



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Ms Joanna Whittington
Chief Executive
The Office of Rail and Road

2nd August 2018

Dear Joanna,

I write to you as the statutory body responsible for health and safety policy and enforcement on the railways. My constituents have raised concerns about three possible health and safety issues regarding GTR trains since the implementation of the interim 15th July timetable. These relate to:

- a) Over-crowding within carriages
- b) Temperature inside carriages
- c) Speed restrictions

Overcrowding

Constituents using the St Neots – London routes and the Royston – London routes report that over-crowding has caused serious concerns during the past two weeks, since the interim 15th July timetable was introduced. They report that naturally, when trains are delayed or cancelled, over-crowding becomes a severe problem. Constituents are concerned about the impact that over-crowding has upon the conditions within a carriage; necessitating cramped and uncomfortable standing (and the problems that this may cause for vulnerable, disabled, elderly or pregnant users); as well as the impact that this might have upon load weights and inside temperatures.

Temperature inside carriages

On both routes mentioned above (St Neots – London and Royston – London) I have received anecdotal evidence of extreme temperature conditions in the new T500 and T700 trains. These trains do not have windows that open and on several occasions the air conditioning systems have failed in certain carriages when the outside temperature reaches 28 degrees Celsius or above. This makes the temperature within the train feel like 30 – 40 degrees Celsius. When the carriages are over-crowded, this means passengers are having to stand for journeys of up to an hour in potentially 40 degree heat with no air supply. I have received two independent reports of pregnant passengers exiting the train and vomiting as a physical reaction to the conditions. When the issue has been reported to GTR by my office and independently by constituents we have been told that the power units on certain carriages failed resulting in a 50% air conditioning function. GTR reported that their policy allows for carriages to run when air conditioning is running at 50% capacity. The concern is that this is not being effectively checked at stations resulting in trains running with no air conditioning supply operating. These incidents have now been reported to me several times causing concern about the power supply reliability for these trains. Until the issue is identified and solved, I fear that repeat occurrences will be more likely during the upcoming hot weather conditions predicted over the next couple of weeks.

Speed Limitations

I would welcome your feedback about whether trains that are loaded to maximum capacity should adjust their speed to below the maximum limits. One constituent has been taking independent speed readings using a variety of speed measurement apps on his smart phone. He has submitted the attached screen shots to me which show 1st Aug 17.42 to Kings Lynn from Kings Cross train travelling at the maximum speed limit for this class of train and potentially, above the recommended limit. I would be grateful to know what additional speed safety measures the operator is required to put in place to deal with over-crowding. I am concerned that during the hot weather, when speed restrictions may be imposed by Network Rail, the combination of over-loaded carriages, maximum speed and track vulnerability (due to heat) could result in a serious incident.

I would be grateful if you could review these concerns in conjunction with GTR to ensure that a sufficient duty of care for passengers is being met on all trains operating under the new timetable.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Heidi Allen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Heidi Allen
MP for South Cambridgeshire

