



Caroline Pidgeon AM
Transport Committee
London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London
SE1 2AA

Phil Hufton
Network Rail
1 Eversholt Street
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05 May 2015

Dear Caroline

Re: London Assembly Transport Committee meeting

Further to my letter of 7 April, thank you again for the opportunity to speak to the Committee and I reiterate my apology for the poor performance at London Bridge station.

Improving punctuality is an absolute priority. I can assure you that this urgency is felt by me individually, and by Network Rail and the rail industry as a whole. The action plan that we have put in place is already starting to have some positive effects on services, but there is still more to do. As you know, Southern evening peak services from London Bridge were proving the most challenging, but there has been progress. Since the start of April the punctuality has generally been much improved and in that time average performance for several separate weeks has been around 90 percent [PPM]. Further, average punctuality for Southeastern services was at 93.1 percent last period (period 13 – March 1-31). We know that if passengers are on a delayed train, it is little comfort that average punctuality is better and that there are still big improvements to be made.

We still have days where service for passengers is still not where we would like it to be. As we go further in delivering our action plan and continue to upgrade the Victorian infrastructure, we expect these will become less frequent. However, squeezing over 1,800 trains, transporting over a third of a million people, into one station every day makes the margins for error very fine. As part of our action plan we are making every effort to mitigate failures. For example, we are using more equipment to monitor key infrastructure locations remotely and additional rapid response teams to fix infrastructure failure more quickly.

As regular users of London Bridge, I hope you will have noticed the improvements we have made to the management of the station, which I am sure that Mark Carne will discuss with you in a few weeks' time. We have five times the level of staff working at the station with improved procedures in place when there is disruption. I do not share your assessment of staff with tabards. My experience has been that passengers find having more customer focused staff useful. We continue to work with train companies to improve the information that passengers receive, particularly during disruption.

In response to the Committee's specific requests:

- 1) I am pleased to say that Committee members are now receiving weekly reports on performance at London Bridge. I hope these are useful.
- 2) The economy is a key consideration in the way the Thameslink Programme is redeveloping London Bridge. We understand the vital role that transport plays in supporting the economy and the Thameslink Programme has a positive cost-benefit ratio of 1.4. The

Department for Transport has also identified wider economic impacts from the programme of £1.3 billion, which are not included in the ratio. With passenger numbers doubling since privatisation and projections suggesting that we will see large increases again in the coming decades, the case for a bigger, better station with more capacity is clear. While it would have been quicker and much easier to rebuild the station if it were completely closed, we ruled this out because of the impact on the travelling public, the capital, and the rest of the rail network serving London.

Keeping London Bridge station open makes the redevelopment programme longer, far more complex and performance more difficult to manage. This clearly does have an economic impact, but it is difficult to quantify it precisely. There is also a social impact and we do not underestimate the effect of the unplanned disruptions that delay passengers getting to and from their destinations. We are keenly aware of our responsibility to improve punctuality. However, by carrying out the redevelopment in the way that we have – limiting work to the night time, weekends and the occasional part-closure – we are putting reduction of overall impacts at the heart of the programme. It is with growth in mind that we undertake the unprecedented challenge of operating a billion pound building project while continuing to move over a third of a million people to and from their destination every day. Further from next year, passengers will start to really feel the benefits of the programme with the introduction of new trains and new concourse starting to open.

I know that Charles Horton is writing to you separately to address compensation to passengers, which is provided by train operators, and I endorse his comments.

I hope this letter is helpful and please let me know if you would like any further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Hufton', written in a cursive style.

Phil Hufton
Managing Director, Network Operations