



Department  
for Transport

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From the Parliamentary  
Under Secretary of State  
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*Dear Mr. Smith,*

Thank you for your letter of 27 July to Chris Grayling, on behalf of yourself, Councillor Bob Standley and Councillor David Tutt, about the GTR Franchise and Southern Rail. I am replying as Minister responsible for this issue and I apologise for the delay in replying.

I genuinely understand passenger frustration over the unacceptable service on Govia Thameslink Railway's (GTR) Southern network. My expectation is that the operator should be able to run a reliable and predictable service for its passengers.

The trade union dispute on the Southern network, which has been ongoing since mid-April, is significantly adding to the disruption passengers are facing. As a consequence of the unjustified industrial action, GTR put in place a robust timetable to ensure passengers had much-needed certainty about their journeys. GTR has now restored over 50% of these services, including the full timetable on the Brighton to Lewes/Seaford route, with the return of half-hourly train services for passengers whose services had been mostly replaced by buses. This means that Southern can better resource the additional football special services for Brighton Albion football club on match days.

I am pleased the RMT has advised their members to accept the new on board supervisor role offered by the company. However, it is disappointing that union leaders continue to reject a deal that protects jobs, and ensures staff can provide more assistance to customers, while delivering a safe, accessible and more reliable rail service. Passengers will once again face needless and unjustified disruption from strike action as the union continues

to try to prevent the delivery of a modern railway. I urge the RMT union leaders to stop this damaging action.

Delay Repay compensation continues to apply against the standard permanent timetable. Under an improved compensation scheme announced this week, rail passengers will soon be able to claim compensation if their train is more than 15 minutes late. 'Delay Repay 15' will be introduced within months on Govia Thameslink Railway services, including Southern, and then rolled out across the country. I would encourage all passengers affected to claim wherever possible. We recognise that, above all else, passengers want a reliable train service, but when things do go wrong it is vital that they are compensated fairly. As well as Delay Repay, the introduction of the Consumer Rights Act on 1st October strengthened the right of passengers to claim compensation for poor service.

This stretch of the network is one of the busiest in the country, with a dramatic increase in the number of journeys over the past few years. This has required significant work in the central London area to increase capacity. Disappointingly, crucial engineering and upgrade work has caused more disruption than any of us would like.

Therefore, on 1 September, the Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling, announced a package of measures to help get the service back running as it should. A new project board, working with the train operator, the Department for Transport and Network Rail, will explore how to achieve a rapid improvement to services for the public. The board will oversee the £20m fund and closer working between GTR and Network Rail to improve performance for Southern customers.

A passenger representative will be included on this review board to ensure commuters' views are heard and improvements properly reflect passenger demands. The project board will present this plan in the autumn and actions will be implemented as soon as possible.

Thank you again for your letter. I hope this reply is helpful.

*Yours sincerely  
Paul Maynard*

**PAUL MAYNARD**