

Councillor Matt Hartley

Leader of the Opposition, Royal Borough of Greenwich
Councillor for Mottingham, Coldharbour & New Eltham ward

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Huw Merriman MP
Minister of State (Rail and HS2)
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR
By email

10th December 2022

Dear Minister,

Southeastern December timetable changes – loss of loop service

Congratulations on your appointment. I write (further to my letter to your predecessor on 10th October) to again urge the Department for Transport to intervene in the matter of Southeastern's deeply damaging December timetable.

I enclose, for your information, my letter to Southeastern's Managing Director Steve White in submitting the 'Save The Loop' petition signed by 2,411 local people who like me, object in the strongest possible terms to the removal of the half-hourly loop train that connects Sidcup Line stations to the Woolwich Line.

The loss of this half-hourly loop service removes my ward's only direct public transport link to the Elizabeth Line – despite the introduction of the Elizabeth Line being used by Southeastern to justify their changes.

Loop trains are used by local primary schools to access the museums and other learning opportunities in Greenwich Town Centre – journeys which I am told by local teachers will not now be feasible as a result of Southeastern's new timetable. University of Greenwich students use the loop train to get to and from the Avery Hill Campus.

The loop service is also used by students attending Bird College in Sidcup and other educational establishments along the line, and by Charlton Athletic supporters to get to and from The Valley – with the certainty of increased car use and congestion now arising from its loss.

I am aware that the specific issue of the loss of the loop train was also raised in this week's Westminster Hall debate with you by Sir David Evennett MP, Louie French MP and Abena Oppong-Asare MP. I would also highlight the fact that the 'Save The Loop' petition has been backed by elected representatives from all levels of representation,

from across the party political spectrum, and from right across the boroughs of Greenwich, Bexley and Bromley. This reflects the wide objections from local communities to this nonsensical change.

You will see that Southeastern have made a commitment to me to consider this specific issue in reviewing the impact of their new timetable, and a public commitment to look at potential “flexibilities” – and that I have urged Steve White to go further than this and restore the half-hourly loop service in its entirety.

I would welcome your intervention with Southeastern on this specific issue, and I would be grateful for your views on the points raised above.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Hartley', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Matt Hartley
Leader of the Opposition, Royal Borough of Greenwich
Conservative Councillor for Mottingham, Coldharbour & New Eltham

Enclosed: Letter to Southeastern Managing Director Steve White, 10th December 2022