

**REPORT:**  
**Katherine Cox, Stakeholder Manager**  
**Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR)**



*This is Katherine's initial report to which I have added further information she provide in response to questions.*

*Dinah Barry, 19 January 2016*

**Performance**

Period 9 (15 November – 12 December) 76% Public Performance Measure (PPM) against a target of 85%

The route was affected by a series of infrastructure issues including signalling problems at Alexandra Palace on 3 December and Welwyn Garden City on 26 November (although not on the Hertford Loop, this had knock-on effects on trains on that line), additionally a train broke down at Drayton Park on 20 November resulting in delays. We are working closely with Network Rail to improve the routine maintenance of the track and signalling systems on the route to improve reliability and performance.

The Sundays leading up to Christmas were challenging on the Great Northern route leading to a significantly reduced service. This was due to a temporary shortages of available drivers with the start of the holiday season. Sometimes, such as at Christmas time and annual leave periods, we do not have enough drivers to carry out both day-to-day operations and the large amount of training required. We worked hard to put in place revised timetables but journey planners may not have shown replacement trains until shortly before the day(s) affected. We kept our stakeholders up-to-date with email updates and updated our passenger information via the website, social media and customer information screens at stations. Live travel alerts were also issued by the travel updates on local radio stations.

The revised timetables that ran on those days targeted our available resource to ensure that we offered the best service we could across all our routes, albeit it much reduced, but also ensured that we had ticket acceptance with other train operators, London Underground and London Buses where we couldn't. We are disappointed that we couldn't provide the expected levels of service on those days and for other shortages that occurred on some other days in December and apologise to each of our passengers affected. We were unable to provide information on our website in some circumstances until the evening before due to our staff working until the last minute to cover shifts. Information was available via journey planner on National Rail Enquires and our website, additionally travel updates were available on local media.

Normally, like the rest of the industry, we rely to a degree on drivers working rest days but on this occasion, it has not been possible. We are running the UK's biggest driver recruitment and training programme to increase the number of drivers and reduce our reliance on rest day working so that we can deliver a more consistent service for our passengers in the longer term.

However, it takes over a year to train a driver to the high safety standards expected in the industry – that's a minimum of 240 hours in practical training and an additional 840 hours learning theory – and we cannot train the large number of drivers we need all at once so there is a rolling programme. Also, while we are recruiting and training, existing drivers retire and leave for personal reasons. Since January 2015 we have 41 more qualified drivers on Great Northern and 91 trainees.

## **New Moorgate trains**

On 22 December Siemens were announced as the preferred bidder for the contract to build the new train fleet for Moorgate services. The order will be for 25 six-car units (150 vehicles), of a variant of the Class 700 Desiro City, which is being built for the new Thameslink service. They will replace Class 313 trains built in 1976/7, and enter service by the end of 2018 on routes to and from Welwyn and Hertford, Stevenage and Letchworth.

Passenger groups and stakeholders were consulted and train features include:

- Fixed length with full width inter-vehicle gangways, creating more space for passengers on board (there are no intermediate cabs)
- Air-conditioning
- The latest in passenger information systems with real-time information
- Fully accessible and compliant with disability legislation
- Power points throughout

## **Off peak timetable change on 13 December**

From 13 December, inner suburban route trains which previously ran into King's Cross at night and at weekends now operate to Moorgate in the centre of London, via the Northern City Line stations of Drayton Park, Highbury & Islington, Essex Road and Old Street.

Late-night services will continue to operate from King's Cross as well as from Moorgate to transport home those enjoying central London's nightlife.

Not only will the change connect communities between Finsbury Park and Moorgate off-peak with the National Rail service but it will also be better for late-returning commuters along the suburban rail route from Welwyn and Hertford, Stevenage and Letchworth.

Passengers from Welwyn and Hertford, Stevenage and Letchworth will also have access to the West End using the fast, step-free, cross-platform connections with the Victoria line at Highbury & Islington where there is also access, via London Overground to the Westfield shopping centre and Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park at Stratford. The nightspots of Shoreditch at Old Street and interchanges with the Northern line are also available.

There will still be services into King's Cross from the longer distance fast and semi-fast Great Northern services from stations such as Peterborough and Cambridge and anyone for King's Cross travelling on the inner suburban service should change at Highbury & Islington for the cross-platform interchange with the Victoria Line to King's Cross; National Rail tickets are interavailable between these two locations.

## **Improvement on the route**

Palmers Green and Winchmore Hill stations are now staffed from the first to last train, improving visibility of staff at the station. We are currently reviewing the provision of station signs on the Hertford Loop as we are aware some are not clearly visible in the dark and should be moved closer to light sources to increase visibility. Reviewing station shelter options at Winchmore Hill in light of recent conversations with our stakeholders, in addition we are meeting with you and Network Rail at the station next week.