HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Lawrence Bowman
Managing Director
South Western Railway
(by email)

Our reference: BS42187

25 June 2026

Dear Lawrence,

Re: Autumn timetable changes consultation

I write following a meeting that took place between Jonathan Nesbitt and my team regarding the public consultation on timetable changes this Autumn.

During this meeting Jonathan highlighted that early engagement and understanding key local priorities would be helpful in shaping the consultation.

Improving service levels and value for money

The priority of local passengers to any changes to the network would be to address the key issues of poor performance, reliability and value for money. In the Runnymede and Weybridge constituency, the Addlestone/ Chertsey branch line has consistently been one of the worst performing parts of the network, experiencing frequent delays and disruption which affect all who rely on it.

The latest statistics published by SWR show the scale of the issue. In May 7.29% of services across the network were cancelled. In addition there was 6.63% of station cancellations, often where smaller stations are missed in order to try and make up time for delayed services.

Only 64.64% of all SWR services were on time. And over 1% of mainline trains had fewer carriages than planned, resulting in passengers standing and often crammed uncomfortably on to trains in order to make their journeys. And over 800 mainline trains were more than 30 minutes late in reaching their destination.

This service is simply not good enough and the timetabling review must look at ways improvements can be made to ensure passengers receive a more **regular, reliable and resilient railway across Runnymede and Weybridge.**

The poor service performance is particularly galling given the high prices residents must pay. An annual season ticket costs from £3,160.00 (Oxshott) to £4,360.00 (Longcross). I note the Government have stated that there are no plans to reduce rail fares following nationalisation of the network, however it is essential that value for money is retained and ideally improved. This includes ensuring the current level of service is maintained at each station, or a commitment to reduce the price of season tickets proportionally should services be reduced. In addition to the concerns about current service levels, I have also set out below some further points that I wish to be considered as part of the consultation.

Level crossings

Downtimes at level crossings in the Egham Area have been steadily increasing since the start of 2026. According to statistics from Network Rail, the worst performing of these level crossings – in Pooley Green – recorded 185 instances of the barriers being down for over ten minutes, with most of these occurring during peak times.

Any changes to timetabling MUST take into account the impact this would have on level crossings, and I will be seeking a commitment from South Western Railway that any changes will not result in increased downtimes.

While Egham is arguably the most affected area due to the number of level crossings in close proximity, Addlestone and Oxshott (and Chertsey to a lesser extent) also have level crossings which cause local delays and disruption. While I am already engaging with South Western Railway and Network Rail on how to address the level crossing issues, this change to the timetable also presents both a risk and an opportunity.

I would implore that, before any changes are proposed or implemented to the timetable, there should be an assessment on not only how any changes could impact the level crossing downtimes, but also how this could partially relieve the burden placed on road users when using these level crossings.

Given the priority of this issue locally and the impact it could have, I request that the timetabling consultation includes a public consultation event in Egham that would be able to demonstrate to residents the impact of any proposed changes.

Government's freight target

The Government, as part of the ongoing Railways Bill, has included a proposal to increase the freight use across the rail network. While this does not fall within public timetabling, the scheduling of freight services still has a significant impact locally and I would hope will still fall within the scope of the upcoming consultation.

This is a significant issue especially when taken in the context of level crossings and down times. Having a large and growing local population, and a central location, (near London, Heathrow, the M25, M3 and M4) making the Runnymede and Weybridge constituency a hub for logistics firms, any increase in freight along the line could have a significant impact on our communities and local economy.

I would be grateful for confirmation at the earliest opportunity that this will be included and addressed. Greater clarity and communication regarding freight schedules would also be helpful to help address local concerns on this point.

Schools

One of the key requirements of any timetable changes are that services support access to education. This is an issue I have raised repeatedly in recent years, with schools and colleges in Chertsey and Egham in particular reporting issues with attendance due to rail timetabling and performance.

Engagement with schools throughout this process is vital. You will recall I set up a pre-consultation engagement event for local schools, however it is vital that South Western Railway identify all those most likely affected by rail services and directly engage to understand both the risks and opportunities of timetables for our schools and student attendance.

Please can you confirm that this analysis and engagement will take part as part of this consultation process?

Interchanges between the network and other forms of public transport

Passengers who rely on our local branch line to get to and from London, Woking, Guildford, or further afield already experience a regular gamble of whether interchanging at Weybridge

between lines will be worth it; often it is not. Current timetabling means passengers frequently just miss the connection to the branch line and are waiting nearly half an hour to continue their journey.

There were changes back in January to the interchange to improve the connections for students, with guards of the 0802 service from Weybridge towards Chertsey were able to delay its departure by up to five minutes to allow for students needing to make their connection. There was also a similar discretion possible for the 0733 and 0833 departures towards Chertsey if needed of delaying departure by up to five minutes.

While this was a welcome addition to ensure the students could rely on this service to get them to school, it is obvious there is still work that needs to be done.

Changes to the timetable presents a unique opportunity to address the concerns commuters have with the interchange at Weybridge Station and ensure that connections between services are scheduled effectively to resolve this issue.

Additionally, I would also like to reiterate the proposal for the change of the Chertsey Branch Line in its current operational form to a circular service that would link stations on the Chertsey Branch Line – Addlestone, Chertsey and Virginia Water – to London Waterloo via a direct line through Weybridge.

Changing the route into a circle would offer a more accessible and efficient rail service, benefits and address the issues with interchanging between services, offering more efficient travel between suburban areas and central London.

Finally, regarding connectivity between the rail service and other forms of public transport, any changes should also be coordinated with other transport networks to improve passenger journey times.

Final Remarks

My priority is to keep Runnymede and Weybridge moving!

Given the impact timetables changes could have on local communities, I am planning significant local engagement to seek further input from local residents and encourage engagement with your consultation this autumn. The feedback from this survey will form part of my consultation response when it opens.

I would again like to express my desire for local pre-consultation events in my constituency. The Chertsey branch line remains one of the worst performing parts of the network and I believe there would be great benefit in holding events to show how South Western Railway are aiming to address the issues I have set out above.

I look forward to hearing your plans on how to ensure these issues are addressed in both the consultation process and technical timetable review, and an update on the proposed timescale for this process.

Yours sincerely,

Ben Spencer

Dr Ben Spencer MP
Runnymede and Weybridge