

Martin Darby  
Stakeholder Manager  
Govia Thameslink Railway

By email to: [GTRPublicAffairs@gtrailway.com](mailto:GTRPublicAffairs@gtrailway.com)

25 September 2023

Dear Martin,

**Public engagement on potential changes to Southern's West Coastway services**

I am writing to you as Lead Officer for Transport for the South East (TfSE) in response to the consultation you launched in June on Govia Thameslink Railway's (GTR) proposals to improve Southern services on the West Coastway from 2024.

TfSE is a sub-national transport body (STB) for the South East of England, bringing together leaders from across the local government, business and transport sectors to speak with one voice on our region's strategic transport needs. Since its inception in 2017, TfSE has quickly emerged as a powerful and effective partnership for our region. We have a [30-year transport strategy](#) in place which carries real weight and influence and will shape government decisions about where, when and how to invest in our region to 2050. The Secretary of State has confirmed that they will have regard to our strategy in developing new policy. We work closely with the Department for Transport (DfT) to provide advice to the Secretary of State and our ambition is to become a statutory body with devolved powers over key strategic transport issues.

Our principal decision-making body, the [Partnership Board](#), brings together representatives from our 16 constituent local transport authorities, five Local Enterprise Partnerships, district and borough authorities, protected landscapes, Highways England, Network Rail and Transport for London.

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Transport for the South East, County Hall,  
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Our [Strategic Investment Plan \(SIP\) for South East England](#) provides a framework for investment in strategic transport infrastructure, services, and regulatory interventions in the coming three decades. The plan provides a framework for delivering our Transport Strategy, which:

- Is a blueprint for investment in the South East.
- Shows how we will achieve our ambitions for the South East.
- Is owned and delivered in partnership.
- Is a regional plan with evidenced support, to which partners can link their own local strategies and plans – a golden thread that connects policy at all levels.
- Provides a sequenced plan of multi-modal investment packages that are place based and outcome focused.
- Examines carbon emissions impacts as well as funding and financing options.

The plan presents a compelling case for action for investors, including government departments – notably the Treasury and Department for Transport (DfT) – as well as private sector investors. It is written for and on behalf of the South East's residents, communities, businesses and political representatives.

The rail network has an important role to play in supporting delivery of the TfSE transport strategy and SIP. Rail can provide travel solutions with much lower emissions than road-based alternatives (whether passenger or freight). Our technical modelling suggests that investment in rail network enhancements can make significant contributions to both economic growth and decarbonisation.

The TfSE area contains GTR's operating network south of Greater London. TfSE values the positive and cooperative working relationships it has with different representatives from the rail sector, including GTR.

Specified in our SIP as part of our Sussex Coast Rail package we broadly support improvements to the timetable on the West Coastway service. We are keen to see delivery of recommendations from the West Coastway Strategic Study, including increased service frequencies and timetable optimisation for local and strategic movements between Southampton, Havant, Chichester and Brighton.

We understand this is phase one and would like assurance that further phases will be implemented in order to continue improving services on the West Coastway line and build on these initial changes.

We are concerned about the loss of direct services and some longer journey times in the proposal. If the service change goes ahead, a good quality interchange experience will be essential at the relevant stations in terms of accessibility, convenience (e.g., maximising same-or cross platform interchange), quality of waiting areas, interchange time and providing supporting information.

GTR should continue to look at improving in-station accessibility and at encouraging more access to/from stations by foot and by cycle by considering the first mile/last mile element of their passengers' journeys.

Yours sincerely

**Rupert Clubb**

Lead Officer

Transport for the South East