

News story: Better journeys for South Eastern rail passengers

- plans unveiled to boost capacity with space for at least an extra 40,000 passengers per day
- improved, longer, more comfortable trains and fast wifi connectivity by 2022
- region will become the first in the country to have a new joint team running day to day operations for track and train to cut delays and improve performance
- next operator required to remove first-class accommodation on all services within 18 months of taking over the franchise to increase space for all commuters

Thousands of rail passengers will benefit from more space, longer trains and more reliable journeys on the South Eastern franchise under new plans announced today (29 November 2017) by Rail Minister Paul Maynard.

The [competition for the next company to run the franchise](#) starts today as the Department for Transport set out a host of improvements potential operators should provide on the network between London and the Kent coast.

Under innovative new plans, the network will be the first in the country where a single director is responsible for a joint team – made up from the train operator and Network Rail – that operates the trains and the tracks on a day to day basis and is accountable for the performance of the network.

Bidders will need to show how they can deliver extra services and more space for passengers on services across the region, as well as providing greater connectivity, smarter ticketing systems and improved compensation.

The next operator must:

- provide longer trains and upgrade or replace older trains, creating space for at least an extra 40,000 passengers
- introduce fast wifi on all services, making journeys more productive and enjoyable for passengers
- bring in improved compensation with a simple, easy to claim system that will provide a refund after 15 minutes
- introduce new smart ticketing systems, including a pilot for pay-as-you-go
- improve customer service, with staff better able to respond quickly to passenger's needs
- deliver significantly enhanced cooperation between Network Rail and operator through a new structure designed to increase the reliability of the railway and put the passenger first in all decision making

Rail Minister Paul Maynard said:

We are investing in the biggest railway modernisation for over a century. Today marks a major step forward in giving passengers better journeys across the south-east and beyond.

We've listened carefully to passengers and have introduced innovative new plans that see smoother, more comfortable journeys for passengers, with new, longer trains and more space.

South Eastern will be also – for the first time – be run by a joint team from the operator and Network Rail under a single director – responsible for day-to-day performance and accountable to passengers.

South Eastern services carry 640,000 passenger journeys a day, and will soon need to integrate seamlessly with future Thameslink and Crossrail services to transform the way people travel across London and the south-east.

The next operator must also meet tough targets for improved wifi to increase the speed of data connection and coverage on trains.

And when passengers are delayed, travellers must be able to claim compensation quickly and easily when their journey is delayed by more than 15 minutes under an improved Delay Repay scheme.

More than 10,000 responses were received for the [department's consultation on the future of South Eastern](#). The department has listened closely to passengers and South Eastern trains will still travel to the same London stations as at present including Victoria, Charing Cross and Cannon Street.

There will be some limited changes to services to deliver significant benefits for all suburban passengers including fewer delays and a regular 'turn up and go' timetable.

The next train operator and Network Rail must also work closely together to make these transformative changes happen. Bidders must put forward plans for integrated joint teams between themselves and Network Rail to bring track and train closer together, cutting delays and improving operations.