

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@southeasternrailway.co.uk>  
Sent: 20 July 2021 11:55  
To: STEWART, Bob <bob.stewart.mp@parliament.uk>  
Subject: Letter regarding Beckenham Junction to Blackfriars train services

Dear Bob

Thank you for your recent letter to David Statham regarding our current timetable and services from Beckenham Junction to Blackfriars. David has asked me to respond on his behalf.

As you'll be aware, we're currently running an amended timetable as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes have allowed us to continue running a reliable service to ensure passengers could complete their journeys throughout the pandemic, while also balancing significantly reduced passenger demand with the unprecedented financial support provided by the government to keep train services running. In the early part of the pandemic passenger numbers fell by up to 96%, and are currently still less than half their previous volume.

Earlier this summer the rail industry and trades unions announced an Enabling Framework Agreement to set out the principles and focus areas that will underpin a sustainable recovery of the rail industry. It is likely that this will result in changes to ways of working and train service levels to align capacity with variable passenger demand, alongside the flexibility to increase services as passengers return to the railway. As the government's roadmap moves forward and restrictions are eased, we're looking forward to welcoming more passengers back to travelling with us. Our most recent timetable change in May provided passengers with additional services and more room to travel safely, and throughout the pandemic we've continually monitored passenger numbers and responded with adjustments to our timetable.

On the Beckenham Junction to Victoria route we're now running the same level of service as before the pandemic – with 4 trains per hour at peak times. This is complemented by 4 Thameslink trains per hour between Tulse Hill and Blackfriars, which provides an interchange opportunity at Herne Hill for passengers on the Beckenham Junction route. Passenger demand on this route is still significantly reduced compared to pre-pandemic, and the most recent data shows that passenger numbers are only at 37% of the levels we were regularly seeing in early 2020. As we're currently operating 67% of the pre-pandemic service, there is still available capacity on these trains – but we appreciate that the direct peak-time journey opportunity between Beckenham Junction and Blackfriars is not currently available.

As we have done throughout the pandemic, we're keeping passenger numbers under close review and carefully balancing decisions on where to increase capacity in partnership with the Department for Transport. This reflects the significant financial support the government has provided to ensure the railways keep running through the pandemic - up to £800 million per month across the country. Prior to the pandemic our data showed that demand for peak time Victoria services was around three times larger than for Blackfriars services, and that pattern is similar today – albeit with only around a third of the passengers. As passenger numbers continue to increase in the coming months, we will carefully monitor levels of demand and consider whether it would be appropriate to reintroduce some direct services between Beckenham Junction and Blackfriars.

Yours sincerely

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Head of External Communications

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