

## Report back: Southeastern stakeholder forum, 11 July 2016

60 stakeholders representing user groups, local authorities and business interests across our franchise area attended our forum, chaired by Stephen Joseph OBE, Executive Director of the Campaign for Better Transport at London's Union Jack Club on Monday 11 July.

Southeastern managing Director David Statham and Train Services Director Richard Dean gave a presentation on developments since the last forum, covering investment in trains, stations and frontline staff, passenger satisfaction scores, our action plan to improve the scores, the August 2016 timetable, performance improvement plans and passenger communications.

Attendees were also shown a video detailing the work of the joint Southeastern/Network Rail control room and how operating decisions were taken.

Advance notice was also given of the timetable consultation for Thameslink services from 2018 which if supported, will see the Thameslink services to Luton and Cambridge via Blackfriars and St. Pancras extended to Kent.

Next, Bob Coulson, Network Rail Infrastructure Maintenance Manager responsible for the Kent route updated stakeholders on the progress of the Thameslink works at London Bridge and NR's plans to improve performance.

David also took the opportunity to update attendees on progress made in implementing requests made by stakeholders at our last forum in October 2015.

These were

- Improved communications, - particularly when services were disrupted.

As part of our £70M investment plan we were able to point to upgraded Customer Information Systems at stations, the roll-out of tablets to front line staff and 200 additional front line employees.

We were able to report on a variety of offers and promotions including 20% discounts, freezing super off-peak fares, “kids for a quid” deals and 2 for 1 offers to visitor attractions in Kent and London.

- Do more to promote destinations in Kent and east Sussex to boost tourism and the local economy.

Since that meeting we had been sponsoring and working with Visit Kent and 1066 Marketing Country and were actively promoting their destinations on our website and on posters at trains and stations.

- Improve peak performance.

While performance had been poor in the first quarter of 2016, primarily due to weather and infrastructure related incidents, since the spring and in response to the joint Southeastern and Network Rail performance plan, there had been an uplift with PPM currently at 86.3%, notwithstanding the loss of capacity at London Bridge .

While still below what we and our passengers expect, the trend was in the right direction.

Copies of our forum presentation have been previously circulated and together with the video will shortly be on our website

After a break for tea and coffee we then went into a table top exercise where attendees were each group was asked for the one change they would like to see implemented at Southeastern.

In no particular order, these were

- Better and more timely responses to stakeholder and passenger complaints and enquiries.

There was a view that the current 10 working day response time should be reduced. Responses were sometimes too general and did not answer the specific issue raised and there was an over reliance on ‘cut and paste’ standard responses.

- Journey times from Kent

While recognising the constraints of the service specification and the requirement to stop at intermediate stations, there was a view that more should be done to reduce journey times.



- Better passenger Information

This was raised by attendees on two tables.

The consensus was that priority should be given to providing real-time information to passengers during normal operation and planned and unplanned disruption, allowing passengers to make more informed choices.

- Better on board facilities and amenities

Suggestions included Wi Fi, power sockets to allow 'phones and lap tops to be charged and restoring the trolley service.

- Station car parking

Car parking at stations needed to be expanded in light of the increase in passenger numbers and on-going and proposed housing development in Kent and east Sussex.

Southeastern and Network Rail should look at all options including double-decking and land purchase.

All these suggestions will receive careful consideration and we'll report back at our next forum in October.

After the presentations and in the question and answer session, there were a number of other issues raised including:

- Information on planned engineering works to include the benefits of the work.
- The need for improved toilet facilities on trains and at stations
- Train services should be better integrated with local bus, cycling and walking routes
- Ticket acceptance during the Thameslink works at London Bridge to be widened to include more bus and tube options.

- Rail replacement bus services to be better resourced with appropriate signage and staff on the ground to assist passengers.
- Oyster acceptance should be widened to include Eynsford, Shoreham and Otford.
- The DfT-funded South East Flexible Ticketing (SEFT) programme to be widened to include provision for season tickets geared to those working part time.
- Ticket acceptance arrangements with other bus operators during unplanned disruption.
- Station and train announcements, - too much “clutter”, channels should be kept clear for essential information

The forum closed with lunch at 1.00PM and the opportunity to meet Southeastern directors and managers.