



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Department for Transport
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As you know from the various meetings you have kindly hosted with Southeastern in the past, overcrowding on the Southeastern rail corridor into central London is one of the biggest problems facing commuters travelling through my constituency. Indeed, many local residents are forced to stand throughout the duration of their journey – something I witness first-hand commuting from Chislehurst everyday – and as I understand it, Southeastern now have the second highest number of passengers standing into London.

As I am sure Southeastern have outlined in the various reports they have submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT), passenger numbers have increased by over 30 per cent since Southeastern took over the franchise in 2006. Coupled with the lack of any additional rolling stock on its network since 2009 – which, I should stress, were made up of the high speed trains serving St Pancras, something very few residents in Bromley and Chislehurst benefit from - the overcrowding too many of my constituents all too frequently endure will inevitably get progressively worse over the coming years.

Passengers pay a significant sum to travel by railway and understandably expect a reliable and comfortable service in exchange. I have been critical of Southeastern where it is appropriate to do so, as have many of our colleagues, but I equally feel it is only fair for us to support rail providers wherever we can. As such, I am very much in favour of the proposals that have been put forward by Southeastern to redeploy Class 319 trains as they are released off contract from Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) as part of the Thameslink Programme.

Alongside the measures Southeastern are taking to reduce and relocate First Class seating on its mainline fleet, the Priced Option included in Southeastern's franchise agreement would, as you know, allow them to sublease 377 units 25 Class from GTR. In the short-term, this could begin to mitigate the escalating problem of overcrowding on these incredibly busy lines, and I would urge your Department to seriously consider this option in your discussions with Southeastern going forward.

I would be very grateful for your thoughts on this issue.

Bob Neill MP