



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

30 November 2017

Dear Chris,

I write regarding your Department's response to the South Eastern franchise consultation, published yesterday.

Although I very much welcome a number of the commitments set out in the document – particularly on delivering longer trains, ensuring additional capacity during rush-hour services, and introducing a 'turn up and go' style timetable on metro routes – I feel it is important to reiterate the considerable concern, and to be frank, scepticism, with which a large number of my constituents view the franchise and the management of it in future years. Indeed, the strength of feeling that exists on this matter was demonstrated by the 'unprecedented' number of responses to the consultation your Department received.

As you will be aware, the percentage of residents in Bromley and Chislehurst who travel to work by rail is amongst the highest in the country, and with no underground as an alternative, thousands of passengers, including myself, are entirely dependent on the franchise to get from A to B on a daily basis. It is something that has a real impact on people's lives locally, and residents will therefore understandably be scrutinising this process closely over the coming months. I believe the Department will be judged on the decisions it makes, and passengers will need to see real improvements in the day-to-day running of the service before being assured that the Government has genuinely taken their views and concerns on board.

Whilst there is certainly a strong case to increasingly join up track and train, and I believe alliancing Network Rail and the Train Operating Company to a greater extent is a positive step in the right direction, it will take more than aligning two organisations, both currently perceived by the public as failing, to convince many that meaningful change can be achieved. We must show that the focus of this tender process is on the quality of the bid, not on financial considerations.

Constituencies in South East London will be uniquely affected by any changes to the franchise, particularly given the proposals at the Lewisham junction, and I would very much welcome the opportunity to meet with you, along with other MPs representing constituencies in Bromley and Bexley, to discuss our specific ambitions for the next franchise period.



On a more parochial level, I would also urge you to use the very pragmatic proposals on restoring disused routes, announced yesterday as a part of the Government's strategic vision for rail, as an opportunity to reassess the feasibility of reopening the Bromley North line. Bromley's population continues to grow significantly, and with a number of large planning applications already in the pipeline, it is vital that we plan for the future and ensure capacity keeps pace with demand. Again, I would be grateful for an opportunity to discuss this with the Department further.

I would welcome your thoughts on these issues, and look forward to your response in due course.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Bob Neill'.

Bob Neill MP