
Secretariat memorandum

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PC057

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Rail issues update

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1. To note the recent performance of the Thameslink, Southern and Southeastern franchises in respect of construction works at London Bridge station and track works resulting from the Thameslink programme.
- 1.2. This report is an update to report PC052 to the 24th February 2015 Policy Committee¹. This is attached as Appendix A.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1. That members note the report.
- 2.2. To continue pressure on the train operators, DfT and Network Rail to improve reliability and resilience of the rail network.
- 2.3. To call on the DfT and train operators to make a permanent change to compensation arrangements, to take account of passengers experience of persistent delays of less than 30 minutes, to lower the threshold for delay repay compensation to 15 minutes for journeys with a frequent timetabled service and to automate the process of compensation using the Oyster / contactless and other smartcard systems.

3 Performance data

- 3.1. The performance of the Thameslink, Southern and Southeastern franchises is closely linked to, but not exclusively dependent on, the rebuilding programme of London Bridge station and associated track works as a result of the Thameslink upgrade programme.
- 3.2. This only partially explains the poor performance of these franchises. Appendix B shows the performance of these three train operators plus South West Trains as a comparator (major commuter operator serving South London) over the period from January 2015 (period 11) to early May 2015 (period 2). As noted in report PC052 (Appendix A), the comparisons with previous years

¹ http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=3948&age=&field=file

show an improvement, but these are against the background of severe weather events in the previous years, whereas in the current periods this has not been the case, and so poor performance is largely attributable to factors within the control of the industry.

- 3.3. It should also be noted that during this period there was no significant change to the compensation arrangements to passengers during this period or offer of goodwill.
- 3.4. Appendix B shows right time arrival (RTA) and public performance measure (PPM) data. Right time arrival is a measure of the percentage of trains that arrive at their final destination either on time or early across the whole day. Right time is defined as less than one minute late and should not be confused with 'on time', as defined for public performance measure purposes. PPM is the percentage of planned trains which are run and which complete their journeys 'on time' across the whole day. Trains which complete their whole route calling at all timetabled stations are measured for punctuality at their final destination. In the case of London and South East services, a train is defined as being 'on time' if it arrives within five minutes of the planned arrival time. It does not include trains removed from the timetable on a planned basis.
- 3.5. Appendix C shows the percentage of RTA in 2014/15 and 2015/16, from periods 11 to 2 January to May. These are compared to the national and London & South East (L&SE) averages. It shows a gradual increase in the operators' right time performance overall and when compared to the averages, except that in the case of Southeastern, there was a significant decline between periods 13 and 1. However, whilst this improvement is welcome these figures have to be seen in the context of the major fall in performance that occurred in the previous five periods (as reported in PCO52) that is shown in the second chart.
- 3.6. It should also be noted that London Overground's performance on the East London Line was also impacted by these incidents.

4 Commentary

- 4.1. The previous report (PCO52) highlighted the series of events that contributed to the poor performance of these train operating companies.
- 4.2. Since February 2015 there have been a number of developments and incidents that have occurred. These were widely reported in the media at the time and were the cause of significant disruption.

Timetable changes

- 4.3. Train operators took a number of decisions to modify timetables in March 2015 and again from the 17th May 2015. This has resulted in the reinstatement of some services that were withdrawn in January 2015 (London Bridge – West Croydon) as they have gained more confidence in the operational robustness of the timetable. This however, has been at the expense of reducing other services notably on the London Bridge – Tulse Hill route

How the industry responded

- 4.4. Network Rail has in the period since March 2015 instituted a number of managerial changes that have led to closer working between Thameslink project staff and those operating the 'live' railway. They are also in the process of connecting better their control room at Three Bridges with that of TfL and of the Network Rail national control centre so as to avoid the occurrence of conflicting information as occurred in the 5th March 2015 incident. They have also publicly conceded that the planning process for the January 2015 timetable change had some significant flaws.
- 4.5. Network Rail and GTR (Thameslink and Southern), and Network Rail and Southeastern have both produced Joint Performance Improvement Plans (JPIPs) that state how they jointly propose to improve passenger train performance and reduce the incidence and severity of delays. The latest versions of these are attached as appendices to this report. It should be noted however, that some of the targets for performance have been reduced to take account of the constrained and reduced infrastructure at London Bridge.
- 4.6. Network Rail and GTR have also initiated a joint alliance planning board for the Brighton Main Line route to which London TravelWatch have been invited as observers.
- 4.7. Network Rail and the train operators have deployed additional staff at London Bridge to be able to deal with incidents and arising passenger queries, should these occur.
- 4.8. The industry has at the suggestion of London TravelWatch expanded the remit of the Travel Demand Management Board from passenger communications linked to planned disruption to becoming a London wide Board that looks more widely at joint working to mitigate the effects of disruption on passengers. This will include scrutinising systems and processes to ensure proper cross industry collaboration to deal with unplanned disruption and to learn the lessons from how incidents of major disruption are planned

Planned disruption

- 4.9. The Thameslink programme successfully completed major works at London Bridge over the Easter, May Day and Late May Bank Holiday weekends without an over run of the engineering possessions required and with no major faults subsequent to reopening of the lines.

Major unplanned disruption

- 4.10. There continued to be unplanned disruption on this part of the network but four incidents were noteworthy.
- 4.11. The afternoons of the 4th and 5th March 2015, were related to trespass, suicide and a train failure on the London Overground East London Line. On the 5th March 2015 the problems were exacerbated by two incidents of trespass / suicide at two different locations at the same time, but affecting lines into Victoria and London Bridge used by Southern and Thameslink. Simultaneously,

a train on the East London Line failed, blocking that route also. This meant that almost every rail route between central London and Croydon was unavailable or severely disrupted. This 'perfect storm' resulted in passengers at Victoria being redirected to use London Bridge and vice versa, only to find that the alternative services were also disrupted or cancelled.

- 4.12. On the morning of the 2nd June 2015 during a storm a tree fell blocking all four lines at Forest Hill, resulting in significant cancellation and curtailment of Southern and Thameslink services into London Bridge and the suspension of the London Overground East London Line south of New Cross Gate.
- 4.13. On the afternoon of the 3rd June 2015 a freight train derailment between Blackheath and Chariton caused significant disruption to Southeastern services on the North Kent route through Woolwich. This latter is significant because the third such derailment in fifteen months involving the Angerstein Wharf freight branch. Enquiries are still being undertaken into the causes of two of these incidents.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1. The users of these franchises have, over the past ten months, experienced very poor reliability and resilience of train services as a result of failures both by Network Rail and individual train operators. However, since the nadir of performance between December 2014 and February 2015, there has been an improvement, but given the constrained nature of the infrastructure until the Thameslink project is completed in 2018 there is unlikely to be a further improvement in performance.

6 London TravelWatch priority

- 6.1 This issue is relevant to the remit of London TravelWatch and the impact of such is substantial amongst a large proportion of London's transport users on a variety of modes and in the wider London and South East area

7 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 7.1 None – report is for information only.

8 Legal powers

- 8.1 Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider - and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight). Section 252A of the same Act (as amended by Schedule 6 of the Railways Act 2005) places a similar duty upon the Committee to keep under review matters affecting the interests of the public in relation to railway passenger and station services provided wholly or partly

within the London railway area, and to make representations about them to such persons as it thinks appropriate.

9 Financial implications

9.1 None – report is for information only.