill Broadway to Blackfriars: As there is no reliable timetable and the online information often differs to the situation at the station, I have taken the approach that I just need to allow more time and just see what turns up (i.e. pot luck). There is no point being angry as there is little point. It is clear that the company have no clue about stabilising the service.

14/06/18 Finsbury Park to Moorgate: The trains yesterday (13 June) were just a series of cancellations and re-ordered stopping patterns. The train this morning was cancelled with no warning, no explanation and no apology as all passengers traipsed from one platform to another.

14/06/18 Kings Cross to Knebworth: Waiting on train - announcement made that the train 'might' run late as the driver is still in Letchworth. Announcement was made too late to get a slower train that departed 3 mins before this one. What do I do. Wait here and see if a driver turns up or go for the next fast train...? Decide to leave the train after a wait with no further announcements. Only to then see it leaving with no announcement that it was about to. So frustrating. the lack of information is awful.

15/06/18 Catford to Elstree and Borehamwood: The train that planned to get was removed from tracker when I checked before leaving home (30 mins before due) - it wasn't cancelled or delayed just completely not listed and will all the continued changes to the timetables assumes it no longer existed so had to rush to go a different route so not to be late for work (yet again) but by the time I got to Blackfriars tube station the train was back and running so caused unnecessary stress, time and money!

19/06/18 Bedford to Blackfriars: So many short notice cancellations. I checked the app in the morning and my usual train 7.52 is running. Arrive at the station an hour later and the service is cancelled with no explanation. Forced onto a slower 8.01 which takes 15 minutes longer to reach Blackfriars.

19/06/18 Stevenage to Kings Cross: 0751 cancelled, 0759 additional train rammed. Boarded 0810 driver announced, 'this is a non-existent train to King's Cross'. No idea where it came from but a slow one into King's Cross!

21/06/18 Liverpool Lime Street to Earlestown: Because my scheduled train was cancelled without notice (not shown on app either) and no substitute transport put on. I had to get a service bus part way and have a friend pick me up there to get home.

22/06/18 Salford Central to Atherton: The 10:33 train to Southport was shown and announced to be 12 mins late, then it disappeared off the screen. Station staff advised that it must be cancelled, but no announcement. No reason was known.

25/06/18 City Thameslink to Biggleswade: As has happened on a daily basis since the introduction of the timetable, the 1709 and 1739 from CTK to PBO were both cancelled without explanation. I have resigned myself to having to go to King's Cross to get out of London in the evenings (I have successfully caught a train from CTK only once in the 7 weeks of this shambles) and did so again today. The train from KGX was then further delayed on route.

27/06/18 Knebworth to Kings Cross: Arrived at 06:20 to find both the 06:13 and 06:28 delayed and the 06:43 cancelled. Waited for a while and the 06:13 was updated to running over an hour late. I got a late running North bound service to Stevenage and managed to squeeze onto another late running train to Kings Cross. I was around 25min late.

29/06/18 Grange Park to Stevenage: Checked the trains at 8.30 and the 09.42 to Stevenage was on time. Arrived at the station to find that the train has be cancelled between Hertford and Stevenage. Meaning it took an extra 30 minutes to get to work. There was no announcement that the change had been made - it was only because I happen to look at the display board I noticed (something people who travel on the same train regularly often don't do).

02/07/18 Hitchin to Stevenage: Checked National Rail Enquiries this morning at 7:59. From Hitchin to Stevenage between 8:00 and 9:30 there were 5 trains listed with 3 cancelled (8:11, 8:34, 9:11). This left just two trains in an hour and a half and they were only spaced ten minutes apart at 8:37, 8:47. When I got to Hitchin train station the 9:11 has been uncancelled, which I just can't get my head around. Why are Govia showing train as cancelled if they actually then run them?

Charles Horton
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07 June 2018

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Ref: AS/2018/0101

Dear Charles

Clearly, it is deeply disappointing that a timetable change that was meant to bring huge benefits to passengers has, for some, dramatically worsened a previously acceptable service. Passengers on Thameslink and Great Northern, in particular, are continuing to face far too much disruption and uncertainty. I believe that to deliver the stability passengers need, GTR should introduce a formal temporary timetable which you can operate reliably with the resources available to you now.

At a meeting on Monday with Nick Brown he assured me that GTR is working hard to stabilise the service so that there are fewer late notice cancellations. At the moment passengers are being advised to check before they travel each day. I do not believe this is acceptable. An interim timetable in which you show only the trains you are confident you can run, plus any supporting buses you will be providing, would allow passengers to plan their journeys with certainty.

If you continue to present a timetable to the public which you cannot operate, it will further frustrate passengers who rely on your services to get them to work, exams and make other daily journeys.

It was good to hear from Nick that GTR is keen to encourage passengers to claim the compensation they are due and that your teams are actively promoting this. He also mentioned that GTR are offering season ticket enhanced compensation. It is really important that passengers are clear about how they can claim and that any process is easy to use. Does GTR consider the current offers of compensation are sufficient to win back passenger trust? It would be good to hear what other compensation you are considering.

As you know from my email yesterday, the Transport Focus board is meeting next week in London and Manchester to discuss the current timetabling, information and performance issues. I hope you will be able to attend the London meeting to discuss the situation as it applies to Thameslink and Great Northern (as well as Southern and Gatwick) services.



I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

PP. 

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Chief executive

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7 June 2018

Dear David

Northern – recovering services and passengers' confidence

We know unprecedented delays, cancellations and confusion have made life miserable in recent weeks for many Northern passengers. When we met last month, I raised concerns that Northern was failing to communicate with passengers. Not only failing to provide reliable information about services to travelling passengers, but also failing to explain why services were deteriorating and demonstrate understanding of the impact this was having on people's lives.

Passengers will hope that the emergency timetable implemented this week allows Northern to begin to stabilise services. However, those who have temporarily lost services, have every reason to feel aggrieved, not least where buses now replace trains, as on the Lakes Line in Cumbria.

We have welcomed the inquiry into what has happened – Transport Focus raised concerns with the industry about timetabling problems as long ago as last year. Today's passengers cannot wait for the inquiry and are looking for three things from Northern now:

- Reliable train performance and clear communication about the timetable that will be provided over the coming weeks.
- Compensation that recognises the extent of the disruption to people's lives and Delay Repay measured against the original timetable promised, not just the slimmed down one now on offer.
- A robust plan to reinstate the 165 train services that have been removed from the timetable as soon as possible.

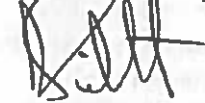
While there has been an understandable focus on disruption over the past few weeks, we should not lose sight of the sustained poor performance on some routes. For example, at the turn of the year, we talked with Northern, Transport for Greater Manchester and the office of the Mayor of Greater Manchester about the poor performance on the Bolton corridor over the autumn.

Through the commitment in Northern's "Customer Promise" to compensate passengers where there has been sustained poor performance, we discussed a potential free extension period for season ticket holders and free travel on rail replacement bus services during the long-running engineering works on this route. This approach equally applies for other hard-hit routes. We also talked about the introduction of "Delay Repay 15", an improvement which is now urgently needed.

As you know, the Transport Focus board is meeting in public next week in London and Manchester to discuss the current timetabling, information and performance issues. I hope you will be able to attend the Manchester meeting to discuss your plan to recover services and passengers' confidence in train travel.

David Sidebottom

Yours sincerely



David Sidebottom
Director

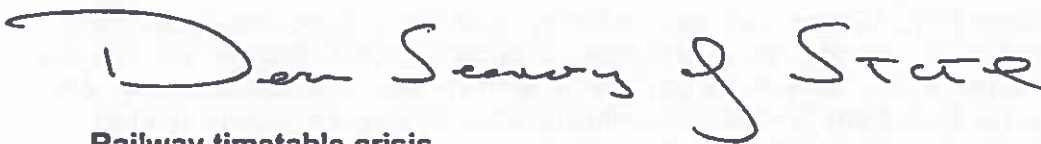
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8 June 2018

Ref: AS/2018/0102



Railway timetable crisis

When I wrote to you on 17 May I talked about the ongoing pressure Transport Focus is putting on the rail industry to address deficiencies in publishing accurate timetables so passengers can plan their journeys. As you know, since then the railway timetable crisis has worsened significantly, with passengers using Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), Great Northern and Thameslink routes and Northern services having to put up with an unacceptable level of delays and cancellations.

Northern have instituted a formal temporary timetable, intended to give passengers certainty while they sort out the driver training issues. We will be monitoring how this works, including surveying experiences of those using the replacement buses on the Windermere branch. Early signs are that Northern's service is stabilising. On the Great Northern and Thameslink routes, GTR have not introduced a formal temporary timetable. Passengers therefore have no certainty about which trains will and won't run. I wrote yesterday to GTR calling on the company to introduce a temporary timetable that can be relied on. Being honest about the service that can be operated reliably is vital to helping passengers struggle through this crisis.

Compensation to passengers must be generous and recognise that day in, day out delays and uncertainly impacts on people's lives and well-being. This situation is different from an isolated delay experienced once-in-a-while. Delay Repay entitlement should be against the intended 20 May timetable, not the slimmed down one. GTR have already agreed to this, and we are pressing Northern to do the same. But the industry must do more for particular groups of passengers. This should include those travelling to and from Blackpool, Bolton and Windermere on Northern, and those parts of the GTR network that have borne the brunt of the unpredictable cancellations.

We understand that Northern is about to announce its compensation package. We would welcome season ticket passengers receiving a refund equivalent to four weeks' travel. But it is also important to go beyond that and recognise the long-term hardship that passengers on the Blackpool, Bolton and Windermere lines have faced. The compensation package needs to be continually reviewed in future weeks – some passengers may continue to experience an unacceptable service for some weeks to come.

Train companies must work hard to encourage take up of whatever compensation they offer. My colleagues raised these points when they met Jo Johnson in Manchester yesterday and we will continue to press the train companies concerned.

Where the current situation has a particular impact on passengers, ticket restrictions should be further relaxed in the short term and clearly communicated to passengers. One specific example is the Gatwick Express where holders of Southern and Thameslink only tickets should be allowed to use Gatwick Express trains until the situation improves.

Stability and fair compensation are the top priorities. After that, passengers want to see a robust plan to reinstate the missing elements of the intended timetable. We strongly encourage the reinstatement of trains be phased in, rather than done all at once. This must not fail again.

Transport Focus has invited GTR, Northern and Network Rail to speak to our Board next week – these meetings are held in public. Also, we are inviting passengers who belong to our Transport User Panel to let us know about their experiences. Our staff will continue to be on the ground observing as well. We will use this insight to press the industry to make improvements where it can in the short term, while maintaining focus in the priority areas of stability and compensation. I will keep your officials fully apprised and we will no doubt discuss the situation when we meet on 4 July.

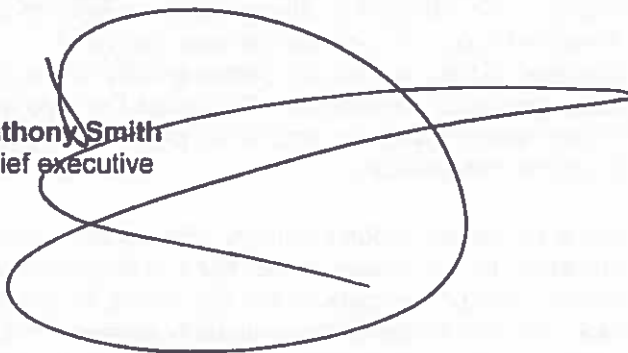
We will co-operate fully with the Glaister inquiry with a view to understanding how the IT, procedural, capacity and capability issues surrounding timetabling can be made to work better in the long term. We are also conscious of the looming December 2018 timetable changes. We have proposals to discuss with you on how the passenger input to these processes could be boosted.

To conclude, we believe the priorities are:

- **Stability:** a timetable that runs reliably
- **Generous compensation** for those passengers affected
- **Relaxing ticket restrictions** to help passengers get where they need to go
- **A robust plan** to deliver the full intended May 2018 timetable.

Regards

Anthony Smith
Chief executive



Appendix 1

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Chief Executive
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13 June 2018

Ref: AS/2018/0105



Railway timetable crisis

I am writing further to my letter dated 7 June and following yesterday's Transport Focus board meeting at which the current timetable crisis was considered.

Stability and communication

The board is concerned that passengers on parts of Thameslink and Great Northern are not getting the service they are paying for and that it appears GTR cannot reliably deliver even the pared back timetable. Lack of transparency about the service you are currently seeking to run is also a concern.

Transport Focus requests that you consider the following as a matter of urgency:

1. That you introduce a formal interim timetable on Thameslink Great Northern which you are fully confident you can operate, day-in day-out, while driver training is completed. A similar approach at Northern appears to have stabilised the situation. The current approach involving on-the-day cancellations on top of pre-planned service reductions is unacceptable.
2. That as part of that interim timetable you introduce an hourly Kings Cross-Peterborough service, Monday to Friday, calling at all stations from Hitchin, restoring at least some normality for passengers badly affected by the inability to reliably run the Horsham to Peterborough service.
3. That you advertise the interim timetable on your and the National Rail Enquiries websites, showing the trains that you can run, the trains you cannot and the replacement buses that will plug the gaps.
4. That in respect of buses replacing trains on a pre-planned basis, you 'bid' the bus schedules to Network Rail in order that they are published in industry data used by National Rail Enquiries, your own website and by all other information providers and ticket retailers.
5. That you 'bid' your interim timetable to Network Rail considerably further ahead than one week. A journey plan today will show that next Monday you will be operating the full, intended 20 May timetable, when clearly you will not. We suggest bidding the interim timetable on a rolling six-weeks-ahead basis, given the industry's current Informed Traveller target. There is nothing to stop you adding extra trains if you are confident that they can be delivered, but it is not fair on passengers to advertise the full service when you know it cannot be delivered.



Compensation

We welcome your commitment to base Delay Repay entitlement on the full, intended 20 May timetable. However we do not think GTR's 'sustained poor performance' enhanced compensation for season ticket holders is adequate. 12 out of 20 journeys over 30 minutes late is an unreasonably high bar. And in any case, we are now well beyond the stage where two free return journeys/vouchers to the value of a single journey, is sufficient redress for what passengers are going through. It simply does not reflect the scale of impact on people's lives.

We believe you should go beyond the Passenger's Charter and offer:

- a lump-sum payable to season ticket holders to reflect the hardship experienced
- a package to recognise the impact on regular travellers who do not buy season tickets – this could take the form of a number of free journeys, similar to the London Midland offer after their driver shortage crisis a few years ago.

I look forward to your early reply.

Regard

Anthony Smith
Chief executive

Appendix J

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27 June 2018

Ref: AS/2018/0113

Dear David,

Thank you again for attending our Board meeting and answering questions about the disruption following the timetable change.

Our Board pressed for more detail about the industry's plans to compensate passengers. We can only reiterate our view that the compensation should include:

- a cash payment for season ticket holders to reflect the hardship experienced
- recognition of the impact on regular passengers who do not buy season tickets – for instance part-time workers
- the adoption of a 15-minute Delay Repay 'trigger' rather than 30-minute.

Passengers will welcome the improvement in punctuality and reliability that Northern's temporary timetable has provided. However, the impact on passengers where services have been removed or replaced by buses has been significant.

We welcome the news that Northern will serve the Lakes Line again from 2 July and are keen to understand your plans to reinstate the remainder of the 165 services taken out of the timetable. This must not come at the expense of this stability. It's vital that passengers' trust isn't set back further by a return to the unacceptable level of cancellations seen in the first weeks of the new timetable. Can you confirm the full 20 May timetable will be in operation from August? We are of course already within T-6 for that date.

Finally, recent weeks have highlighted once again the need to improve passenger information and communication during disruption. We have considerable experience in this area and are keen to help – Jordan will be in touch.



I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Smith
Chief executive

A large, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Appendix K

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27 June 2018

Ref: AS/2018/0114

Dear Leo,

Thank you for attending our Board meeting and answering questions about the disruption following the recent timetable change.

Our Board pressed for more detail about the industry's plans to compensate passengers. We can only reiterate our view that the compensation should include:

- a cash payment for season ticket holders to reflect the hardship experienced
- recognition of the impact on regular passengers who do not buy season tickets – for instance part time workers
- the adoption of a 15-minute Delay Repay 'trigger' rather than 30-minute.

Passengers will welcome the improvement in punctuality and reliability on the network following Northern's introduction of a temporary timetable. However, train performance remains poor. When do you expect TransPennine Express's train performance to recover?

Finally, recent weeks have highlighted once again the need to improve passenger information and communication during disruption. We have considerable experience in this area and are keen to help – Jordan will be in touch.

Yours sincerely


Anthony Smith
Chief executive

Transport Focus website updates during the timetable crisis

Week 1

How did it all go?

Some Northern passengers had a torrid time. Many trains delayed or cancelled in the North West. One in seven of its services were cancelled on the first morning, with a further 17 per cent delayed by at least five minutes. There were lots of staff around and good information at places like Bolton but this no substitute for sticking to the basic promise of the railways: running the trains on time.



We were at St Pancras from early morning right through the peak Thameslink rush hour. Yes, some trains were cancelled and some delayed but generally it seemed alright. What was noticeable was the crowding. Changing times is pushing people into different, already busy services. Trains need to be as long as possible. While an eight-carriage train might have worked in the past the pressure on the system means 12 carriages are needed. We will keep a close eye on these crowding levels.

Transport Focus have also been out on Great Northern and Southern reporting similar experiences. Lots of Govia Thameslink Railway staff were actively helping passengers get to grips with the changes.



So, as passengers get used to the new times and as the industry gets used to running them hopefully teething problems will get ironed out.

You can read more about this in our chief executive's latest blog [here](#).

Week 2

Northern has announced a [temporary change to its timetable](#) to help reduce delays and cancellations.

Passengers have clearly been let down and will want to see services back to normal as soon as possible. They need accurate information, at stations and online, now.

Continuing poor performance has eroded their trust in the railway. To start rebuilding that trust we want to see an honest, realistic interim plan that leads to a return of reliable services.

Passengers deserve better compensation for the misery they have experienced, especially commuters who have paid in advance through their season ticket.

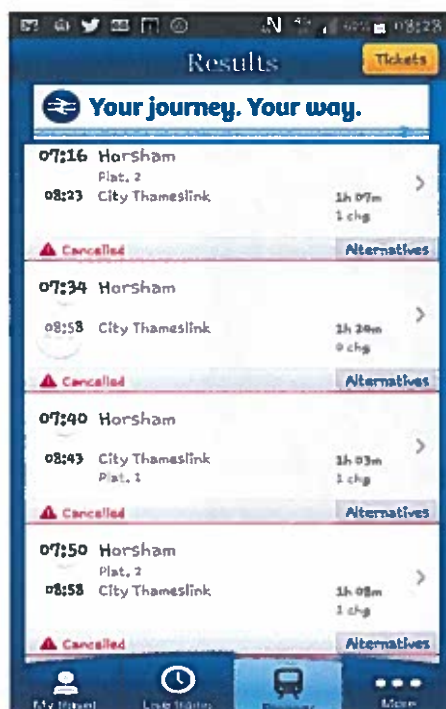
We continue to monitor the impact of the timetable changes. Transport Focus has discussed recovery plans with senior staff at Govia Thameslink Railway and Northern.

We are calling for:

- delivery of a reliable timetable quickly, one that passengers can trust and not have to check every time they travel
- a focus on accurate, clear and consistent information that allows passengers to make decisions about their journeys
- compensation that goes beyond the minimal obligation of Delay Repay.

Cancelled and delayed trains

This has clearly been another very frustrating week for passengers on some



Northern and GTR train services with many trains were either delayed, cancelled and crowded when a service did turn up.

This morning a colleague was stuck at Horsham with pretty much every service between seven and eight o'clock cancelled.

The 07.34 service is one of the new Thameslink services that appears on the online journey planner one day, and not there the next. It was showing this morning on journey planners and on the station screen as running but then cancelled just one minute before departure.

Lack of confidence in information

The lack of confidence in information both online and at stations is adding to passenger frustration.

A colleague relayed a commute from Finsbury Park to Welwyn Garden City this week. Trains are now much longer and therefore less crowded. However, the main frustration from the timetable change is that all the information is wrong on the app. So she will turn up at the station and the app says that everything is running normally and then there won't be a train for twenty minutes.

Our colleague said that it's particularly frustrating as the staff also have no idea what information is correct. Whilst she appreciated that it wasn't their fault, it meant there is no one to ask for updates. The other day the staff announced 'We've lost a train, it's just gone missing!' which obviously isn't helpful info for anyone.

She feels this lack of information is the most frustrating part of the whole change because it really affects her ability to plan.

Mixed experiences for passengers

A member of a rail user group reported that the main impact on him has just been restricted choice travelling Harpenden to and from London. Out of 12 journeys this week he had a seat on all of them, six right time journeys and just one journey that triggered Delay Repay where delays are 15 minutes or more.

A fellow member of the group who travels from Leagrave to West Hampstead reports out of their 10 journeys one journey was on time and five journeys were more than 15 minutes delays. Six of the journeys were so crowded that passengers were "crushed" against one another.

All Northern services between Oxenholme and Windermere have been cancelled.

One passenger travelling on Northern wrote us to tell about his concerns:

'I really hope things improve. I have now stopped using the train as Northern cannot be relied upon.

*I don't envisage seeing any improvements on the horizon. What a mess it is...
The wider issue here is how and why were Northern allowed to even proceed with the new timetable if they knew it was going to fail?*

Or did they not even realise this? It is also interesting to note that the staffing issue was quite late to emerge as a reason for the disruption. I am amazed that there is no accountability anywhere.

I value bodies like Transport Focus as they really do get the issues from the perspective of the customer. My concern is how much Northern have not been honest – the delayed infrastructure handback from Network Rail has been exaggerated. There is no owning up to their staffing issues or allowing Rest Day Working to be pulled – surely they knew this would impact on delivery of the timetable.

Anyway, thank you again for your efforts and please do keep the pressure on them.'

Passengers just do not trust the new timetable. Too often this week they have turned up at stations expecting to catch a particular train only to find it is not running or delayed.

Monday update

Delays and cancellations continue for passengers on Thameslink and Northern services.

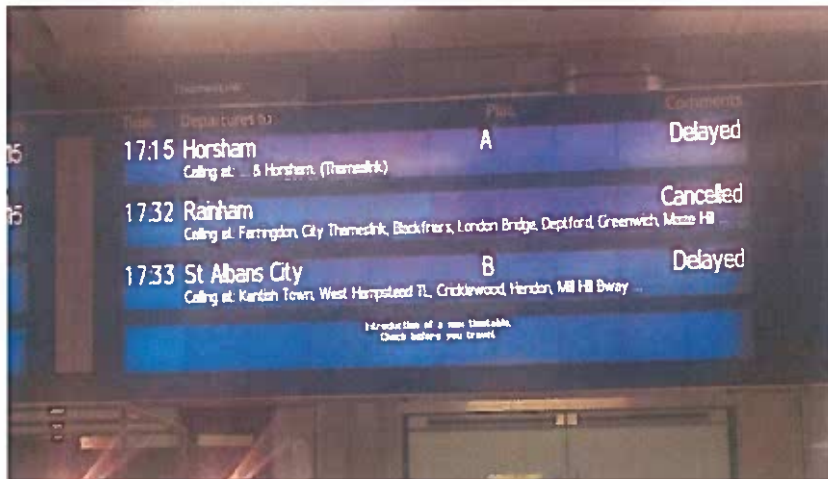
Members of the Transport Focus team continue to go out and about looking at how the introduction of the timetable is going, how passengers are impacted and how operators are handling the disruption.

During the return to work after the bank holiday, on Tuesday, there were more than 250 cancellations on Northern rail services. Transport Focus also observed many delays and cancellations on Govia Thameslink Railway services.



It is clear commuters have been let down and will want to see services back to normal as soon as possible. They need accurate information, at stations and online, which matches what is actually happening on the ground. Train operators and Network Rail need to show that they can run things reliably even when bringing in change.

We want to know when passengers can expect to see this settle down and when they can rely on the new timetable. We're also calling for generous compensation for passengers when things do go wrong.



As many commuters get back to work after the half-term holiday next week we will be looking to operators to get the timetable back on track.

In the meantime, train operators must:

- be generous with compensation when things do go wrong
- have plenty of staff on the ground to help passengers
- make sure there is clear, accurate and concise information at the station and online.



We're still keen to hear from you. How has the timetable affected your journey? You can tell us about your experience by tweeting us @transportfocus.

We continue to use this information to feed back to individual operators, transport authorities and Government on where things can be improved

Week 3

Friday 8 June

The end of a torrid week for passengers on Thameslink (GTR) and Northern.

There is still no sign of the promised stability on Thameslink, with some passengers facing unacceptable gaps between services after cancellations. Some early, more promising, signs following the introduction of a temporary timetable on Northern.

See our letters to both operators [here](#).

In the letters, as well as calling for better services and compensation, we invited the operators to attend special Board meetings in public.

These will be an opportunity to question the operators on what went wrong and, importantly, exactly what is being done to get things back on track.

Relaxing ticket restrictions

We pushed GTR this week to relax ticket restrictions so that passengers can get the first train that comes going to where they want to be. *We suggested that passengers with tickets normally valid on Southern or Thameslink-only should for now be able to use the Gatwick Express. This is now happening.*

Case study from last night

Abi, who is eight months pregnant, had a four-hour trek home from Huntingdon that included a slow crawl on a coach to Hitchin.



In a diary she kept for us, she described herself as 'hungry and sad' as the minutes ticked away and she still had no idea whether she had made the right decision to get on the coach rather than wait for a train.

The journey should have taken 55 mins on Thameslink, and then another hour from Finsbury Park to South London. It actually took over four hours after successive cancellations at Huntingdon.



She concluded: "I think it's easier for me to be amused/upbeat by the complete bedlam because I only do this one or twice a week. I cannot imagine how soul destroying it would be to be stuck in this every single day."

Thameslink cancellations and poor information

A colleague tried to travel to City Thameslink from Harpenden this morning. Arriving at 9.50am, there was no train until 10.22. He and fellow passengers kept checking the information boards wondering why there were no trains going south. There was no explanation. Eventually a train arrived, extremely crowded, more like an early morning commuter service than a mid-morning off-peak train.

Replacement buses in the Lake District

Despite the temporary timetable that takes out 165 trains, Northern passengers continued to experience delays and cancellations.

We have been monitoring the situation on the line between Windermere and Oxenholme in Cumbria, where much of the impact is felt. See our [recent report](#).

Today we went back to the area to find out how passengers are finding the replacement bus service. We found plenty of staff at Oxenholme and clear information about where to find the buses. However, the bus timetable means some long waits for connecting trains – more than 45 minutes on occasion.



At Kendal we found volunteers from the Lakes Line Rail User Group helping out providing information to passengers. At 11.30am school children flooded through after exams and overwhelmed the mini-buses – some passengers were left behind until extra buses arrived.

Some passengers felt that at least the buses were better than unreliable trains – but frustrated that this is what it had come to.

Next week we're going to be out asking passengers on the Windermere route to complete a simple survey about their experiences using the buses.

Thursday 7 June

Passengers continued to face too many delays and cancellations today. It appears to affect both commuters early in the morning and those travelling outside of this really busy time.

Those planning to use Thameslink peak trains into St Pancras this morning would seriously question the impact of any stability in services promised by GTR earlier in the week as they faced delayed and cancelled trains yet again.

The experience for those travelling to Kings Cross was better.

However, for those travelling later on the morning, the service did not improve – if anything it appeared to get worse.



Due	Origin	Status	Platform	Details
10:50	Brighton	11:30 40 mins late	B	Details
11:12	St Albans City	Cancelled		Details
11:13	Rainham (Kent)	On time	B	Details
11:14	Peterborough	11:29 13 mins late	A	Details
11:15	Horsham	Cancelled		Details
11:17	Kentish Town	On time	A	Details
11:18	Sutton (London)	Cancelled		Details
11:19	Bedford	On time	A	Details
11:29	Brighton	11:55 35 mins late	B	Details



Due	Origin	Status	Platform	Details
10:53	King's Lynn	On time		Details
08:58	Woking-Banbury City	On time		Details
10:44	Peterborough	10:41 3 mins late		Details
10:50	Cambridge	08:52 2 mins late		Details
10:52	Barnet	10:50		Details
11:02	Woking	On time		Details
08:00	Cambridge	On time		Details
07:57	Woking-Banbury City	On time		Details
07:11	Peterborough	07:10 3 mins late		Details

The situation really did not improve through the morning as trains from Brighton to London St Pancras were impacted by severe delays. Passengers arriving at Horsham and Sutton stations found their services cancelled.

We challenged GTR this morning about automatic delay repay as we were made aware that some passengers had heard this method of receiving compensation had been removed by the operator.

We were assured that the operator had not removed this facility for its season ticket holders and these continue to be processed as normal.

Where some confusion may have arisen for passengers is that in wanting to ensure that passengers get the compensation they are entitled to, GTR advised passengers that they may be best submitting a manual claim. So, trying to do the right thing but got muddled up in communications.

Wednesday 6 June

Passengers on routes in the North West are being forced to adapt to the emergency timetable introduced by Northern on Monday. We have continued to monitor services.

This morning there were still delays and cancellations that will have undoubtedly spoiled passengers' days, but so far not the widespread chaos of recent weeks. Passengers should expect nothing less since 165 trains have been taken out of the normal timetable and will be hoping the service begins to stabilise.



Trains arriving from North of Manchester were noticeably quieter this morning, while we have heard reports of increases in passengers on buses and cars on the road. Is this a sign that some passengers have had enough and are abandoning the train?

“My train was getting cancelled so frequently and the new timetable meant that the trains that did run were packed. I’ve now started to drive which I hate but I feel for the sake of securing my job and family life I’ve got no choice.”

Northern passenger feedback



Where lines have been sacrificed and left with a bus replacement service passengers have every reason to feel aggrieved, not least on the Lakes Line in Cumbria where buses replace all trains for the next two weeks. We are calling for Northern to offer passengers Delay Repay compensation against the full timetable as Govia Thameslink Railway has.

Passengers deserve compensation if they are 30 minutes late or more in arriving at their destination because their service has been removed from the timetable or replaced by a bus. It’s vital the special compensation scheme announced this week reflects the extent of the disruption to people’s lives. Passengers will be keenly awaiting details from Northern about how to claim.

What’s needed now is certainty about the timetable for the coming weeks. Northern have said it won’t run a full service until the end of July, but what should passengers planning a journey for next week do? They need a published timetable they can rely on.

Thameslink passengers call for better information

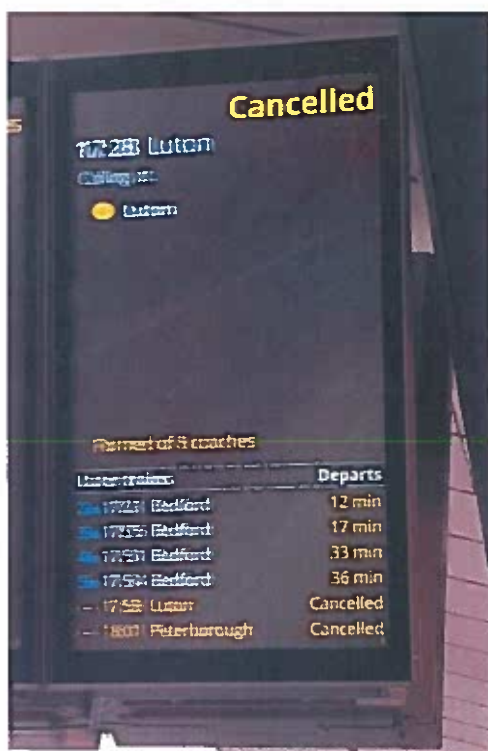
Colleagues were out on the ground during the Tuesday 5 June morning peak reporting services through London Bridge and Victoria were running okay. When we looked online it showed a few services delayed arriving into St Pancras and Kings Cross.

A colleague reported it being extremely crowded during 5 June morning peak 0735 Wimbledon Chase to City Thameslink service.



The evening peak so far this week has been a real mixed bag. Colleagues reported a relatively normal service at Victoria. However, passengers arriving at City Thameslink were faced with cancellations. Services from St Pancras to Bedford all looked fine but services to Luton and Peterborough were cancelled.

Information updates online are not helping passengers and can be confusing. A colleague needing confidence on times of trains home to pick up their kids checked as instructed by GTR only to be faced with confusing information about disruption.



Time	From	To	Time	Duration	Details	Status
16:49	City Thameslink (CTK)	Streatham (Greater London) (STE)	17:14	25m	Details	cancelled Alternative trains
16:56	City Thameslink (CTK) Platform 2	Streatham (Greater London) (STE) Platform 1	17:38	42m	Details	disrupted Alternative trains
17:19	City Thameslink (CTK)	Streatham (Greater London) (STE)	17:44	25m	Details	cancelled Alternative trains
17:34	City Thameslink (CTK) Platform 2	Streatham (Greater London) (STE) Platform 1	17:59	25m	Details	on time

She fed back to say...

"What the hell does this mean?! My service is disrupted – does that mean delayed or cancelled?? I now have no idea whether I'll make it back for nursery pickup and I can't realistically be leaving work in time to get a 4.30 train home!"

Tuesday 5 June

Unprecedented delays and cancellations continue to make life miserable for some Northern, Thameslink and Great Northern passengers.

The [announcement](#) of special compensation above and beyond the usual is welcome. But passengers' first priority is to get services running so that they can plan their lives with some certainty.

An inquiry into what has happened and why is welcome – including an understanding of how, despite strong assurances, these welcome investments and potential improvements have gone so sour.

The relative roles played by governments, Network Rail and train companies need to be analysed and understood so that timetable planning can be put back on a proper footing for the long term. This can't be allowed to happen again at the next timetable change in December.

On 4 June our chief executive met with Nick Brown, chief executive of Govia Thameslink Railway and pushed on the following improvements:

- stable timetable that allows passengers to plan better
- better information and lots of staff on the ground
- compensation over and above Delay Repay 15.

GTR assured him that they are working hard to develop the stability and [information for passengers](#). They agreed that [better compensation](#) is required.

Yet more disruption for passengers...

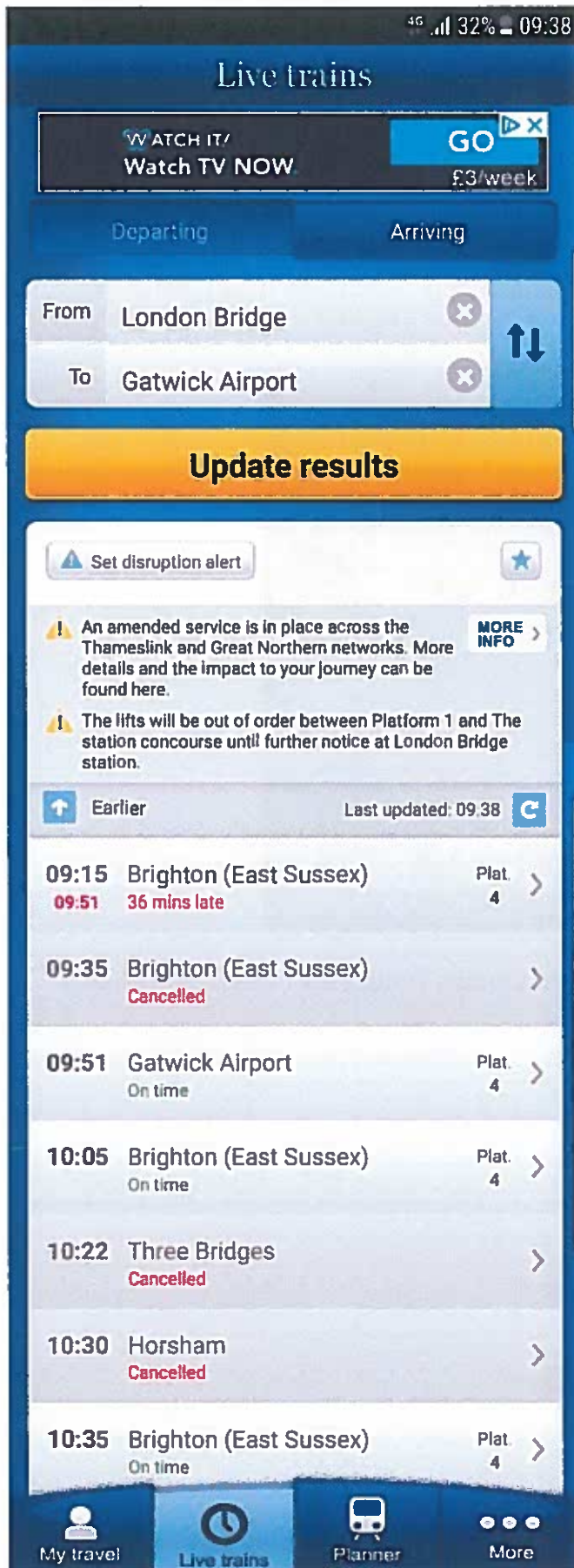
Members of the Transport Focus team continue to go out and about looking at how well the introduction is going.

It was not a good start on Thameslink on Monday 4 June as early morning delays and cancellations into London St Pancras showed.

Later in the morning passengers at Blackfriars were faced with a screen full of cancellations and delays.



Passengers expecting to catch trains from London Bridge also faced delays and cancellations.



Northern rail emergency timetable

Despite the introduction of the emergency timetable Northern passengers faced more disruption.

Under the new timetable around 165 trains a day have been cut until the end of next month.

All services on the Lakes Line to and from Preston, Lancaster and Oxenholme are operating as a replacement bus service.

One passenger told us about the impact the timetable disruption is having on their life:

"I travel on the Bolton to Manchester line and, to be honest, it's hard to know where to start. Since before the introduction of the new timetables, Northern were cancelling or delaying trains during rush hour. Introducing the new timetables has exacerbated the disruption... Travelling to work has become a complete lottery...."



Week 4

Thursday 14 June

Turn up and might go

How do you set your alarm for a train that might or might not run? That's what many passengers are asking, as information continues to be patchy. It is turning into a real 'turn up and might go' situation.

Thameslink

Passenger comments and colleague experiences indicate that reliable information is lacking.

Yesterday afternoon a colleague checked to see whether one of the new Horsham to Peterborough trains would be running this morning (14 June). The National Rail Enquiries website confirmed that the 7.34 was planned to run – but when he checked again at about 7am, it was cancelled.



Thinking he'd then catch the 7.40, he made his way to the station. Here the 7.34 was still showing as cancelled, but he could see it at the platform so he checked with staff on the information desk and was told it was definitely cancelled.

He made his way to the platform for the 7.40... and two minutes later there was an announcement to say the 7.34 was running. After a quick dash he managed to catch this train – and yet a recheck of the NRE app still showed it as a cancelled service.

Meanwhile at Three Bridges last night a Littlehampton train arrived just under an hour late.

It was due to split somewhere on the route with only the front four carriages going on to Littlehampton. At least that was what was being reported on the platform by some passengers.

However, because of delays due to a trespasser on the line between Gatwick and Redhill, the whole train was going to skip intermediate stations and go straight to Littlehampton. Platform staff didn't seem to know this, so didn't announce it. Consequently passengers got on, and then off again, asking what was going on – they were frustrated and confused.

There had been some sort of announcement on board but clearly not everyone had heard it or understood it. They looked to station staff and fellow passengers for assistance.

Just as confusing are some of the very vague announcements about cancelled services heard at St Pancras. 'An operational incident' is not clear enough. We have challenged Thameslink to be more honest about the causes and to give assistance with alternative transport.



Northern



This morning a colleague attempted to get from Manchester Piccadilly to Blackpool North, but the direct train terminated at Preston. There was no announcement – our colleague only realised when the information screen at Leyland showed the train as Preston only.

At Preston, the announcer said the Blackpool train was going from the next platform, but the doors closed by the time he made it. Platform staff helped him get on further down where the conductor was, but the lack of information may mean that passengers were left behind.

On the way back he tried to catch the 2.23 train from Blackpool North to Oxford Road. Though

station screens showed it as 'on time' it wasn't, and staff ushered waiting passengers onto a train to Preston instead. There were no announcements or explanations.

Passenger feedback

Passengers responding to our daily survey are indicating poor and confusing information too.

"Messed around going home. Got on a fast train (announced as fast & shown as fast on the display boards). At the next stop I overheard a platform announcement saying it was now slow (nothing announced by the driver). Had to change on to an already packed Farringdon station & then change again at St Albans, where the station was too packed for half the people trying to get to Harpenden to change platforms in time for the next train. In the morning the train was cancelled for no reason."

(Harpenden to City Thameslink)

*The usual rail chaos with trains delayed by 30+ minutes or being cancelled. **The communication is extremely poor**, you are left to figure out your own alternative routes home*

(London Bridge to Preston Park)

"Thameslink journeys have been utterly unpredictable so it's nerve wracking as well as frustrating. Will there be a train with room to squeeze on? When will I arrive? How late will I be? (Not will I be late as I know I will be) Should I just give up. After 25 years using the route I've no idea what the timetable is supposed to be. Online information is no use as allegedly on time trains simply disappear between setting off for the station and getting there."

(St Albans to St Pancras)

"Change to train times but no information available at stations."

(Bentley to Doncaster)

"Never sure if a train will turn up, and a lottery whether we get a seat. Never had this uncertainty before timetable changes."

(Hazel Grove to Manchester Piccadilly)

One angry passenger is avoiding travelling as much as possible:

"It's all a nightmare. The present Great Northern Thameslink chaos has meant I've avoided travelling as far as possible. It's like train roulette – no way of knowing what

At the other end of the Horsham to Peterborough line passengers at St Neots are hit much harder in the off-peak. There the Peterborough to Horsham trains are meant to make up a half-hourly service, providing the only trains into London. As you can see from the screen grab below from recenttraintimes.co.uk, St Neots passengers have effectively been left without a service and no alternative:

The screenshot shows a train timetable for the St Neots to London service. The columns represent days of the week: Today, Tomorrow, Mon 10, Tue 11, Wed 12, Thu 13, Fri 14, and Sat 15. The rows list train numbers and their scheduled times. Many cells in the timetable are empty or contain red 'X' marks, indicating cancellations. The text below the screenshot states: "At the other end of the Horsham to Peterborough line passengers at St Neots are hit much harder in the off-peak. There the Peterborough to Horsham trains are meant to make up a half-hourly service, providing the only trains into London. As you can see from the screen grab below from recenttraintimes.co.uk, St Neots passengers have effectively been left without a service and no alternative:"

A reliable timetable is critical. Where there is severe detriment like this to passengers we are pushing Thameslink to urgently address the issue and be honest with passengers about the impact.

Passenger feedback

Northern

Comments from passengers responding to our overnight survey reflect the stabilisation of Northern's service:

"2 consecutive days the trains have had only 5 minutes delay....hooray."

(Preston to Bolton)

However, a reliable train service doesn't just mean on time:

"The train was surprisingly on time, it is usually late. On the down side it had only 2 carriages instead of normal 4."

(Atherton to Salford)

And the emergency timetable means some passengers have had to change their plans:

"Again due to the emergency timetable I am getting a train 20 mins earlier, due to change of route the train is full of suitcases and busy... Just weary."

(Widnes to Manchester Oxford Road)

Some passengers have given up on rail travel and found another way to make their journeys:

"Before the timetable changes there was a direct train from Stockport to Kirkby. Following the timetable changes this train was removed. I now have to go Stockport

to Salford Crescent then from there to Kirkby. The first day of the new timetable the journey took 4.25 hours due to cancellations. The second day took 3 hours or so. By the third day I gave up and borrowed my son's car which I have done every day since. These changes together with Lime St closing means there is no longer any certainty I can get to work and back in a reasonable manner."

Thameslink and Great Northern

Some passengers have noticed an improvement:

"My train the 07.15 departure was not cancelled today. Indeed it ran virtually on time. This is only the second time that this has happened since the new timetable was introduced."

(East Grinstead to London Bridge)

"Amazed we could actually get a train and not wait half an hour."

(Harpenden to St Pancras)

When this is not delivered, as continues to be the case on many Thameslink and Great Northern trains, passengers become bored:

"I am just tired of never being sure if the trains will run as per the timetable or how long my journey may be if they are cancelled or delayed."

(Harpenden to St Albans)

People become angry as they try to figure out what services are actually going to run:

"I went to London Bridge for the 11.30 to Redhill. This train was cancelled as the 11.18 to Rainham was stuck on platform 4 with no driver thus blocking any other trains from departing southbound. The 11.35 train to E.Croydon & Gatwick was cancelled. The 11.51 to Redhill arrived several minutes late & arrived 15 minutes late in Redhill or half an hour after 1 should have arrived at Redhill. On the way back I was lucky as when I got to Redhill station at 14.01, the 13.49 train to London Bridge was running 15 minutes late & I caught this train but it then got held up by a previous slow running train at Purley. It arrived at London bridge at 14.45 & unsurprisingly the 14.48 Thameslink train to Abbey was cancelled!"

Tuesday 12 June

This is the second week of Northern's emergency timetable, and industry statistics show services have begun to stabilise as a result of the reduced services and use of replacement buses on some routes.

On Thameslink and Great Northern this morning there are still clear problems with a number of late notice cancellations and delays on services from the north into St Pancras and London Farringdon.

One colleague travelled from Kings Cross from Ely on an extremely busy service with two stops scheduled. The driver announced a further two stops – this made the journey very stuffy and unpleasant and over 15 minutes late. There was much grumbling from passengers. The driver apologised for the delay – however, it was over the amount of time that allows passengers to claim compensation through Delay Repay 15 so why not announce that?

We are gathering daily input from passengers through a short daily survey. We want to hear how passengers are feeling, the impact on their daily lives and if they are seeing any improvement week on week.

We are using this information to demonstrate to rail companies how badly people's lives are impacted, and to encourage a generous compensation offer. Last night we heard that Northern passengers will receive a cash sum equivalent to one month's travel on the worst-affected routes. But passengers will want to know who is eligible and how they claim so they can decide if this is a good deal.

For more on what we think about compensation see [our news release](#) or see our [guide to claiming](#).

We have also published our letter to Secretary of State Chris Grayling [here](#).

Passenger feedback

Thameslink and Great Northern

Some passengers are angry about confusing information both online and at stations including one NHS worker:

"- Wrong information shown on National Rail Website – Wrong information provided by Gatwick Airport Train Staff. – Advised to take wrong (very slow) Thameslink train to East Croydon to change to a connecting Southern train. Once we eventually got to East Croydon, the connecting Southern Train was 15 minutes late.

"I trusted the Train Station staff which made me very stressed, angry and late. If they had told me to wait at Gatwick Station for 5-10mins I would have been able to get the direct Gatwick Express train to Victoria, for which I have an annual gold card ticket. I would have got to work on-time.

"I was 30 minutes late for taking over from my colleague (a lone 24hour on-call worker in a stressful NHS central London hospital). I myself, also a 24hour on-call lone worker in the NHS, arrived at my work stressed and out of breath from running. This could have dangerous, unintended consequences for patients in the NHS."
(Gatwick to Victoria passenger)

Passengers are frustrated by constant delays and the impact on being late to work and worried about how this is impacting on their reputation:

"Every train, every morning, has been delayed by 5 – 10 minutes. This may not sound much but it means arriving at work 10 – 15 minutes late every day – or having to leave the house 10 minutes earlier, well before 07:00. This is putting my position at work at risk as I am seen as unreliable."

(Tulse Hill to London Blackfriars)

One passenger travelling from Royston to Cambridge summed up his indifference:
"It was a normal journey, nothing special and better this week as the train was a train and on time!"

Northern

Where the emergency timetable means trains are replaced by buses some passengers are losing out:

"I had to get a rail replacement bus from Ormskirk to Preston as the service I needed to use is one of several peak hour services swapped for rail replacement bus services in the emergency timetable. Journey takes extra 35 minutes."
(Ormskirk to Blackpool North)

Others are seeing the benefits of stabilising performance:

"Leeds – Southport services seem to be stabilising, the 1620 departure hasn't been cancelled since the middle of last week. This is an improvement. Trans Pennine services seem to be in less disarray, less disruption due to them running late."
(Leeds to Mirfield)

Passengers haven't got what they paid for and want compensation:

"Train was 29 minutes late and was unable to get on that or the next one. Had to get a bus. I have a yearly season ticket and have paid nearly £40 out on bus journeys since the new timetable due to cancelled, delayed and overcrowded trains. I have paid for a service and am not able to access it! I am unsure as to whether or not it is worth me renewing my season ticket in July."
(Swinton to Manchester Victoria)

Week 5

Wednesday 20 June

Passengers on Thameslink and Great Northern continue to experience too many short notice cancellations and delays.

Yesterday we met with Govia Thameslink Railway's chief operating officer Nick Brown to discuss two key areas:

- the urgency of giving passengers a timetable they can rely on
- appropriate compensation.

Calling for an interim timetable

For a few weeks we have been calling for an interim published timetable that GTR are confident they can run day-in-day out on Thameslink and Great Northern.

They confirmed at the meeting that a temporary timetable will be introduced in July 2018, the detail of this is still being worked on. In the interim GTR have agreed to publish a Monday to Friday interim timetable on its website and on online systems, although this may still be subject to some cancellations.

GTR will also further improve communication of its remedial plan so that passengers can have more confidence about which trains are expected to run and where bus replacement is being offered. GTR will continue to recommend that passengers check before they travel.

Appropriate compensation

We welcome GTR's commitment to base Delay Repay entitlement on the full, intended 20 May timetable. But the enhanced compensation being offered is not sufficient redress for what passengers are going through. We stressed to GTR that the current offer must be improved and we continue to call for:

- a lump-sum payable to season ticket holders to reflect the hardship experienced
- a package to recognise the impact on regular travellers who do not buy season tickets.

Passengers on Thameslink and Great Northern completing our daily survey back up the need for both of these issues to be sorted out:

"It's the uncertainty. Every morning and every evening I wonder if the train will run, will I get a seat, how crowded will it be? All trains seem to stop everywhere which is adding a lot to the travel time."

"Train was cancelled again along with it being cancelled on my way home last night and already my 17.39 has been cancelled tonight already"

"So many short notice cancellations. I checked the app in the morning and my usual train 7.52 is running. Arrive at the station an hour later and the service is cancelled with no explanation. Forced onto a slower 8.01 which takes 15 minutes longer to reach Blackfriars"

"0751 cancelled, 0759 additional train rammed. Boarded 0810 driver announced 'this is a non-existent train to King's Cross'. No idea where it came from but a slow one into King's Cross!"

"Took 1044 from Cambridge to Kings Cross; originating from Kings Lynn, and only 4 coaches. People standing, and then additional stops made. Had seat, but uncomfortable journey."

"Went to catch 17:44 from Cambridge. Running late second evening in a row, Left Cambridge approx. 18:03, arrived Waterbeach 18:17. Since introduction of new timetables, trains more unreliable, cancelled and some trains removed completely from timetable."

Tuesday 19 June

Today the rail industry apologised at our [public Board meeting](#) for the frustration and misery inflicted on passengers for the last month. They say there is a plan to restore reliability and the missing 165 Northern services. Speakers included David Brown (Northern managing director), Leo Goodwin (TransPennine Express managing director) and Patrick Cawley (director of route sponsorship, Network Rail).

We held the rail companies accountable in public and gave passengers the chance to ask questions. We shared the stories passengers have been telling us about the impact of the disruption on their lives. We heard from the speakers why the timetable change went so badly, then asked them how they were going to put it right, compensate passengers and rebuild trust.

The companies have promised services will improve and that detail on special compensation will be announced soon. In the meantime, we encourage passengers to keep claiming the compensation you are entitled to and keep speaking up when things go wrong.

Meanwhile, in London last night the Transport Select Committee heard from a number of industry representatives about the timetable meltdown. We attended and have written to the committee to reiterate what passengers are telling us.

Passenger feedback

Last night we asked passengers if they claim compensation, and what they think of it.

- *"The problem is it will not store my season ticket or photocard details. So every time I have to fill them out again. This is a stupid waste of time. I should*

be able to store them and then change them when they change.” (Haywards Heath to Clapham Junction)

- *“No, I have not claimed compensation. In the past I have found the process to be far too complicated and for very little return.” (Enfield Chase to Moorgate)*
- *“No. I have weekly tickets and I don’t think the Northern rail company will compensate me enough for the couple of months of really horrendous services.”(Preston to Bolton)*
- *“When I woke up and looked at the train schedule, I saw that three trains had already been cancelled and one wasn’t even showing as part of the timetable. Yet again, I chose to drive so as to have some certainty to my morning and evening commutes. Because I have, in most cases, chosen not to travel by train; company makes it impossible to claim compensation in this situation.” (Elstree and Borehamwood to West Hampstead Thameslink)*
- *“Two trains cancelled in a row. The next one turned up 13 minutes late: arriving at Blackfriars 14 minutes late, just inside the delay repay window! I am going to claim for the worst disrupted days. But the process when paying by contactless credit card is a bit of a pain. So for a couple of pounds it’s almost not worth the hassle.” (Elstree and Borehamwood to London Blackfriars)*
- *“I still never know if my train will turn up or run on time and always anxious about getting a seat. I have claimed when my journeys have been disrupted but its not always made clear you can claim. Process is difficult and I often wait months for my compensation. The compensation is hardly worth claiming. I tend to get back about £2 on a journey which costs me £9 and doesn’t compensate for the stress and inconvenience. I don’t think 30 mins is fair either, i dont get compensation if my train is stuck waiting for a platform for 15 mins which can in turn make me miss a connection and later for work!” (Chorley to Manchester Victoria)*
- *“Claimed each and every time. Got a nice pile of vouchers as a result but would prefer the trains to run to time.” (London Victoria to Haywards Heath)*

Week 6

Friday 29 June

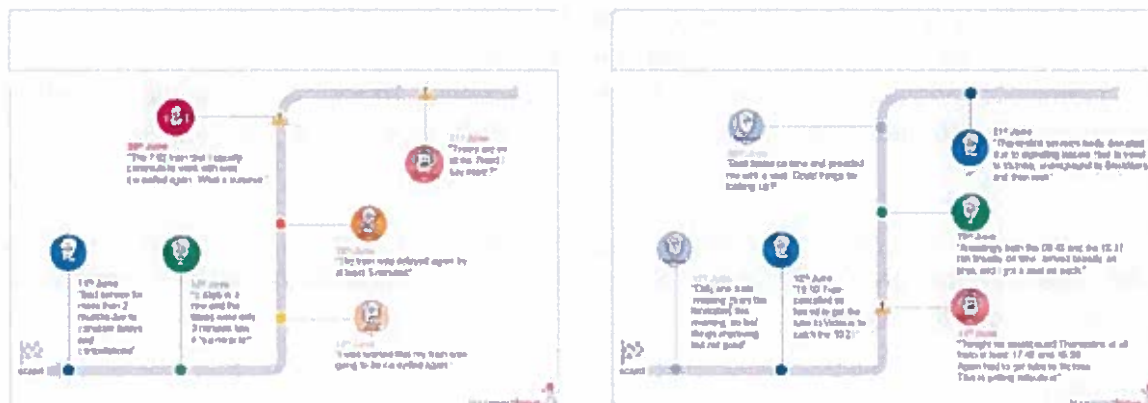
We have been collecting passenger experiences for more than a month now. *How is this helping?*

We have used your first-hand stories as evidence to demonstrate the need for stable, more reliable timetables, better information and compensation.

Wins have included the [compensation announcement](#) for passengers in the north of England and working with Thameslink to improve the clarity of the information on its homepage, which sets out the overall situation and what passengers' travel alternatives are. We've also made recommendations for the rail2020 websites and the FAQs.

We will continue doing this and will also make sure that lessons are learned so that we, hopefully, never see such chaos on the railways again.

Here's a couple of examples of the ongoing experiences of passengers trying to make journeys on a regular basis, and how they have felt over time.



We've been hearing about the real impacts that this has had on people's lives. Here's just a few examples.

"My experience since the timetable change on 20th May 2018 has been dreadful, even worse than usual. I work at Great Ormond Street Hospital in an exhausting, demanding job, which is why I am unable to travel to and from work by car. On Thursday 14th June the previous trains from St Pancras to Flitwick had all been cancelled. Three trains after the 17:12 were also cancelled. When I got on the train it was very crowded. However, more and more people squeezed on because so many trains afterwards were cancelled. A woman next to me screamed as the door shut and I was squashed against the handrail unable to move. At the first stop, St. Albans, we fell out of the train when the doors opened. My back and shoulder have been sore since this happened. I now have to travel south to Blackfriars to be able to get on a train safely. I have reluctantly resigned from a job that I love, making medicines for sick children. I have over 10 years NHS experience and I am leaving a

department that is now severely understaffed. This diabolical service is not just affecting me and my colleagues, it impacts on innocent seriously ill children. The people responsible for this shambles need to be punished."

"On this day I had to get to London Bridge in order to travel north to Stoke Newington and train over 50 people obviously I was late which is just not acceptable for police officers ... I have been affected by southern strikes 40 days and now Thameslink inability to run any sort of reliable timetable."

"In total the journey took me about 90 minutes when it should have been around 60. The return journey was no better. My total commute today took 3 hours rather than 2. This is currently typical (i.e. about 5 hours extra per working week spent commuting)."

And passengers have told us what they would like the rail companies to do to help them. Again, much of it seems like common sense:

"There is no certainty whatsoever around timetables, journey planner or live departure boards. We are told to check these but there is no point as they aren't accurate and change all the time. Trains disappear and reappear. We need to know and understand which services will stop for us if other services are cancelled. They should also provide more reassurance about buses or to refund taxis. But they won't make any commitment. We are supposed to just accept the uncertainty."

"The timetable is horrible and random. They should announce updates the night before and have proper contingency plans. this is franchise so needs to pull their socks up. Staff at the gate are so rude, they are told to take our tickets away so we don't claim compensation, last week the staff harassed me to retain my ticket, when I said I needed it to claim he showed a very rude behaviour. Staff treat us as enemies."

"Make sure that the published timetable is the one the operator is going to use. And make sure it's staff are fully briefed. Simple lack of attention to detail! The passenger is left to sort out the mess."

What next?

We would love to hear about your journey – what happened and what the rail company could have done to help you. Click [here](#) to tell us as regularly as you would like.

We will also send out specific surveys to passengers on our [Transport User Panel](#) – at various points over the coming weeks and months, to get detailed feedback through various developments until things are back to normal.

Monday 25 June

Northern's temporary timetable has been in place for more than three weeks now. Passengers on some lines will welcome the improvement in punctuality and reliability this has provided. However, the impact on some passengers where services have been removed or replaced by buses has been significant.

The Lakes Line between Oxenholme and Windermere has been one of the most impacted, with no Northern trains for more than three weeks. However last week trains made an [unexpected return to the line](#) as West Coast Railways –normally a charter operator – stepped in and provided a shuttle service running alongside Northern's rail replacement buses.



It's a remarkable story as this 'DIY' train service was put together at short notice, in part thanks to the Lakes Line Rail User Group. We've been on the line again in recent days speaking to passengers and seeing what they think of both the bus and this unusual train service. Have these trains been enticing passengers and holidaymakers back to the Lake District? Longer term, passengers will now want to know when a full service will resume on this and Northern's other affected routes.

Meanwhile in the south, both performance and information continue to disappoint passengers.

Regular commuter Dan says:

"If I didn't have the option of going to Victoria this morning I'd be a bit stuck. When I arrived at Horsham station the 34 Thameslink service was advertised as on time at 07.34. Except there was no sign of it arriving from the Horsham depot two minutes away. It's usually waiting in the platform – IF it's running. More often than not it isn't.



"The information screen then switched to saying expected at 35. Then 36. When I asked platform staff whether I should wait for the 34 or catch the 40 service to Victoria they asked where I was going. I said City Thameslink and they said "they don't usually tell us about those trains (the new Thameslink services from Horsham) – try to catch the 40 and change at Three Bridges for a Thameslink". There was then an announcement to say "apologies to passengers on Platform 2, I know some apps are showing the 07.40 service as cancelled, but it's not. It's actually at Christ's Hospital and will be here shortly".

"I got the 40 to Victoria as I have no faith or trust that GTR will get me to where I actually want to go."

Week 7

Tuesday 3 July

Yesterday Northern trains returned to the Lakes Line, with a shuttle service operating between Oxenholme and Windermere supplemented with rail replacement buses.

Last month we were on the ground speaking with passengers and monitoring the passenger experience, on both the buses and the interim West Coast Railways trains. You can read our report [here](#).

Getting Northern trains back in the lake district is great news, but passengers here and in other areas affected by Northern's emergency timetable will now want to know when the full May timetable will be introduced.

We are continuing to ask passengers for feedback on their journeys since the timetable change. It's clear that some Northern and TransPennine Express passengers are still experiencing unacceptable disruption.

"The train was cancelled. Had to get a tremendously overcrowded TransPennine Express to Dewsbury and then complete the journey by bus... It seems like the 1620 Leeds – Southport gets cancelled at least once a week at the moment." Leeds to Mirfield passenger

"The train was running approx 20 minutes late at departure from York. This is not unusual since the timetable change. We passed through Leeds at which point we got stuck behind another train on Platform 16. This delayed our train further and we finally arrived 40 mins late in Huddersfield. This is symptomatic of Trans Pennine Express service performance following timetable changes... we didn't get any explanation as to why it was late." York to Huddersfield passenger

We have written to the Managing Directors of both Northern and TransPennine Express. We have sought assurances on behalf of passengers about when punctuality and reliability will improve and also reiterated our view on compensation for affected passengers. You can find our letters [here](#).

We have since welcomed the announcement by [Transport for the North](#) that compensation for season ticket holders on affected routes has been agreed. Passengers will look forward to hearing how they can apply.

Elsewhere, we're working on our input to the Office of Rail and Road Inquiry into the whole timetable crisis. We're also meeting Govia Thameslink Railway later this week to hear about preparations to introduce a new, stable timetable on Thameslink from 15 July.

Week 8

9 July

We've just entered the eighth week since the 20 May timetable change went so badly wrong on Northern and Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR). In the north west the situation has been stable in recent weeks, if far from brilliant in terms of punctuality, but what happens next?

For Thameslink and Great Northern passengers, things have been anything but stable. Everything is riding on the interim timetable that starts on Sunday 15 July – one week to go! It's difficult to overstate how important that 15 July timetable is in bringing stability, getting away from a large number of cancellations every day and letting passengers start to rely on trains again. You can download next week's Thameslink timetables [here](#).

What is Transport Focus doing?

In the north of England we're continuing to press for generous compensation for passengers affected by the timetable crisis. We've welcomed what's been announced, but as ever the devil's in the detail. If it's right that compensation starts from 15 minutes delay on Thameslink and other train companies, why not for Northern and TransPennine Express passengers? We're also pressing Northern to be clear with passengers what's happening from 1 August onwards (oddly, a Wednesday) – it's only three and a half weeks away.

The screenshot shows the Northern by Arriva website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Tickets, Destinations, Stations, Help, Login, and a Service Update notification. A prominent red alert box titled 'Temporary timetable changes' is displayed, stating that from Monday 4 June to Tuesday 31 July, the Lakes Line, Blackpool, Lancashire, Manchester, and Liverpool City Region lines are affected. Below the alert is a 'Read more' button. To the right, a 'Buy tickets' search form is visible, featuring fields for 'Leaving from', 'Going to', and a date selector set to 03/07/20. The form also includes options for 'One way' and 'Return' journeys, a 'Search' button, and a link for 'Advanced search'.

And we continue to monitor how things are running, including on the Windermere line where after a near-perfect Saturday there were three out of eight trains were cancelled yesterday.

On Thameslink and Great Northern, we're pressing GTR to publicise the new schedules widely, to get the new schedules onto apps and websites and – above all – make sure the changes deliver that all important stability. We'll be closely monitoring how it's goes next week. We're also pressing on compensation for Thameslink and Great Northern passengers – the detail missing from last week's [announcement](#) must come soon. And we've asked the Office of Rail and Road to investigate reports of dangerous levels of crowding on some Thameslink platforms as a result of signalling problems on 21 June.

We're also putting together our inputs to the Glaister Inquiry into the whole 20 May crisis. And we'll be doing the same for the Blake Johnson review by Rail North into what happened in the north of England.

Give us a stable timetable now

The current timetable chaos on Thameslink, Great Northern and Northern is as saddening as it is deeply frustrating for passengers.

Take Thameslink passenger Kelly. Three weeks ago she had a reasonable and improving service, with the last [National Rail Passenger Survey](#) score showing her fellow passengers were also recognising the improvement. Now she's having to work from home because her service has been wrecked. How on earth has the rail industry managed to replace timetables that basically worked, with ones that just can't be delivered. We've been warning since November about [problems in getting accurate timetables finalised](#). We were told that, bar some initial teething problems, it would be ok. How wrong the industry turned out to be....

What to do next?

Passengers need a stable timetable – one they can rely to get them to work, exams, shops and airports. Northern decided to declare a temporary timetable, removing 165 trains each day, to buy time to get the driver training finished. Has this started to stabilise things? [Let me know about your experiences since it came in](#). It has also begun to feel very quiet in places. Are people taking to buses and cars instead in the North West?

Thameslink and Great Northern haven't gone for a temporary timetable and passengers are facing uncertainty and confusion – even about the timetable GTR is attempting to run. At times it is bizarre. As well as multiple cancellations of the trains that are advertised, this morning the 0605 Peterborough to London Kings Cross Great Northern train actually ran, but with hardly any passengers because it wasn't showing on websites and apps.



Passengers need a service they can trust

This has to change. At a meeting on Monday afternoon with Nick Brown, GTR's Chief Operating Officer, I made it clear that passengers need a service they can trust. There needs to be a properly-advertised interim timetable that will run reliably until there are enough drivers trained to introduce the promised timetable properly. Expecting passengers to cope with the current lottery is unacceptable.

Northern's short-term solution has of course left some routes abandoned in the short-term, with trains replaced with buses. Those passengers have every reason to feel aggrieved, not least on the Lakes Line in Cumbria where buses replace all trains for the next two weeks.

We are calling for Northern to offer passengers Delay Repay compensation against the timetable which should have been running, as GTR has done. Passengers should get compensation if they are 30 minutes or more late getting to their destination for whatever reason, including because their train has been withdrawn or replaced by a bus.

But it's not just about Delay Repay. The special compensation scheme announced this week must recognise the human impact – the extent of the disruption to people's lives. Northern needs to get on with providing this compensation – details 'in due course' really doesn't wash. And it is the same for some parts of the Thameslink and Great Northern networks – the impact has been so severe that passengers deserve more than just Delay Repay.

We'll [continue gathering feedback from passengers](#) and monitoring the impact on the ground, while pushing the industry to get stable interim timetables in place and to provide decent compensation.

Anthony Smith
6 June 2018

More rail chaos

Earlier today Transport Focus met rail minister, Jo Johnson MP, in Manchester. The minister was there to see senior stakeholders and learn first-hand about the issues caused by the recent timetable and disruption chaos.

Our Manchester-based director talked to the minister about the impact on passengers, what has gone wrong, and most importantly what needs to be done to restore a reliable service and faith in the railway in the north.

We explained our asks for passengers to the minister:

- reliable train performance and clear communication about the timetable that will be provided in the coming weeks.
- compensation that recognises the extent of the disruption to people's lives and Delay Repay measured against the original timetable promised, not just the slimmed down one now on offer.
- a robust plan to reinstate the 165 train services that have been removed from the timetable as soon as possible.

These are key points, amongst many others, that we are reinforcing on behalf of passengers to organisations including Northern, Transport for the North and the Mayor of Greater Manchester.

An illustration of the impact.... A colleague took a day's leave today to be around if needed to drive her daughter to college for her A level exams – as they weren't confident the trains would run properly during this timetable chaos. As it turned out the trains did run, but it illustrates the decisions people are needing to take to be sure they get to critical appointments.

Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) today offered to get students to exams by taxi if needed. A sensible, responsible decision – but the very fact it has been necessary tells a tale.

Passengers continued to face delays and cancellations on Thameslink services today, and it appears this is being felt by commuters early in the morning and those travelling outside peak times.

Those travelling on Thameslink trains into St Pancras this morning would question the success of GTR's promises to stabilise the service – it again faced delayed and cancelled trains. The experience for Great Northern passengers into Kings Cross did seem better, however.

at	London St Pancras Internationa	from	Station (optional)	Update
Due	Origin	Status	Platform	Details
07:10	Brighton	07:47 37 mins late	B	Details
07:35	Horsham	07:43 8 mins late	B	Details
07:39	Bedford	07:42 3 mins late	A	Details
07:40	Brighton	Delayed	B	Details
07:42	Margate	On time	12	Details
07:42	St Albans City	Delayed	A	Details
07:43	Rainham (Kent)	On time	B	Details
07:45	Gatwick Airport	Cancelled		Details

The situation really didn't improve through the morning as trains from Brighton to London St Pancras were impacted by severe delays. Passengers arriving at Horsham and Sutton stations found their services cancelled.

We continue to argue that GTR should introduce a formal temporary timetable on Thameslink, one they know they can deliver. Stability matters to passengers.

This morning we asked GTR to confirm that it is still doing automatic Delay Repay – there having been some suggestion that it had been suspended. We've been assured that it hasn't and season ticket holders will get compensation as normal.

We'll keep up our monitoring. And [please let me know](#) about your experiences – whether north or south.

Anthony Smith
7 June 2018

Must do better next week!

It's an understatement that it's not been a good week for many Govia Thameslink (GTR) and Northern passengers. There's not been much progress with the stability promised by GTR at the beginning of the week, with cancellations leaving long gaps in the service at some stations. There are early signs that the Northern temporary timetable is starting to help, though. Stability is crucial – the industry must do better next week. We've written to both GTR and Northern about this and you can see the letters [here](#).

Time	Origin	Status	Platform	Status
07:14	London & Tottenham Gates	07:14 20 mins late	12	On time
07:21	London Avenue & Hagen	07:21 20 mins late	13	On time
07:27	Highgate	07:27 21 mins late	14	On time
07:31	London Kingsland	07:31 12 mins late	15	On time
07:33	London Kingsland	07:33 10 mins late	16	On time
07:31	London Kingsland	07:31 12 mins late	17	On time
07:31	London Kingsland	07:31 12 mins late	18	On time
07:31	London Kingsland	07:31 12 mins late	19	On time
07:31	London Kingsland	07:31 12 mins late	20	On time
07:31	London Kingsland	07:31 12 mins late	21	On time
07:31	London Kingsland	07:31 12 mins late	22	On time
07:31	London Kingsland	07:31 12 mins late	23	On time
07:31	London Kingsland	07:31 12 mins late	24	On time
07:31	London Kingsland	07:31 12 mins late	25	On time
07:31	London Kingsland	07:31 12 mins late	26	On time
07:31	London Kingsland	07:31 12 mins late	27	On time
07:31	London Kingsland	07:31 12 mins late	28	On time
07:31	London Kingsland	07:31 12 mins late	29	On time
07:31	London Kingsland	07:31 12 mins late	30	On time

Thameslink cancellations and poor information

One of my colleagues arrived at Harpenden station at 9.50am this morning to catch a train to City Thameslink, only to find no train until 10.22. He and fellow passengers kept checking the information boards wondering why there were no trains going south. There was no explanation, all they could see were six trains going the other way to Luton and Bedford.

Then various of the northbound trains were cancelled or had the dreaded "delayed" appear next to them. There was still no explanation. Eventually a train arrived, extremely crowded, more like an early morning commuter service than a mid-morning off-peak train.

Replacement buses in the Lake District

Despite the temporary timetable that takes out 165 trains, Northern passengers continued to experience delays and cancellations. It has been better, but it's still not good enough.

Some of the passengers most affected by the interim timetable are on the line between Windermere and Oxenholme in Cumbria. We were monitoring on the

ground there last month, at a time when passengers were experiencing a chaotic service. You can read our report [here](#).

We were back there today speaking to passengers about the bus service that's replacing trains on the line for at least another three weeks. We found plenty of staff at Oxenholme and clear information about where to find the buses. Oddly, the bus timetable means some long waits for connecting trains – more than 45 minutes on occasion.

At Kendal we found volunteers from the Lakes Line Rail User Group helping out providing information to passengers. There's no shelter or waiting facilities there, not a problem on a nice sunny day, but what if the weather turns? At 11.30am there were school children coming home earlier than normal after exams and overwhelming the mini-buses – some passengers were left behind until extra buses arrived.

What did the passengers make of it all? On one hand a sense that the buses were better than the unreliable train service provided of late. But there was frustration that it has come to this. Next week we're going to be asking passengers on the Windermere route to complete a simple survey about their experiences using the buses.

Great Northern cancellations

Back on GTR, we heard from eight-months-pregnant Abi who had a pretty grim commute home yesterday from Huntingdon to South London. The journey should have taken 55 mins (5.41- 6.36pm) on Thameslink, and then another hour from Finsbury Park to South London. It actually took over four hours after successive cancellations at Huntingdon. How awful!

Relaxing ticket restrictions

We have pushed GTR this week to relax ticket restrictions so for the moment passengers can get the first train that comes going to where they want to be. We've suggested that passengers with tickets normally valid on Southern or Thameslink only should for now be able to use the Gatwick Express. I am pleased to hear that a decision has been made to do this. This is sensible and will be welcomed by passengers.

To reiterate, achieving stability is crucial. Next week we'll continue to push train companies on this, and also the need for generous compensation for passengers receiving a raw deal. Next Tuesday the Transport Focus board meets in public in London and we've invited GTR and Network Rail to attend.

Anthony Smith
8 June 2018

Week 5: train roulette on Thameslink, more certainty in the north

Tonight the Transport Select Committee is [questioning the rail industry](#) over the last few weeks' meltdown. We'll be there – those who can't make it can watch it on Parliament TV.

Tomorrow we'll be quizzing the managing directors of Northern and TransPennine Express, David Brown and Leo Goodwin, and Network Rail director of route sponsorship Patrick Cawley, at a public meeting in central Manchester. It's not too late to sign up to come along – click [here](#) to find out more.

Or you can submit questions by tweeting [@transportfocus](#) using [#timetablecrisis](#).

While things have stabilised in the north of England, in the south and east passengers who use Thameslink and Great Northern are still playing train roulette. It's just not fair to leave passengers guessing whether their train will run tomorrow.

Govia Thameslink (GTR)'s efforts to stabilise the timetable is just not working. There are still far too many late-notice cancellations and delays, on top of pre-announced cancellations. Online and station information is confusing and inconsistent. Passengers have completely lost confidence in their trains.

One passenger travelling from Meldreth to Cambridge summed up their frustration:

"Two consecutive trains listed as running on the app, but cancelled last minute after I had left work and travelled to the station. No point in going back to work so had to sit on the platform."

We are again [urging GTR](#) to publish an interim timetable that works and passengers can rely on. They cannot be expected to wait until mid-July for certainty.

We have written to rail minister Jo Johnson MP specifically about better compensation for passengers.

We are calling for:

- a lump-sum payable to season ticket holders to reflect the hardship experienced
- recognition of the impact on regular travellers who do not buy season tickets – for instance part-time workers or regular leisure/business passengers. This could take the form of a number of free journeys.
- special offers/marketing deals designed to rebuild trust/confidence once services have returned to normal
- for Northern passengers, the adoption of a 15-minute delay 'trigger' rather than 30-minute.

One bit of good news. West Coast Railways is running a train backwards and forwards between Oxenholme and Windemere, a line where Northern has suspended trains entirely at the moment. Well done! We're pressing for these trains to show in the National Rail journey planner.

Anthony Smith
8 June 2018

Turn up and (maybe) go: timetable problems persist....

The weekend looms

As the weekend approaches, where are we on the great timetable crisis?

Northern has become more reliable and oddly, in a seemingly parallel universe, the rest of the network has generally been running OK. The large-scale Southern and Gatwick Express timetable changes went well. Many passengers will have noticed nothing. However, those affected have noticed a lot.

Thameslink and Great Northern, which between them carry a huge number of passengers, have yet to stabilise. July 15 sees an interim timetable finally introduced. Short-notice cancellations, poor performance and patchy information are the side effects of a system out of kilter. Who knows when we passengers will see the full, promised, timetable that we've been paying for in advance for years.

Return of (scheduled) trains to the Lakes Line

After Northern's suspension of services on the Lakes Line between Oxenholme and Windermere a replacement bus was put in. Then a charter train was also organised by local MP Tim Farron and the energetic chair of the local user group Robert Talbot. Northern trains return on Monday July 2nd.

Keen to understand how this was working for locals and visitors we had a researcher there, talking to passengers, this week. While the sun helps it all seems to have worked well and has had an energising effect – maybe a blueprint for future services on that sort of branch line? It also acts a brilliant case study of replacement services for a very varied group of passengers. See [our report](#).

Back to predictable unpredictability?

It seems odd to think we are getting back to where we were on May 19. In other words, an industry that is still have difficulty publishing some timetables more than six weeks in advance. These ongoing problems continue to have a sapping effect on passengers all around the country.

At the weekend I was talking to someone who organises tours where guests often want to travel by train. He can't sell tours if he can't find out well in advance if trains will be running. So, he hires some coaches, goes through real hassle having to take temporary booking until timings are confirmed and, worst of all, has had to cancel some tours.

A passenger travelled from Peterborough to Ipswich on Sunday morning. He had an epic journey because the first train was so late. It involved two replacement buses – while on one of them, he could actually see the supposedly-cancelled train running! People were ringing their employers from the coach and at stations saying they would be late – this is having real impact on people's lives.

My colleague who comes in from Streatham on the Wimbledon Loop Thameslink services in South London has had days and days of not being able to get to work as huge gaps appear in the timetable and the later trains are so crowded she, eight months pregnant, cannot risk the journey.

Complain!

Our advice is always complain – make your voice heard. But what about many people who simply don't travel? A contract is still in existence, but the train company has not fulfilled their part of the offer by running a train. Also, the useful Delay Repay kicks in after 15 minutes but that should not stop you complaining if you are 14 minutes late especially if it happens repeatedly.

Who is in charge? Who takes responsibility?

This question has arisen hundreds of times in recent weeks. The answer is everyone and no-one. The rail industry, governments, staff and unions all bear some responsibility but no single person is totally at fault.

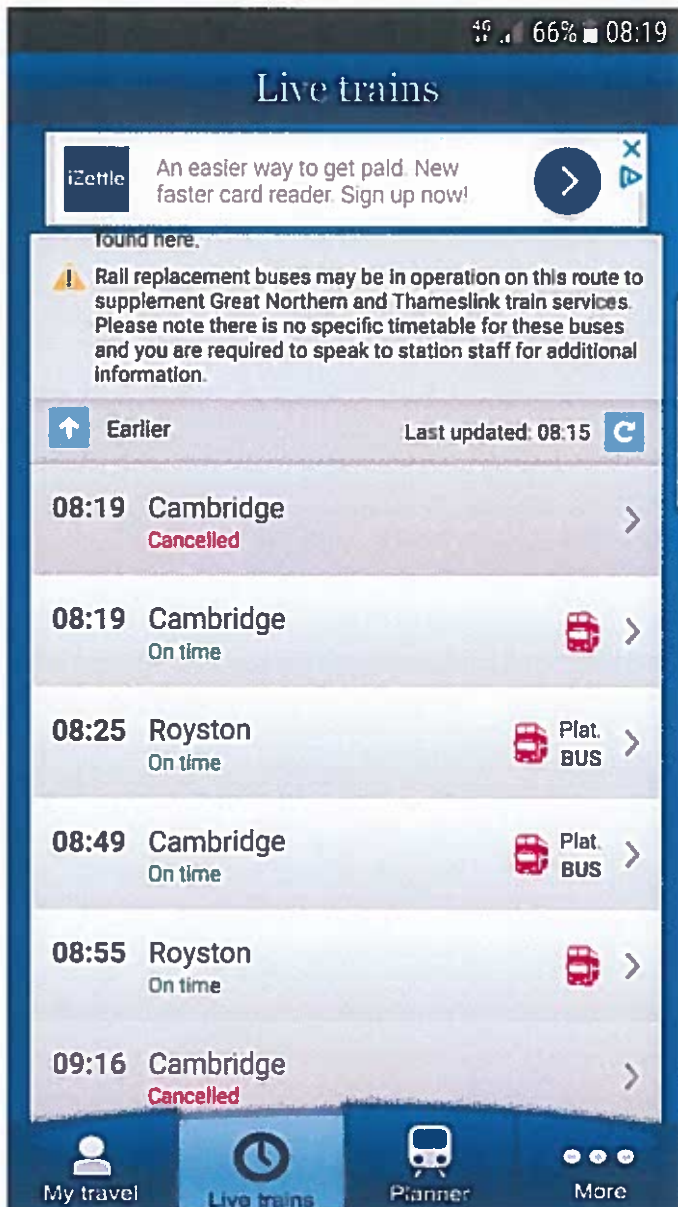
While welcome investment is being made all over the country, there is an enduring feeling that no-one is in overall charge. Passengers tell us they want a clear sense of who is in charge of their service. Has the time come again to put one person clearly in charge of the whole system? They wouldn't have to own or run every cog in that system, but would provide the much-needed overview to make sure the cogs mesh in future. Otherwise, fares will continue to rise and passengers will make other transport choices.

Anthony Smith
29 June 2018

There and back again – a tale of timetable crisis woes

Sunday before last one of my colleagues got first-hand experience of the passenger impact when timetables aren't finalised early enough. He needed to get from Peterborough to Ipswich on a Sunday morning before the first through train. This route starts up very late on a Sunday, 09:50 in the summer and 11:50 in the winter. Hopefully Greater Anglia will improve on this when the new trains arrive.

The previous day National Rail Enquiries (NRE) said that, with a very early start, it would be possible to get to Cambridge in time for Greater Anglia's 09:14 train to Ipswich. It involved going south to Hitchin and changing there for Cambridge – both Great Northern trains. Even finding that out took some doing, involving clicking on 'alternative trains' to those that were showing as cancelled. Many passengers would already have given up. Knowing the current timetable problems my colleague checked again just before heading for bed. The crucial train from Hitchin to Cambridge at 08:26 had now disappeared! Not showing as cancelled, just disappeared from the journey planners altogether. From thinking his plans were sorted, he was back on NRE researching.



Although the early trains from Peterborough to London were cancelled, a click on 'alternative trains' showed a train to Hitchin – and then an hour later one into Kings Cross, just giving time to get to Liverpool Street. Talk about putting obstacles in the way of people who just want to get from A to B. Rising early on Sunday he found that, overnight, rail replacement buses from Hitchin to Cambridge via Royston had appeared in the NRE journey planner, meaning he could make the 09:14 from Cambridge after all!

There was a final twist to the information challenges facing passengers that Sunday. Passengers at Royston were directed to the 08:00 replacement coach to Cambridge, which set off on time and called in at the intermediate stations. Two passengers boarded the coach at Shepreth at 08:19 just as the level crossing barriers descended for the supposedly-cancelled 08:19 train to stop. The cancelled train really did run, here's a picture where you can just about see it a couple of minutes later in the platform at the next station, Foxton!



Now my colleague was making a leisure journey, albeit a time-critical one. But it stood out to him how the timetable crisis is having real impact on people getting to work and going about their lives, even at the weekend. This isn't just a Mondays to Fridays problem. He overheard a number of people phoning their employers to say they would be late for work that Sunday – hopefully those passengers still have a job to go to next Sunday.

If anybody was in any doubt, this illustrates why Transport Focus is pressing Govia Thameslink Railway hard to publish a timetable it is confident can be delivered reliably. Services need to be put into journey planning systems with full details of any buses that will be covering gaps in the service. It also underlines why it's crucial that the rail industry gets back to publishing accurate timetables 12 weeks in advance. If trains and replacement buses aren't correct in journey planning systems passengers are left frustrated, potentially stranded and many will just walk away concluding that it's all too much hassle. It is called 'Informed Traveller' for a reason.

Anthony Smith
4 July 2018