

Amberley Rail SOS – We need YOUR help!

What is happening?

As part of the Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) transformation programme, GTR are consulting on a new Southern Rail timetable. This timetable would come into effect in 2018 and be in place for 10 years.

The first phase of consultations finished in December 2016. GTR and Southern have now published a proposed timetable and asked for feedback. This second phase of consultation started in June and closes on **July 27 2017**.

What does this mean for Amberley?

The new timetable provides increased services at all stations down the Arun Valley **except for Amberley**. This has been achieved by creating a more even half-hourly service and introducing additional trains at peak times.

But, Amberley **does not benefit** from these additional peak services. In fact, there will be **less services between London and Amberley** in the new timetable, particularly at peak times.

- **Morning peak** services to London will now depart Amberley at 6.19 (London Bridge), 7.14 (London Victoria) and 8.15 (London Victoria).
- While this provides a more even morning service, there are **no additional peak services**. There are **a further 3 services** that arrive in London before 9.00am and could stop in Amberley. These services stop at all other Arun Valley stations.
- **Evening peak** services will now be **reduced to hourly**, arriving in Amberley at 18.57 and 19.57. These depart London Victoria at 17.36 and 18.36. We will **lose 2 services** that currently depart London between 17.00 and 19.30.
- In the evenings, **direct trains from London Bridge will no longer stop at Amberley**.
- There are **a further 5 services** running down the Arun Valley line in the evening peak that could stop at Amberley. These stop at all other stations. These include two additional peak services direct from London Bridge, departing at 17.03 and 18.03.

In June 2016, a report by a railway expert to the Department for Transport (the Gibb report) recommended that **Amberley's off-peak service should be reduced to every two hours**. While this has not currently been proposed in the new timetable, it **remains a risk** until the new timetable is finalised and proved reliable.

Why should I be concerned?

Amberley station is used regularly by residents of Amberley Parish as well as neighbouring Houghton, Bury, Madehurst and parts of Storrington. It is used by tourists wishing to access the South Downs National Park, use local pubs and cafes, and visit the Amberley Museum. It is the only train station that is directly on the South Downs Way, making it a natural gateway for walkers.

A frequent train service during peak times helps to attract working age residents to the area. Likewise, a regular train service during off-peak times increases tourism and benefits local businesses and attractions. Reduction in service to every two hours is still a **real risk** until the timetable is finalised.

In general, a regular and reliable train service increases the accessibility of the area and has a knock on impact on the attractiveness of investment.

This is the biggest overhaul in decades and timetable changes could likely be in place **for up to 10 years**. Eroding services to Amberley sets a dangerous precedent, particularly as attempts to close Amberley station have happened in the past.

As members of the community, **we need to protect our village station**. Rail services are a national service. We need to ensure that people living in rural areas retain good access to public transport.

But isn't Amberley just a small station?

There are about **58,000 journeys** to and from Amberley Station every year. This means an **average of 80-100 people** are using the station every day. About half of these are regular commuters.

Although this is small in comparison to stations like Horsham and even Pulborough, there are many smaller stations in the Southern network that have a much better service.

- **Amberley is the only station** with more than 40,000 journeys per year that **will not** have a half-hourly service during peak times.
- **Amberley may be the only station** in the South-East Southern network with a direct link to London that **will not** have a half-hourly service during peak times.
- As part of the proposed timetable changes, **there are 6-7 smaller stations** that appear to benefit from more frequent peak service. These include Faygate, Ashurst, Hever and Cowden.
- **Amberley is the only station** in the South-East Southern network where **peak services will decrease** as part of the timetable changes.

There are many local residents who currently travel 6-10 miles every day to use neighbouring stations because the current service from Amberley is so infrequent and unreliable. This increases congestion on the road and is not in line with the aims of the SDNPA to reduce traffic. It also adds to parking problems at neighbouring stations, such as Pulborough (where cars park on a busy road due to space limitations).

When there are problems on the line, services often run fast through Amberley, leaving passengers stranded for hours. But an average of 80-100 people still use the station every day. With a more frequent and reliable service, this demand is only set to increase.

How is GTR communicating these changes?

GTR claims that it is running one of the biggest public consultations in the history of the railway industry. But this consultation is **not genuine**.

Information published around the changes at each phase of the consultation has only described the positive impacts. For the Arun Valley, this has emphasised:

- No significant changes proposed for Monday to Friday and Saturday daytime services
- Proposals for some additional Monday to Friday morning peak services to London Victoria

In addition, online tools through GTR and Southern have missing/incorrect information. Southern journey checker reports that there will be 3 additional services into London in the morning, with a total of 6 peak services, when in fact timetables show only 3 stopping services.

This misinformation is incompetent at best, and purposefully misleading at worse. It will have impacted consultation responses for all those who have not downloaded and checked the detailed schedule.

What are we doing about this?

We have formed an **Action Group** of local residents and passengers from Amberley station. Our aims are to get a **half-hourly service introduced at peak times** and to **safeguard our hourly off-peak service**.

We are taking the following actions:

- Mobilising local residents to send as much feedback as possible to GTR in this consultation
- Securing the support of local parish and county councils
- Securing the support of our local MP, Nick Herbert
- Publicising the issue through local newspapers and social media
- Lobbying GTR and DfT both directly and through the West Sussex Rail Users Association (WSRUA)

We are keen for more people to join this group to help us achieve our aims.

How can I help?

First and foremost, please **send feedback to GTR** in the consultation process. The more feedback we send on this, the more noise we will make. Consultation feedback needs to be sent by **27 July 2017**.

Consultation feedback can be sent directly by email to: gtr.timetableconsultation@gtrailway.com

Please **email our local MP**, Nick Herbert, to tell him that you support this issue. He can be reached at: nick@nickherbert.com

Please feel free to use the information in this bulletin to inform your responses.

You can **follow our Twitter feed @AmberleyRailSOS**. Please help us by retweeting posts.

You can **like our Facebook page Amberley Rail Action Group** to keep up-to-date with the campaign

If you would like to join the **Amberley Rail SOS Action Group**, or if you have any media contacts you could share with us, please get in touch at AmberleyRailSOS@gmail.com

Amberley Rail Station is being left behind in the proposed Southern timetable changes. **It is up to all of us to take action to stop this**. We are a strong community – our voices can be heard.