

Digital upgrades affecting Great Northern and Thameslink services over August Bank Holiday weekend

July 25, 2023



Great Northern and Thameslink passengers intending to travel to and from London on the East Coast Main Line over the August Bank Holiday weekend (26-28 August 2023) are being asked to plan ahead and check how their journey may be affected.

Further upgrade work is taking place to deliver the East Coast Digital Programme (ECDP), which will create a more reliable railway with lower emissions through the introduction of digital technology. Traditional lineside signals will be replaced by continuous signalling information to a screen in the driver's cab.

On Sunday 27 August, buses will replace trains between Potters Bar and Peterborough, and Hertford North and Royston. Additionally, on Saturday 26 August from 2000 until end of service, and on Monday 28 August until 0800, buses will replace trains between Peterborough and Biggleswade.

New equipment and technology is being installed between Welwyn Garden City and Hitchin in Hertfordshire, preparing the way for that section to begin using digital signalling from 2025. Upgrade work is also taking place in the Peterborough area, enabling a move of local signalling control to our modern operating centre in York. Dynamic software is being introduced to efficiently move trains across junctions and reduce delays; the first such deployment on the East Coast Main Line.

The work has been planned to ensure that passengers making trips over the long weekend will have unaffected journeys during Friday and most of Saturday and Monday.

Ed Akers, Network Rail's Principal Programme Sponsor, ECDP said: "The August Bank Holiday weekend work will enable further progress towards Britain's first digital signalling on an intercity mainline. We've carefully planned the work to avoid the busiest travelling times, and to progress two different elements of digital change at the same time. Both sets of work will contribute to enabling more reliable journeys in the years ahead.

"We are sorry for the disruption that this work will cause passengers, and thank them for their patience."

Jenny Saunders, Thameslink and Great Northern Customer Services Director, said: "The work Network Rail is carrying out over the August Bank Holiday weekend is essential to delivering more reliable journeys for our Great Northern and Thameslink customers. Whilst the work has been planned to minimise disruption, regrettably, there will be some disruption to our customers' journeys – particularly on Sunday 27 August – so please check ahead of travelling."

Impacts to Great Northern and Thameslink services are listed below.

Saturday 26 August from 2000 to end of service: no trains between Peterborough and Biggleswade*

- Rail replacement buses will run between Biggleswade and Peterborough
- Trains will run between:
 - London King's Cross and Biggleswade
 - London King's Cross and Cambridge/Ely/King's Lynn
 - Moorgate and Stevenage via Hertford North
- *There is no step free access at Biggleswade. If you are travelling between Biggleswade and Peterborough and require assistance, please speak to a member of staff. Accessible transport will be provided at Hitchin.

Sunday 27 August: no trains will run between Potters Bar/ Hertford North and Peterborough/ Royston

Rail replacement buses will run between:

- Hitchin and Royston
- Bedford and Peterborough via St Neots
- Hitchin and Peterborough
- Luton Airport Parkway and Hitchin
- St Albans and Hitchin via Welwyn Garden City
- Potters Bar and Hitchin
- Hertford North and Stevenage via Watton at Stone

Trains will run between:

- Royston and Cambridge / Ely / Kings Lynn
- King's Cross / Moorgate and Potters Bar / Hertford North
- Brighton and Finsbury Park via St Pancras

Monday 28 August from start of service to 0800: no trains between Peterborough and Biggleswade*

- Rail replacement buses will run between Biggleswade and Peterborough
- Trains will run between:

- London King's Cross and Biggleswade
- London King's Cross and Cambridge/Ely/King's Lynn
- Moorgate and Stevenage via Hertford North

- *There is no step free access at Biggleswade. If you are travelling between Biggleswade and Peterborough and require assistance, please speak to a member of staff. Accessible transport will be provided at Hitchin.

About ECDP

Digital signalling, using the European Train Control System (ETCS) is a proven technology already in use in many countries in Europe and elsewhere. The East Coast Digital Programme will see the first introduction of ETCS to an intercity mainline in Great Britain, and will provide the foundation for the future expansion of digital signalling across the network. ETCS is currently in use in the central London section of Thameslink and on the Cambrian Line in Wales.

For further information about the ECDP please visit www.nextgenerationrailway.co.uk

Photo credit: Network Rail