

Q3. Southern Rail -

In order to travel between East Croydon, Gatwick or Brighton to stations between London Bridge and Anerley, passengers have to change at Norwood Junction - already a busy station serving London Overground, Southern and Thameslink services. Are there plans to improve access between platforms at Norwood Junction by installing wider stairs/lifts? (Sydenham Society)

A:

Major accessibility improvement works, such as the installation of lifts and footbridges, are funded through the Government's Access for All programme, which is then delivered by Network Rail.

We are awaiting an announcement by the Department for Transport for improvement schemes to be developed and delivered during Network Rail's next funding control period – 2024-2027.

Q4.1 Southern Rail Can you please let us know when you anticipate restoring a full pre-COVID timetable on the Croydon- London Bridge line?

A:

As part of the timetable introduced at the start of September, we made a set of changes to Southern services to London Bridge Station.

The context to these changes is the need to adapt the network to the financial impact of increased levels of working from home. While demand has partially recovered, it has now stabilised, with peak time demand across the network at around 70% of pre-pandemic levels and within that, concentrated Tuesday to Thursday, with fare income reduced by similar levels.

Our approach is to seek to create the best fit of services to demand by making the most efficient use of the resources and the funding available to us. As we make changes, we prioritise our available resources to support as many customers as we possibly can.

One of the changes was the replacement of the all-stations London Bridge to East Croydon service with the return of the all-stations London Bridge to London Victoria via Sydenham and Crystal Palace service seven days per week.

The reason we made this change was that it allowed us to double capacity for customers on the Sydenham to London Bridge section with eight and ten carriage trains, replacing the five carriage service into London Bridge which was operating prior to the September timetable.

This service also caters for journeys towards Clapham Junction, and because it is running between the two terminus stations, provides more peak time capacity into and out of London Victoria for stations to the west of Crystal Palace, as well as capacity into London Bridge from stations such as Forest Hill.

However, this change does mean that stations along this route no longer have a direct service to East Croydon. One option for those travelling to East Croydon or other destinations further south is to need to change from a London Overground service at Norwood Junction.

We have therefore increased the number of Southern and Thameslink services which stop at Norwood Junction to provide better connections for passengers

Current train loadings for London Victoria to London Bridge services indicate that the service at Brockley at 8:33 and New Cross Gate at 8:36 towards London Bridge runs at around 60% of passenger capacity.

In the future, as passengers return to rail, then we want to see more services operating, building a thriving railway and we know the changes introduced in September will have been a disappointment to some customers on this route.

We will continue to review feedback from rail users and will make changes and improvements where we are in a position to be able to do so with the resources available to us.

Q4.2. Is there any possibility having the Croydon-London Bridge route re-established as it was previously, terminating at East Croydon.

A:

Please refer to answer to question 4.1 for more information on the background to this change. We will continue to review feedback from rail users and will make changes and improvements where we are in a position to be able to do so with the resources available to us.

Q4.3(and Lewisham Council) Prior to the re-development of London Bridge station, the Croydon line ran through to Charing Cross outside rush-hour, giving residents a quick direct service for the West End. When this service was removed the then Transport Minister, Lord Adonis, promised users it could be re-established once the new cross-overs were in place. This has not happened. The need to change at London Bridge can mean that journey times are hugely extended. (For example the journey from Charing Cross to New Cross Gate was 16 minutes is now an average of 30 minutes and potentially 45 minutes). We appreciate this cannot be amended until franchises are changed but will Southern Rail (with the help of Lewisham Council) commit to lobby for and negotiate a return to the services we had prior



to “modernisation”? The route through London Bridge is available (as used by Thameslink services which run through our stations non-stop). It would provide additional revenue for Southern Rail (as faster and more convenient than the 30 minute route via Tfl and Whitechapel) and would give a boost to the West End.

(NB if one goes to the National Rail enquiries website and search for trains from Charing Cross to New Cross gate, it only provides you with the route using Tfl services changing at Whitechapel, and does not show the National Rail route at all changing at London Bridge at all.)

A:

The off-peak only Southern service which operated from Charing Cross through to London Bridge and Croydon was removed over 10 years ago as part of the High Speed 1, East London Line Extension and Thameslink upgrade programmes. We do not have any plans to reintroduce these services.

The easiest routes for passengers from Charing Cross to New Cross Gate will be either via a London Overground service from Whitechapel or via a National Rail service from London Bridge. The National Rail Journey Planner will recommend either route option depending on which is quicker at the time of enquiry. It is possible to travel on a customer’s preferred route by using the “via” option in the journey planner.

The station upgrades at London Bridge have made it easier for passengers making this connection to change between Southern and Southeastern services, with accessible lifts to every platform.

Q5. Thameslink/Tfl:

What are your current plans for reinstating the Thameslink through line beyond Blackfriars to St Pancras, St Albans etc outside peak hours; and for establishing more regular connections to Victoria?

(Councillor James Royston (Labour), Representing Catford South)

A:

The rail network has had to adapt to the financial impact of increased levels of working from home and increasing pressures on government finances. While demand has partially recovered, it has now stabilised with peak time demand across the network at around 70-75 per cent of pre-pandemic levels. Furthermore, travel is concentrated from Tuesdays to Thursdays, with fare income reduced by similar levels.

With a number of trains currently providing connections at Blackfriars between north and south destinations, I’m afraid there isn’t a strong enough



business case to extend off-peak Catford loop services beyond Blackfriars at the present time.

We are, however, working to encourage more passengers back to rail with the aim of increasing the number of services we run for our passengers.

Q7.1 Govia/TfL

1. I want to ask about the loss of direct services from Sydenham to East Croydon and direct services from Penge West/Anerley to London Bridge. Residents are very concerned it is full at Sydenham.

For example: On the morning of Wednesday 19 October 2022, the 8.26am service at Forest Hill, was standing room only.

A:

Please refer to the answer to Q.4.1 for more background on the replacement of East Croydon to London Bridge with London Victoria to London Bridge services.

Passenger numbers across the network have recovered to approximately 70-75% of pre-covid levels, with peak traffic now heavily concentrated on Tuesday, Wednesdays and Thursday only.

To encourage customers to travel at less busy times, we provide information on train loadings on the timetable pages of our websites. This shows that while Wednesdays are the most popular day of the week, the services either side of the 08:28, such as the 07:58 and 08:58 are carrying significantly fewer people.

We will continue to review feedback from rail users and will make changes and improvements where we are in a position to be able to do so with the resources available to us.