



Department
for Transport

From the Secretary of State
The Rt. Hon. Chris Grayling

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: chris.grayling@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

2 December 2016

COMPENSATION PAYMENT OF ONE MONTH'S TRAVEL FOR SOUTHERN PASSENGERS

Dear Colleague,

I am announcing today that tens of thousands of Southern rail passengers are to be repaid the equivalent of a month's travel for the extraordinary disruption they have suffered.

I know many of you, like me, commute to work by train, and have done so for many years. I understand how important it is for your constituents to have a train service you can depend upon.

In recent months, as you are very much aware, that is not what Govia Thameslink Railway's (GTR) Southern passengers have received. Instead, due to a combination of RMT strike action, track failures, engineering works and operator poor performance they have endured extraordinary, sustained disruption.

In recognition of everything Southern's passengers have suffered, I have today announced special compensation payment for season ticket holders on the Southern network. While nothing can truly make up for what you and your constituents have had to endure, I hope this goes some way to showing that the government is on their side.

Passengers with a Brighton to London annual season ticket, for example, will get £371 back. Quarterly, regular monthly and weekly ticket holders will also qualify for compensation. GTR will contact passengers setting out what they are owed and how to have it paid directly into their bank accounts. For those

passengers who do not wish to have money paid into their bank accounts vouchers will be available.

I wrote to in October about an additional measure to introduce improved compensation paid to passengers following delayed or cancelled trains. From 11 December, all Southern passengers will be eligible for compensation for any train delayed for 15 minutes or longer, rather than the current 30 minutes. We will introduce this change across the whole country in future, but we will start next Sunday with all routes operated by GTR, including Thameslink, Southern, Gatwick Express and Great Northern. The extra compensation I have set out above comes on top of the £6.5 million GTR has already paid out since the strikes began in April this year.

The disruption to Southern's services has been due to a number of Network Rail and operator causes aside from RMT Union strike action. These factors taken together warrant this one-off compensation payment. But it must also be recognised that the majority of the disruption has been caused by the actions of the RMT.

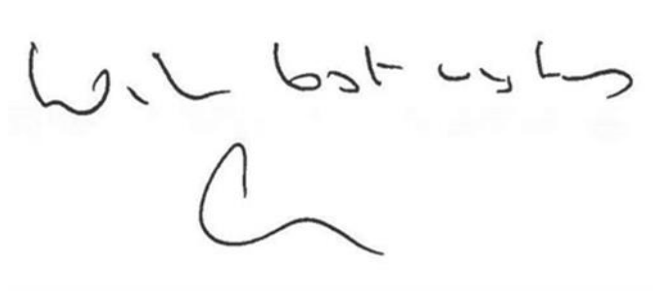
To be clear, the union's dispute with Southern is over plans to allow drivers to be in full control of the doors on state of the art trains being introduced for passengers. But while the trains are new, this method of operating the doors is not. It is already in use on over 60% of trains on GTR routes, including Southern, and has been operating for more than 30 years on a third of the UK rail network. Importantly, the independent safety regulators have repeatedly ruled that driver-operated doors are safe.

The RMT Union has brought travel disruption into the lives of millions of commuters. And now, as I mentioned in my letter to you earlier this week, the drivers' union, ASLEF, has decided to increase pressure on passengers by announcing its own coordinated strikes in the run-up to Christmas.

Following this news, GTR wrote to ASLEF earlier this week asking them to withdraw strike action. Unfortunately, the union rejected their request on Thursday 1 December. GTR subsequently issued proceedings at the High Court seeking an injunction to stop ASLEF's strike action and simultaneously wrote to the union. If the application goes ahead, the expectation is that GTR and ASLEF potentially could be in Court at some point next week.

If these unions were to have their way in future, Southern trains would needlessly not run whenever a conductor is unavailable to operate the doors. That cannot be right. I want to see on-board staff doing what they do best – helping passengers, not preventing them from travelling. Under Southern's proposals, no one will lose their job. I urge the RMT Union to engage with that offer, put passengers first, and let staff go back to work. And I urge ASLEF to stop trying to capitalise on RMT's unnecessary strike action.

I know from my own years of experience that to be a rail commuter in this country often requires patience – especially when upgrades are taking place. What rail passengers – your constituents - should not have to tolerate is unions treating them as bargaining chips in a pointless and irrelevant disagreement over changing staff roles. While I am clear that the dispute is between GTR and the unions, it is time for the unions to stop their damaging action now and give passengers what they want – a predictable, uneventful commute.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Grayling", with a stylized flourish below the name.

Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT