



19 September 2019

Dear Tom,

We wanted to provide you with an update regarding the Maidstone East Thameslink service.

As you will know, following the introduction of the May 2018 timetable and the serious disruption experienced by passengers, a decision was taken to ensure that any new introduction of services would need to go through more rigorous scrutiny than in the past.

Guaranteeing the stability and reliability of services is now at the heart of all major improvement projects. We are united in our belief that we can never subject passengers to the same level of disruption ever again, and this has had a considerable effect on all subsequent timetable changes. Despite all our efforts, this means that we have had to take the regrettable decision that the Maidstone East Thameslink services cannot start operation in December 2019 as previously advised without seriously compromising reliability.

Adding these services onto an already busy and complex railway network presents a real risk of delay and disruption to the thousands of passengers that rely on our existing train services, and we hope you can understand why we cannot allow this to happen. The entire rail network in the South East is integrated, which means that every change we make can have multiple knock-on effects to other services, all of which need to be worked through and mitigated.

When the commitment to bring the Maidstone East service to London Bridge was made for this December, it was assessed to be achievable. Since then, a number of issues have been highlighted that do not support an introduction at this time. We have been working hard on these requirements and reviewing all other options to introduce the Maidstone East services.

We need to be realistic, however, about what we are able to provide, and when. We continue to work together as an industry, in close collaboration with Southeastern and the Department for Transport, to allow for the introduction of these services as soon as practicably possible.

We fully appreciate the immense disappointment that will be felt by you and passengers at this news and that there is a great deal of expectation surrounding the Maidstone East service. We have worked tirelessly to try and find a solution, right up until the last minute.

We want to state our full commitment to finding a reliable and sustainable solution that will work for the people of Kent and this work has been and will continue to be given our highest priority. We want to thank you for your continued understanding and want to keep working with you, and the rest of the industry, to find a way through this.

We will keep you updated on any further developments and would be happy to explain the situation in more detail, so please don't hesitate to contact us if it would be helpful to have a wider discussion about this.

Yours sincerely,

**John Halsall**  
Route Managing Director  
(South East), Network Rail

**Patrick Verwer**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Govia Thameslink