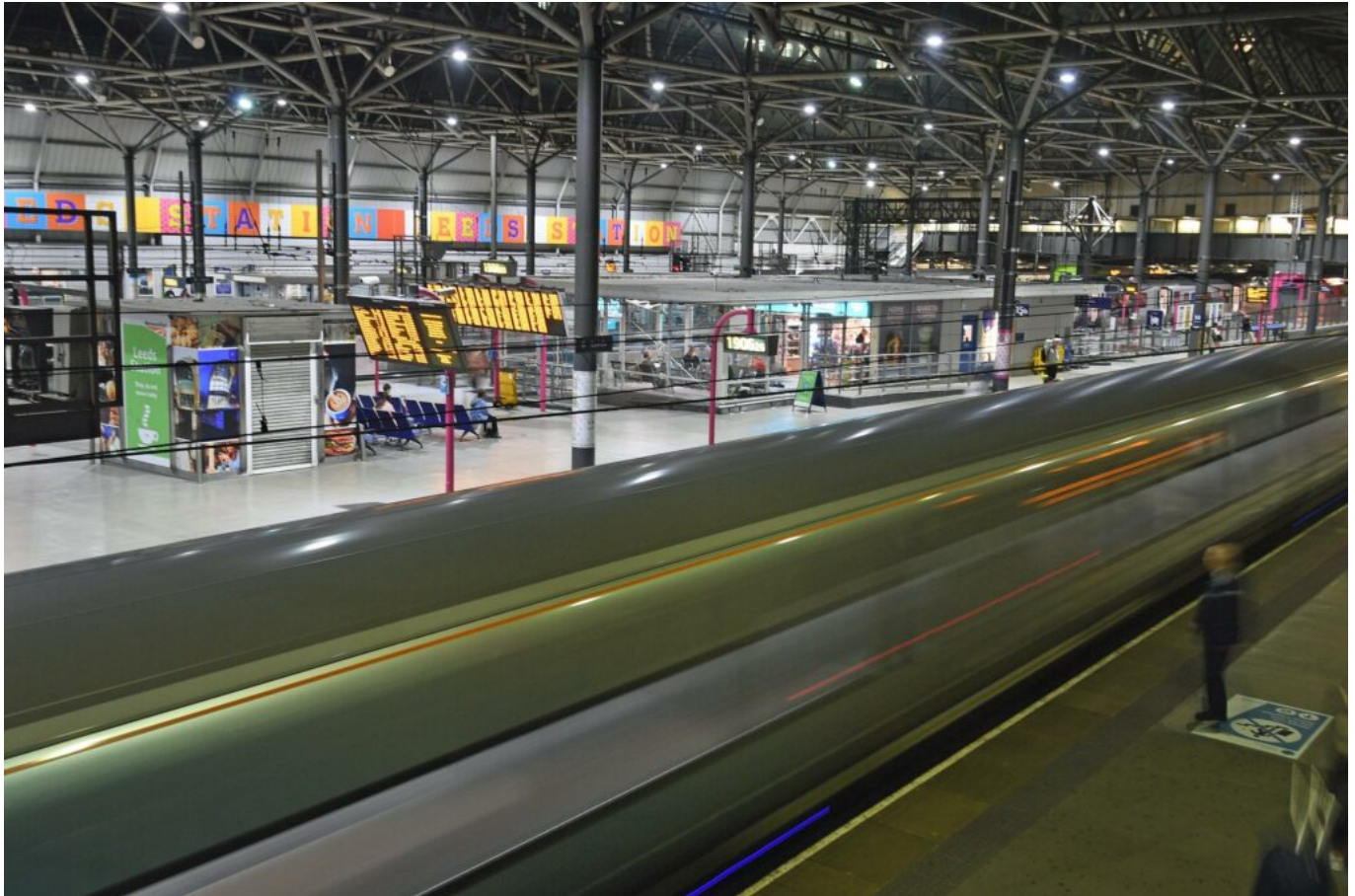


Train services increase today, but commuters urged to only travel if essential

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The railway is gradually increasing train services from today, but commuters are being urged to only travel by rail if their journey is really necessary.

Train companies are united in their calls for those who do need to travel to use alternatives or to go at quieter times if they can.

To keep staff and passengers safe and to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus there will only be space on trains for as few as a tenth of the usual number of people despite the increase of services.

Train operating companies are doing all they can with increased cleaning regimes, potentially one-way systems and queues to get in stations, to adhere to social distancing guidelines. Commuters are being urged to wear face coverings, and only travel if essential.

Robert Nisbet, Director of Nations and Regions at the Rail Delivery Group, which represents train operators and Network Rail, said: "We need people's help to keep trains clear for those who really need them so we are asking people to consider alternatives like cycling or walking and if that's not possible, to travel at

quieter times.

“We are doing everything possible to keep passengers and staff safe, including cleaning trains and stations several times a day, managing capacity and increasing signage to help people get around.

“For those who do need to take the train, we ask that they plan ahead, consider others and stay safe when they use public transport. That means buying tickets online for quieter times of day, maintaining social distancing wherever possible, wearing a face covering and keeping hands sanitised.”

What the train operating companies are saying and details of the new timetables

Lawrence Bowman, customer experience director for London Northwestern Railway, said: “I would like to thank all the people who have stayed away from the railway during the national emergency. Since the travel restrictions have been in place we’ve been able to help thousands of key workers make essential journeys across the region.

“The well-being of our customers and staff is our top priority which is why we are asking our passengers to act considerately and think very carefully if they really need to travel by train.”

Visit www.lnr.uk/coronavirus for the timetable.

Andy Heath, Managing Director at Merseyrail, said: “We have been working with government and key stakeholders to develop an increased service that aims to meet demand for those who need to travel

“It is essential that everyone plays their part in helping to keep the trains for those who really need them. So, only use our services if you absolutely must while maintaining social distancing where it is possible to do so.

“We are committed to providing a reliable service to those who need to travel across the Liverpool City Region as we move through these uncertain times, and I would ask all passengers to act responsibly at all times when travelling, and listen to advice given by staff and displayed at our stations.”

Visit www.merseytravel.gov.uk for more details.

Mary Hewitt, Interim Managing Director at Chiltern Railways said: “At Chiltern Railways, we’re working closely with industry partners to run as many services as possible where we can safely do so – the health of our customers and staff is of paramount importance to us.

“We are taking lots of extra steps to keep people safe including increased cleaning using enhanced products and installing markers at stations to remind our customers of the 2-metre social distancing rule. To ensure that we can continue to run a safe railway, it is important that only essentials journeys are made, in line with government guidance.”

Visit www.chilternrailways.co.uk/ for more details.

Steve White, Govia Thameslink Railway's Chief Operating Officer, said: "Please listen to the latest Government advice and only travel if you have no other alternative."

"We ask that customers work with us by respecting the requirements for social distancing and personal hygiene so that we can help everyone who needs to travel or who is working on the railway stay safe and well. I would like to thank our own key worker colleagues who have shown great fortitude in keeping the railway running and supporting our passengers who must travel."

Visit www.nationalrail.co.uk for more details.

Chief Operating Officer at Nexus, Martin Kearney, said: "The safety of customers is our top priority and we are following Government advice to create a Covid-secure environment on the Metro system."

"By putting more trains into service at busy times we can maximise the space that we have for social distancing."

"The new timetable will deliver a 12-minute frequency of service. There will be a train every three minutes through the central area between Pelaw and South Gosforth at peak times. This gives us more capacity and takes us back to pre-lockdown levels of service at busy times."

"People are advised to take Metro only where a journey is essential, such as for work if you cannot do so from home, and where you can't walk, cycle or use a car. If you do have to travel then you need to follow social distancing rules, stay two metres apart as much as possible, and wear a face covering at all times."

"We have made sure Metro stations and trains are cleaned to the highest standard, and that there is clear information on how to distance as you travel."

Visit www.nexus.org.uk/coronavirus for more details.

Jonny Wiseman, customer experience director for West Midlands Railway, said: "I would like to thank our customers who have continued to stay away from the railways to save space for those people making truly essential journeys with no other travel option."

"Maintaining social distancing on the railway network is a real challenge because the concept goes against the entire principle of mass transit. We have had to think hard and move fast to bring in new ways of moving people within social distancing constraints."

"It is absolutely essential that our customers play their part by being kind, considerate and travelling responsibly. Only use public transport if you absolutely have to travel and have no other alternative."

Visit www.wmr.uk/coronavirus for more details.

Will Rogers, Managing Director at East Midlands Railway, said: "I am very grateful for the cooperation of our passengers and the hard work and commitment of our staff right across the country in recent weeks. This has been an unprecedented period for all of us."

“Our new timetable will allow a small increase in the number of passengers we can accommodate. However, we urge everyone to only go by train if it is necessary and keep public transport for key workers and those who must travel.

“To help, we will be providing extra information and guidance at all 91 of our stations and on our trains. I would urge everyone travelling to be mindful of each other and maintain a safe and sensible distance.”

To plan your journey visit www.eastmidlandsrailway.co.uk/covid-19

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A spokesperson for Northern said: “From next week we will begin to introduce an amended timetable that will introduce additional services on some routes. However, due to social distancing, there will be significantly reduced capacity on each and every one of our trains.

“We’re therefore calling on people to help us keep the railway clear for those who need it most and to only take the train if there’s no other way to travel. Those customers who have to travel by train should plan ahead, check the new timetable, and consider whether journeys are absolutely essential.”

Visit www.northernrailway.co.uk for more details.

Jamie Burles, Greater Anglia managing director said: “Government advice is still to avoid public transport, so please only travel with us if your journey is absolutely essential.

“We are continuously monitoring passenger numbers to make sure customers can continue to follow Government and Public Health England guidelines on social distancing wherever possible.

“Our top priority is that customers and staff can travel safely while the coronavirus outbreak persists. We will continue to pay particular attention to cleaning high contact areas on our trains and stations such as push buttons, door handles and grab rails.

“We would kindly encourage customers to buy tickets online or via our app. If that’s not possible then please use contactless payment on our ticket vending machines.

“We have marked up stations with tape and markings to help customers to socially distance. A one door in and one door out system may be in operation on some trains or stations, please look or listen out for instructions from our staff.

“There are other ways that customers can help us to keep them safe – please consider starting or finishing work earlier or later so that not everyone is travelling at the same time.

“The Government is also advising people to wear a face covering when using public transport.”

Visit <https://www.greateranglia.co.uk/> for more details.