30 January 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

GTR DECEMBER 2015 TIMETABLE CONSULTATION

I refer to GTR’s consultation on the December 2015 timetable for off peak services. GATCOM welcomes the opportunity to comment the proposals and looks forward to ongoing engagement with GTR over the next few years.

GATCOM represents a broad range of interests at Gatwick from local authorities and communities, airlines and business groups, to passengers and environmental and amenities groups. One of our key aims is to ensure that the future growth and development of Gatwick Airport have particular regard to the impact this has on the surrounding local communities, the environment and local economy. The way in which passengers, staff and users access the airport is therefore a key issue for the Committee.

As one of the UK’s key international gateways, ensuring good, efficient surface access links to Gatwick Airport, particularly by rail, is a vital component in achieving the Government’s aim of making airports better. It is acknowledged that Gatwick is one of the UK’s best connected airports by rail but GATCOM is concerned that the number of destinations reached by direct rail services has declined in recent years.

GATCOM is most encouraged therefore that the new franchise will offer a unique opportunity for Gatwick and the wider region to take advantage of significant investment in train and rail network capacity offered by the Thameslink Programme with the improvement in direct services, interchange connectivity and new rolling stock, to help harness economic growth in the region. GATCOM particularly welcomes the greater resilience GTR is aiming to build into the new timetable which will help to address the performance and punctuality issues on the buy Brighton Main Line.

CONT’D ...
GATCOM fully endorses the efforts of Gatwick Airport Limited to seek and secure improvements to rail services and supports the airport’s aim to increase the number of passengers accessing the airport by public transport.

The opportunity to comment on GTR’s first consultation on the timetable is very much welcomed and GATCOM’s responses to the consultation questions are as follows:

**Bedford to Gatwick Airport and Brighton**

**Q1 What do you think about these proposals noting that it is not possible to serve both London Bridge and London Blackfriars stations from Preston Park, Hassocks and Wivelsfield until 2018 when the Thameslink works are completed?**

No comment

**Q2 Do you support the new journey opportunities between Brighton, Gatwick Airport, Central London, Stevenage, Letchworth and Cambridge?**

GATCOM welcomes and fully supports the opportunity of providing a direct connection between Gatwick Airport and new destinations north of London.

In addition to the stations mentioned, GATCOM would also welcome direct connections to Peterborough as a result of the same improvements as this could result in a significant increase in patronage from that location.

GATCOM is disappointed however that the consultation does not include provision for:

- overnight/early morning services to enable passengers from north of London to reach Gatwick in time for first wave departures

- services to permit passengers arriving by air in the late evening/very early morning (2300-0200) to reach destinations north of London by direct train.

It would also be helpful to have more clarity as regards the pricing of a ticket on these through services. GATCOM would expect to see wherever possible off peak tickets prices to apply.

**Q3 Do you support faster journey times on overnight services for passengers travelling from stations between Bedford, Luton and London?**

Yes - GATCOM supports the introduction of faster journey times where this can be achieved reliably provided that GTR will work with Gatwick Airport Limited to examine the implications of the resultant reduced stopping patterns in order to optimise increased interchange opportunities at key stations. It is also important to ensure transfers are made as seamless as possible for passengers, particularly for those travelling to either Luton or Gatwick airports with luggage.
Q4
In order to achieve this, the existing calling pattern of overnight services will have to change and Radlett, Elstree & Borehamwood, Mill Hill Broadway, Hendon and Cricklewood will be served by a new Luton to London overnight service. Do you support this?

GATCOM acknowledges the constraints on providing the full timetable of services whilst the London Bridge works are taking place. It is important that GTR is proactive in ensuring passenger information about the changes and stakeholder engagement, particularly with Gatwick Airport Limited, to deal with unforeseen consequences are thoroughly planned for and managed.

December 2015 – Gatwick Express
Q5
Do you support the integration of the Gatwick Express into the wider Brighton mainline?

GATCOM cautiously welcomes the integration of the vast majority of rail services passing through Gatwick Airport into a single franchise and believes this will help decision making and passenger service particularly in times of disruption. The Gatwick Express is a key component of the airport’s rail strategy and surface access strategy. Over the years GATCOM (and Gatwick Airport Limited) has lobbied to retain and enhance this important express service in the context of the current and future operating franchises. It is therefore essential that the quality and reliability of this service is not compromised by the changes. It is also important to ensure that there is sufficient resilience in the timetable south of Gatwick to avoid cancellations in the event of problems with other South Coast services.

However GATCOM has serious reservations about a number of aspects of the proposal which extend beyond proposed changes to the timetable. GATCOM remains concerned about the impact of Gatwick’s passengers if more trains arrive at the airport already carrying passengers from other stations. Network Rail’s forecast growth assumed for the Sussex Area Route Study indicates that following the completion of the Thameslink programme capacity should be available throughout the day for everyone boarding at Gatwick to find a seat. GATCOM strongly urges GTR to keep the possible crowding on “high peak” and “peak shoulder” trains under review to ensure that all possible measures are taken to distribute passengers to available seats and reduce the incidence of passengers standing for long periods. This should include an allowance for passengers boarding at Gatwick to get a seat and not be crowded off trains designed to cater for them.

GATCOM’s specific concerns are as follows:

- **Premium service** - Gatwick Express is positioned as a premium fare non-stop service between London and Gatwick Airport. For several years, passengers who have paid a premium fare have had to travel alongside passengers on regular fares heading to and from the coast on six rush hour trains. This proposal extends this practice to the off-peak period thereby further bringing into question how a premium fare can be justified. Maybe the fact that the only stop south of Gatwick is Brighton will enable the premium service to extend to the coast? This needs to be clarified and, if necessary, be appropriately addressed.

- **Service reliability** - the proposal to extend two off peak services per hour to Brighton is likely to increase the chance of disruption to the ‘every 15 minute Gatwick Express to London’. By running two services per hour south of Gatwick, there are numerous opportunities for these extended services to be delayed during the approximate 60 mile round trip.
• **Rolling Stock** – GATCOM is pleased that GTR has committed to replacing the Gatwick Express rolling stock early in the franchise, bringing forward a new fleet specifically tailored to the needs of the airport passenger. However, it is questioned whether there will be sufficient Gatwick Express rolling stock to operate the service. The current service pattern requires 7 train sets to operate the London – Gatwick Airport route. Therefore, in peak times 12 car trains will utilise 84 of the 108 new carriages. Allowing for maintenance and faults, we question whether there will be enough carriages to provide a service to the coast. GATCOM would like to see a ‘hot standby’ train and crew to be held in readiness at Gatwick sidings in case of late running ‘down south’.

In addition to this GATCOM has some concerns about the quality of the interior and comfort of seating on the new trains. It is hoped that as the designs for the interior of trains is developed, specific attention can be given to ensuring appropriate comfort for this premium service.

• **Dwell times** – GATCOM questions whether the proposed dwell time of three minutes is adequate. Passengers with luggage, the less mobile passenger and passengers travelling as a family, do not move with the same consistency as regular commuters. GATCOM asks that the dwell time be reconsidered and believes it would be prudent to plan on a 5 minute dwell time.

• **Timetable re-alignment** – GATCOM notes that the proposed timetable alters the departure time of this service from Gatwick and believes this is an unnecessary change. GATCOM is concerned that scheduling the arrival and departure of a Gatwick Express at the same time will result in degraded performance and could create potential conflicts over train paths at both ends of the journey.

• **Peak and Non-Peak** – it would be helpful if the start and end times of the peak periods are defined.

**December 2015 – Southern**

**Brighton Main Line**

**Q6**

**Do you support the above proposals?**

GATCOM acknowledges the need to achieve improved performance and delay recovery as a key driver and very much supports the objective for making changes to the timetable. The availability of interchange to optimise connectivity to Gatwick, particularly at key stations such as Clapham Junction and East Croydon, is also important when there are service changes.

Currently 44% of air passenger surface access journeys to/from Gatwick are by public transport with a rail access mode share of 38%. Gatwick Airport Limited is targeting its overall public transport mode share to increase to 60% over the next few years with the aim of balancing the number of journeys to roughly equal by road and rail. To achieve this aim, it is essential that a consistent service to/from stations, particularly south of Gatwick Airport is provided. As mentioned in response to Question 5 above, the Gatwick Express is a key component of the airport's rail strategy and surface access strategy. It is hoped therefore that the final timetable for all services optimises connectivity to Gatwick and fully complements the Gatwick Express service.
Mainline West

Q7
Do you support our plans to reduce the journey time between London, Horsham, Chichester, Portsmouth Harbour, Southampton Central and Bognor Regis by omitting to call at Redhill?

GATCOM welcomes any improvement in journey times between Gatwick and destinations served via the Arun Valley line. However, the removal of a stop at Redhill from Arun Valley trains poses the question of the frequency of services from Gatwick to Redhill and vice-versa. It appears that the service to Redhill will be two trains per hour (Thameslink) and one (First Great Western). GATCOM is concerned that a reduced level of service between Redhill and Gatwick will increase road traffic for staff and passengers and as such will not help Gatwick Airport Limited in achieving its public transport mode share targets.

Redhill is also important as an interchange station between the North Downs Line services between Gatwick and Reading and the Brighton Main Line and Coastway services. GATCOM has consistently advocated the need to improve east-west public transport links to the airport and also to areas of Kent. Although some changes to the interchange opportunities will result from these changes GATCOM urges GTR to ensure that all opportunities to provide greater connectivity between the North Downs Line and the Brighton Mainline are explored to realise their full potential.

Q8
Do you support our plans to reduce the journey time between London, Hove, Worthing and Littlehampton by omitting to call at Preston Park and placing the calls at Portslade and Lancing into one train?

GATCOM welcomes any improvement in the speed of services to Hove, Shoreham Worthing and Littlehampton. Gatwick is a major regional employer and relies on rail to provide access to jobs, including meeting early and late shift patterns.

GATCOM is surprised however that the consultation document does not discuss additional early morning/late night services from the West Coastway to enable passengers to use public transport to leave Gatwick on flights departing before 8am or those passengers departing or arriving on flights late at night. GTR is therefore urged to consider the timing of first and last trains to Gatwick.

Mainline East

Q9
Do you support our plans to reduce the journey time between London, Lewes, Eastbourne and Hastings by placing the calls at Wivelsfield and Plumpton into one train?

As discussed in response to Question 8 above, GATCOM welcomes any improvement in the speed of services to Lewes, Eastbourne and Hastings. It is disappointing however that the consultation document does not discuss additional early morning services from the East Coastway to enable passengers to use public transport to leave Gatwick on flights departing before 8am or those passengers departing or arriving on flights late at night.
Redhill

**Do you support:**

**Q10** The reduction of journey time between London, Reigate and Tonbridge and the change of London terminal from London Bridge to London Victoria?

As mentioned above Redhill is an important interchange station between the North Downs Line services between Gatwick and Reading and the Brighton Main Line and Coastway services. GATCOM understands the need to alter the calling pattern of services previously using London Bridge and notes the approach being taken by GTR to maintain connectivity and reliability during this period of disruption. The change from London Bridge to London Victoria for the services mentioned will however advantage some passengers but will also disadvantage others. It may also increase the incidence of interchange at East Croydon, which will need to be considered and adequately catered for.

**Q11** The introduction of new off peak Thameslink services between Redhill, Merstham, Coulsdon South, Purley and London Blackfriars, City Thameslink, Farringdon and St Pancras International earlier than planned?

GATCOM supports the early delivery of this improved service as it brings forward the role of Redhill as an increasingly important interchange between north-south and east-west services.

**Q12** Removing the Redhill stop from London Victoria to Portsmouth Harbour, Southampton Central & Bognor Regis via Horsham services

See also GATCOM’s response to question 7 which requests that consideration be given for interchange with North Downs Line services at Redhill. The removal of a stop at Redhill from Arun Valley trains poses the question of the frequency of services from Gatwick to Redhill and vice-versa. GATCOM believes the service will be two trains per hour (Thameslink) and one (First Great Western). If this is the case, GATCOM is concerned that a reduced level of service will increase road use by staff and passengers.

Coastway West

**Q13** What do you think of more trains calling additionally at Southease during the week noting that there will be a slight increase (2 minutes) in journey times to/from Seaford to accommodate the call?

GATCOM notes the potential benefits from the increased service provision and connectivity at weekends and the potential increase in demand during the summer months, which coincides with Gatwick Airport’s busiest period.

**Q14** What do you think of Sunday trains calling at Three Oaks and Winchelsea alternately every two hours on Sundays noting that there will be a slight increase (2 minutes) in journey times to/from Ashford International to accommodate the calls?

As stated in response to Question 13 above, GATCOM notes the potential benefits from the increased service provision and connectivity.
**December 2015 - Great Northern**

Great Northern (Outer)

**Q15**

Do you support the new journey opportunities between Brighton, Gatwick Airport, Central London, Stevenage, Letchworth and Cambridge?

GATCOM welcomes the new direct connections as a result of integrating the Thameslink and Great Northern services. It is hoped that the final timetable will embrace any opportunities to improve overnight services and will be able to provide early morning and late evening trains to meet the first and last wave of passengers through the airport as well as staff shift patterns.

**Q16**

Do you have any further comments not covered in this consultation which you would like to raise for possible future consideration?

GATCOM is pleased that a number of its aspirations for the franchise have been taken into account in the proposed timetable for off peak services. However there are many points that remain to be addressed. GATCOM therefore urges GTR to consider the following points:

- **Services to/from Kent** - It is disappointing that GTR does not plan any significant upgrade of services from Kent to Redhill. GATCOM acknowledges the view that ‘the number of passengers making regular cross-Tonbridge journeys is low’. However, if an appropriate service is first put in place and then marketed correctly patronage would increase particularly as the air passenger throughput at Gatwick grows. The example proposed service from Strood and Maidstone West that has a 56 minute wait at Tonbridge is not likely to be attractive. GATCOM therefore encourages GTR to re-consider this potential market.

  GATCOM notes that with the additional Redhill Platform 0 planned during CP5 (2014-2019) it is expected that there will be two First Great Western services an hour connecting Gatwick with Reading via Redhill. GATCOM would like to see the opportunities this new platform presents fully utilised to improve east-west rail connectivity.

- **Gatwick connections using the West London line** – there is concern that terminating West London line trains at East Croydon rather than South Croydon could result in an unnecessary blockage of a platform at East Croydon.

  GATCOM also asks whether there has been any examination of the potential benefit of offering a regular connection from Gatwick to the West Coast Mainline via the West London line?

- **Gatwick Express premium fare** – GATCOM continues to have concerns about what constituted a premium fare on Gatwick Express services. We are concerned that as currently structured passengers travelling on a Gatwick Express service between Brighton and London would not be subject to a premium fare, despite it being an express service, but passengers boarding at Gatwick would be subject to a premium fare. This needs to be addressed as if trains arrived from the south coast already full, Gatwick passengers would be paying a premium for standing room only.
• **Presentation of fares by ticket machines** – GATCOM would like to know whether GTR has plans to improve the way in which fares for a given journey are presented to the passenger? It is important to provide the passenger with clearly described fare choices across all services. GATCOM is also aware of the problems arising from the trial of Southern’s smart card “The Key” which is to be rolled out later this year. It is hoped that prior to its roll out the issues concerning ticket pricing are resolved and that the cheapest fare is always offered.

• **Access gates to Gatwick Express platforms** – GATCOM continues to press for ungated access to the platforms serving the Gatwick Express. It believes that this premium service should be a ‘walk-on, pay on the train’ service. GATCOM would like to be updated on GTR’s plans regarding this.

• **Maintenance Access and Early Morning/Late Evening and Sunday Services** – GATCOM acknowledges the challenge of balancing the increasing demand for services to be provided around the clock, against the need to ensure that access is available to the network for maintenance to ensure the provision of a safe and reliable rail network. Access to the rail network at off-peak times is a key issue for securing services to/from Gatwick to match flight schedules in the early morning/late night and also on Sundays. Access at early mornings/last thing at night is not only important for air passengers, but also for staff working shift patterns at the airport.

Whilst GATCOM appreciates that the scope for later evening/earlier morning services and Sunday services on the Brighton Main Line/Arun Valley Lines south of Three Bridges are limited by the 2-track lines and track maintenance access, it asks that GTR considers whether there might be opportunities to address the demand through future smarter maintenance and new technology.

GATCOM trusts its comments can be taken into account.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]

Assistant Secretary