

Ipswich Station, Burrell Road, Ipswich IP2 8AL  
North Station, Colchester, CO1 1XD

## customer relations

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Doctor David Kirkby  
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Althorne  
Essex  
CM3 6DT

Contact Ref.93  
14/Aug/2004

Dear Doctor Kirkby,

Thank you for your further letter.

Dates of forthcoming 'Meet the Manager' sessions are published at stations, but not – to my knowledge – on the website. I will, however, mention this to our communications people. Because the number of 'Meet the Manager' sessions has been increased, we feel it would be very time-consuming to prepare reports of past sessions and put them on the website. There are, therefore, no plans to do this.

There are no plans to fill the 'Thursday gap' with a bus, mainly because a bus takes at least twice as long as the train for the end-to-end journey, and hence would arrive in Southminster (or Wickford) only marginally ahead of the next train service.

Under normal circumstances, all trains have a conductor - so we believe that opportunities for ticketless travel are no greater than on other routes where we operate a Penalty Fares scheme. However, where there is a deliberate attempt to avoid payment, we will not hesitate to prosecute if we feel we have a reasonable chance of success.

The branch line is treated in exactly the same way as the Southend line when gathering statistics for punctuality and reliability. The performance regime between us and Network Rail is too complex to go into here, but our control office would only ever cancel a train for operational reasons.

The variation in frequency is due to the fact that trains have to be both found a 'path' out of Liverpool Street and then slotted onto the single line without clashing with another service. In such circumstances, it is virtually impossible to produce an even-interval through service.

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I am pleased to confirm that, from 12 December, the last train with a Southminster connection will definitely leave Liverpool Street later every day of the week – although the difference is only marginal. The times will be: 22.15 Monday to Friday, 21.45 Saturday, 21.15 Sunday.

Your final point is, to some extent, answered by my previous comments that 'the variation in frequency is due to the fact that trains have to be both found a 'path' out of Liverpool Street and then slotted onto the single line without clashing with another service'. Hence, although two trains currently follow each other onto the branch with only a 40 minute gap between them, it would be virtually impossible for a series of peak trains to follow one another at this interval once turn-round times at Southminster and other allowances have been factored in.

Whilst minor improvements can sometimes be achieved by 'fine-tuning' the timetable, it will - as stated in my previous letter - require a major investment in the infrastructure for any significant improvement in the frequency of service to be achieved.

I hope these comments answer the points you have raised.

Yours sincerely,



Carl Lombardelli  
Customer Relations Team Manager  
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