

Mr Steve White
Managing Director Southeastern
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Via email

5th October 2022

Cllr Anthony Okereke
Town Hall
Wellington Street
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Dear Steve,

RE: Changes to timetabling from 11th December

We write to you to express our concerns regarding timetabling changes announced by Southeastern across your network and with particular regard to the Woolwich, Sidcup and Bexleyheath lines.

Whilst we understand the need to deliver reliable services in the face of challenging financial circumstances, the disruption these changes will bring will be felt by our local population and those travelling to and from the Royal Borough of Greenwich. It will also have an impact on our ability to meet our climate change objectives and provide the required infrastructure our growing population needs.

As a result of these changes, passengers travelling on Southeastern trains face the removal of entire services and reductions in trains per hour. For those that remain, it will lead to longer journey times and disruption to their travel. This will end direct links to many key destinations including the West End, St. Thomas's Hospital and Waterloo for many of our residents, meaning they need to change trains at the busy London Bridge to reach Charing Cross and Waterloo East stations. This will be a particular issue for those with mobility issues, luggage and caring responsibilities.

The new timetable will have a negative effect across our whole Borough. Residents accessing the Sidcup Line have long had to deal with capacity issues at New Eltham and Mottingham, where there are no other fast public transport options. This will be made worse by the approximately 15% reduction in services that has been announced, and will ultimately discourage people from using public transport, as peak services which are already at capacity, come under more pressure.



Struggling?



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Charlton will lose a quarter of its off-peak services and a third on Sundays compared to the pre-pandemic timetable, significantly affecting the new housing and business development proposed in the Charlton Riverside Opportunity Area. Moreover, Charlton, Woolwich and Abbey Wood will lose their direct Sunday service to Blackheath and Lewisham which plays a vital role in connecting people to their families, leisure and communities, forcing many into cars. No station in the Borough will benefit from the consistently high-frequency service which had been the pre-pandemic pattern (8 trains per hour in Woolwich and Charlton). In Charlton, there will now be two waits of 21 minutes between services each hour.

Our Borough attracts 19 million visitors a year who contribute £1.3 billion to our local economy which in turn supports over 17,000 local jobs. Yet tourists and residents will be left with just 4 trains per hour and waits of nearly 25 minutes at Greenwich and Maze Hill stations.

While people will still be able to make use of the reduced service at Greenwich station, the same cannot be said for those wanting to get to Lewisham or Blackheath on a Sunday. Those who wish to travel to off-peak to Charing Cross from Eltham, Kidbrooke or Blackheath as those services would also need to change trains.

This reduction in services has a knock-on effect on our Borough's action to tackle climate change, reduce emissions and improve air quality. 31% of the Borough's emissions are generated through transport, and almost all these emissions come from private vehicles on our roads. To reduce these harmful emissions, we need public transport to be a viable alternative to jumping in the car; reducing the frequency of services and curtailing direct point to point journeys will only further deter people from using rail services.

It would be helpful to know Southeastern's plans should passenger demand return to 100% of pre-pandemic levels to ensure your services across the network remain attractive to current passengers and retain the usage of customers coming back to rail. That these timetable changes are being implemented against the backdrop of government-imposed funding reductions of £4 billion is concerning. It would also be useful to know what impact you feel these funding cuts have had on these timetabling changes.

The December changes will have a huge impact to Greenwich in terms of the reduction in services, increased travel times, loss of direct journeys and the potential for pre-existing capacity issues to be exacerbated as a result. They will have a really significant social, environmental and economic cost to our Borough and beyond. It is also concerning that the changes have not been subject to any consultation whatsoever.

As Leader and Deputy Leader of a fast-growing Borough with ambitious plans to be carbon neutral by 2030, we'd be grateful to meet personally with you to discuss these issues and how we can work together to mitigate the disruption to the lives of residents in, and visitors to Greenwich. We also hope you will be able to come to the council's Regeneration, Transport & Culture Scrutiny Panel on 20 October 2022 with revised proposals.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Anthony Okereke
Leader, Royal Borough of Greenwich



Cllr Averil Lekau
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for
Climate Change, Environment and
Transport, Royal Borough of Greenwich