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customer relations

Ref: oneJC1605

July 22, 2004

Anglia
West Anglia
Great Eastern
Stansted Express

Mr C Drew
Willows End
Stephenson Road
North Farnbridge
CM3 6ND

Dear Ms Drew

Thank you for your letter concerning services on the Southminster branch.

Please accept my apologies for any delays you have experienced in recent weeks. Punctuality during the early part of the summer was undeniably poor.

While it would be desirable to increase the frequency of trains, the limitations of a single track branch line with only one passing place at Farnbridge precludes us from doing so. A peak time frequency of around forty minutes is the maximum that can be accommodated within the branch line infrastructure. Although the possibility of timetabling later evening trains has been discussed, there are no plans to do so at present. Network Rail are reluctant to allow later evening trains on branch lines as they require access to the track for overnight maintenance work, and the number of passengers using the later services is unlikely to be economically viable. Incidentally, our passenger counts are taken by physically counting people on trains and at stations rather than by ticket sales.

The staff at Wickford have authority to order buses (if available) during disruption, and invariably do so. However, the staff must use their own judgement as to whether ordering buses is worthwhile considering the extent of delays.

In mileage terms season ticket rates from Southminster branch stations are on average 1.4% more expensive than season tickets from Southend line stations. This slight disparity is largely a result of Southend line season ticket prices being held in some recent years to compete with season ticket prices on the Fenchurch St line. However, in mileage terms Southminster line season ticket prices are actually cheaper than most mainline and metro area season ticket prices.

I am sorry I cannot be more positive, but I do hope I have clarified the position.

Yours sincerely,



Jeff Cracknell
Customer Relations

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