

Councillor Matt Hartley

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

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Steve White
Managing Director
Southeastern Railway
2nd Floor, 4 More London Riverside
London SE1 2AU
By email

10th December 2022

Dear Mr White,

Submitting the petition to 'Save The Loop' service from the Sidcup Line to the Woolwich Line

As you and your team are aware, more than 2,400 people who value the half-hourly 'loop' or 'rounder' service between the Sidcup and Woolwich Lines have now signed my 'Save The Loop' petition. Following our previous exchanges on this subject, I am writing to formally submit these signatures to you on the petitioners' behalf, and to request a further meeting to discuss ways in which the loop service can be restored as early as possible in the New Year.

We discussed local residents' need for this half-hourly loop service during your recent appearance at the Royal Borough of Greenwich Transport Providers Scrutiny meeting – and I am aware that my colleagues in the London Borough of Bexley similarly raised it during your session with them.

The 'Save The Loop' campaign has been backed by elected representatives at all levels of representation, from across the party political spectrum, and from right across the boroughs of Greenwich, Bromley and Bexley, given the deeply negative impact that your removal of the loop service from tomorrow will have. The 2,411 signatures enclosed show how valued this service is by people in communities along the Sidcup Line, including:

- **To access the Elizabeth Line at Abbey Wood** – as we have discussed, the loss of the loop train removes my ward's only direct public transport link to the Elizabeth Line, depriving communities right along the Sidcup Line of its benefits
- **By University of Greenwich students** getting to and from the Avery Hill Campus, and by students attending Bird College in Sidcup and others
- **By local primary schools to access** the museums and other learning opportunities in Greenwich Town Centre – a journey that I understand will no longer be practically feasible under your new timetable
- **By Charlton fans** all along the Sidcup Line to get to The Valley – with the risk that the loss of the loop train significantly increases car journeys on match days
- **As a means of commuting into London**, used by many as a 'backup' route during periods of the disruption on the Sidcup Line

I was pleased that in our exchanges at Woolwich Town Hall you and your Director of Operations made a commitment to me that you will look specifically at this issue of the loss of the loop service, when reviewing the impact of the new timetable. I further note that Southeastern issued the following public comment in response to the petition:

“We are listening and have made some changes to the December timetable in response to specific feedback regarding school flows not previously provided for and some other straightforward improvements that can be made. We will look into flexibilities on the loop service regarding its use by University of Greenwich students to reach the Avery Hill campus and by local primary schools to organise trips to the town centre.”

(Southeastern spokesperson, London News Online, 7 November 2022)

In your considered response to the submission of this petition I would urge you to go further than this (welcome) commitment to look into “flexibilities” on the loop service – and commit now to re-instating the half-hourly loop service in full. The service could be restored with a minimal impact on the rest of the timetable and I would urge you to take this step – to both restore the deeply unfair loss of this invaluable service, and actively demonstrate Southeastern’s claims to be listening to feedback on the new timetable.

You will see that, in full, the petition calls on Southeastern to:

1. Re-instate the half-hourly 'loop' train service in the timetable as soon as possible, as above
2. Reverse the planned reduction in morning peak services in to London on the Sidcup Line, which will cause overcrowding on the train services that remain
3. Run a full public consultation on a new timetable early in the New Year

I urge you to consider all three of these asks, in full, in response to the submission of this petition. I am also sending a copy of this letter to the Minister for Rail (who you will be aware received direct representations on the specific issue of the loss of the loop service from Sir David Evennett MP, Louie French MP and Abena Opong-Asare MP during this week’s Westminster Hall debate).

Finally, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you again to discuss ways in which the loop service can be restored as early as possible in the New Year.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



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

Enclosed: Save The Loop Change.org Petition Signatures and Comments