

As I am sure many rail passengers are aware, Southeastern's new timetable begun earlier this week and if the reaction on social media is anything to go by, initial concerns about the changes have been completely justified.

With any major overhaul of train services, there is always going to be a degree of disruption or at least a period of time where the new changes bed in. Sadly, this is in addition to the regular poor service many passengers endure and having initially raised concerns with Southeastern and Ministers at the Department for Transport about the new timetable, benefits to passengers in my constituency and across much of the network appear to be very limited and indeed, many are faced with a poorer level of service.

We've been told that the changes are necessary to accommodate new Thameslink services to Luton via London. While in theory and on paper this sounds welcome, especially given the long running issue of direct services to London on the Maidstone East line, in practice Thameslink will not be rolled out on this particular line for another year or so and in the meantime commuters will have to make do with longer, and less frequent train services. I have been assured that Southeastern will be carrying out detailed analysis at a station by station level of the changes to services and journey times and it is absolutely essential that they monitor how the changes are affecting individual journeys over the coming weeks.

As many will know the franchise is up for renewal this year. There will be much to consider including whether Southeastern is fit to run the service but where changes can be made to the new timetable which will have a positive impact for my constituents, whichever station you travel from, I will be pushing for Southeastern to introduce them.