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The Rt. Hon. Tessa Jowell MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

25 November 2009

Dear Ms Jowell

Thank you for your letter of 18 November addressed to Chris Burchell, Managing Director, regarding your constituent's concerns about forthcoming changes to our service. Chris has read your letter and asked that I respond on his behalf.

There are two key areas covered by your constituent both of which I have provided some background to below.

Charing Cross Services (Dec 2009):

From the timetable change point on 13 December 2009 it is the case that our current service via Sydenham which runs to London Bridge and on to Waterloo East and Charing Cross will terminate and start from London Bridge instead.

This is the result of developments to the Southeastern timetable which will see the incorporation of high speed services to and from Kent from December. During the writing of this timetable it was identified that in order to make it workable there would be significant limitations on the 'through London Bridge' pathways available for other operators.

As a result, the Department for Transport did not specify that South Central franchise services (the franchise that we run as Southern) should operate through to Charing Cross from December. Scrutiny of the off peak timetable by us has confirmed that it is not possible to run our services through London Bridge into Charing Cross given Southeastern's timetable specification from December.

This will mean that passengers will need to change at London Bridge to pick up one of the Southeastern services as they will be the sole operator on the route to Charing Cross.

I can appreciate that this will be an inconvenience to those that currently use the direct service but I hope that the explanation above provides a rationale as to why the service will change.

East London Line (May 2010):

The opening of the East London Line extension together with Southern services will provide a significant overall increase in capacity along the New Cross Gate - Sydenham train route. The number of trains overall will double from six trains per hour to 12 trains per hour in the off peak and evening with even more trains in the morning peak. This does, however, necessitate changes to

Southern services operating in the South London area. Essentially, we will share tracks and platforms along the route and therefore we must amend our services accordingly.

There will continue to be six Southern trains from Sydenham to New Cross Gate into London Bridge per hour in the morning peak.

There will be four Southern trains per hour to and from London Bridge in the off peak.

In the evening peak from London Bridge some trains will no longer call at New Cross Gate to Sydenham inclusive. This is because trains from London Bridge to West Croydon, Sutton and Epsom (which currently call at New Cross Gate to Sydenham) must be diverted to run fast to Croydon to accommodate new East London line trains. However, the Southern trains that will call at New Cross Gate to Sydenham trains from London Bridge will run no further than Croydon between 1700 and 1900. This means that there should be a better distribution of passengers, as those heading for stations beyond Croydon will switch to the 'fast' trains rather than using stopping services to New Cross Gate – Sydenham as is the case now.

The table below shows the current departure times of trains from London Bridge to stations from New Cross Gate to Sydenham between 1700 and 1900 and the planned options for passengers from May 2010.

Current service	Plan from May 2010
1705	1705
1719	diverted to 'fast' lines
1725	1721
1735	1736
1751	diverted to 'fast' lines
1755	1753
1805	1805
1820	diverted to 'fast' lines
1824	1821
1834	1836
1851	1851

In the medium term, additional capacity on Southern services is planned to accommodate future growth on this line which is expected to take place as the economy recovers. Network Rail plan to extend platforms on the New Cross Gate - Sydenham route allowing Southern to run 10-carriage trains rather than the current limit of eight. We will be receiving additional carriages in this franchise and refurbishing existing trains to provide a passenger capacity increase on our network of 10 per cent.

I hope this provides you with adequate explanation as to the changes planned for May 2010 and an assurance that longer term plans remain to increase capacity on National Rail services on this route.

Yours sincerely


Yvonne Leslie

Stakeholder Relations Manager