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Department for Transport
Great Minster House
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15 May 2023

Dear Peter

Rail replacement bus services

The difficulties train operators are having sourcing sufficient buses to deliver rail replacement links, with the knock-on impact on passengers of cancelled buses, has caused us to ask questions recently about the monitoring of delivery in this area.

The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) has confirmed our suspicion that, unlike the train service, data is not gathered showing the proportion of the advertised bus service that actually runs, let alone information on punctuality or whether the intended number of seats was provided.

We have three concerns, best summarised as:

- if delivery of the 'bus plan' isn't measured, problems caused to passengers by cancellations will be invisible and there will be less pressure on the industry to improve
- without data on bus cancellations, automated systems are likely to be rejecting legitimate 'delay repay' claims
- the principle of transparency in how well the railway has delivered what it advertised

We feel that a potential solution would be for the industry to take forward a long-standing Transport Focus recommendation that real time running information for *planned* rail replacement buses is fed into Darwin, the national real time running database. As well as generating performance data automatically, this would be particularly valuable for passengers waiting at intermediate stations who, currently, must just hope that the advertised replacement bus will turn up. We accept that, while desirable, the same may not be possible for buses hired at short notice during service disruption.

We will continue to press RDG to propose a way to plug this gap, but anything the Department can do to help would be appreciated. Could performance reporting around planned replacement buses be built into what you require from operators in future?

Yours sincerely



Guy Dangerfield
Head of Strategy