

HEIDI ALLEN MP  
SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Chris Grayling  
Secretary of State for Transport  
Department for Transport

Cc – Jo Johnson, Minister of State for Transport

29<sup>th</sup> August 2018

Dear Chris,

We write firstly to acknowledge Govia Thameslink Great Northern's recent announcement that they will extend compensation to non-season ticket holders. While this is of course welcome, we regard it as the bare minimum. Given that services are still not where they should be, we ask that you also give urgent consideration to a 'fare freeze' for the long-suffering passengers of the Great Northern franchise who have endured a dreadful summer of cancellations, delays and over-crowded services. Passengers should not be expected to routinely pay more for less.

It is our view that the annual fare increase must not be introduced until our passengers have experienced 3 months of a reliable, sustained service that meets the levels expected due to the May timetable change.

According to Network Rail's own statistics (<https://cdn.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Sub-operator-PPM-figures-for-Period-05-2018-19.pdf>), the public performance measure for 22 July - 18 August (Period 5) nationally was 85.0%. Great Northern achieved 73.9% PPM for this period. Their cancellation and significant lateness figures for this period were measured at 13% as against a national average of 5.1% and their right time performance was measured to be 51% against a national average of 59.9%.

GTR as a whole was deemed to be responsible for 35% of all delays and cancellations as against a national average of 30%. Unfortunately, Network Rail's failings still account for 61% of all GTR's cancellations. We hope that government aspires to change this through targeted intervention in the coming year.

Statistics only give us a partial picture. The concentrated human cost of these percentages is played out in the massive impact that these delays and cancellations have had on our constituents; missed business opportunities; lost work time; resignations; missed children's bedtimes; stress-related illnesses; additional expense incurred through added travel arrangements. The toll has been huge.

*We cannot ask hard pressed commuters to fund a fare increase on the back of this performance.*

A fare freeze, held in place until benchmarked improvements of three months is sustained is a proportionate and reasonable way to acknowledge the suffering endured by these passengers.

Govia Thameslink have repeatedly apologised to our passengers; we now need to see this translated into action with a freeze on fare increases. We trust that you will work with them to ensure this is achieved.

Yours sincerely

Heidi Allen, MP   Bim Afolami, MP   Sir Oliver Heald, MP   Stephen McPartland, MP   Jonathan Djanogly, MP