Department for Transport

XXXX
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
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London SW1P 4DR

Direct Line: 020 7944 XXXX

Web Site: www.dft.gov.uk

Our Ref: F0007068

5 January 2011

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Dear XXXX,

RE: Freedom of Information Request - a list of the 20 busiest train services for which data is available

I am writing to confirm that the Department does hold the information you requested on 11 November 2010 but has decided that some of this information cannot be disclosed. The information that can be released is the list of the 10 busiest train services.

The detailed information on services outside the Top 10, relating to those services and passengers in excess of capacity, that is being withheld falls under the exemptions in section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Exemption 43(2) applies because the Department in conjunction with the train operators consider these data to be commercially sensitive. In applying this exemption we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure. The attached Annex A to this letter sets out the exemption in full and details why the public interest test favours withholding the information.

Please see the attached table showing the Top 10 list based on autumn 2009 data that we are happy to release. In all cases, the data was collected prior to the December 2009 timetable change, and relates to “commuter” services arriving at and departing from London termini in the morning and evening peaks. It is important to note that the overcrowding figures we are supplying to you are derived from one-off measurements of the passengers on each train on a particular week day. They are not an average representation of overcrowding on the service over a period of time. Therefore, these figures represent a one-off snap-shot from autumn 2009 and do not provide a guide to current overcrowding.

Since you are interested in overcrowding, you might also find it useful to know what the Department is doing to tackle this problem both across the network and specifically on these ten services within the scope of your FoI request.

All franchises let by the DfT require the train operator to address crowding and to plan their timetables in such a way as to ensure as far as possible that

crowding is not unduly concentrated on any particular route or individual service.

The Government is committed to delivering 650 additional carriages by March 2014. Of the 650, a total of 441 have already been contracted. The Department is now in commercial negotiations with train operators for the remaining carriages and it is expected that these will enter service by the end of the control period in March 2014.

The Thameslink Project will provide up to 1,200 new carriages for services across London and the previously confirmed Crossrail project will also require the provision of around 600 new carriages. These two major projects will free up approximately 800 existing carriages for potential redeployment on other routes to provide further additional capacity.

It is also the Government's aim to improve efficiency in rolling stock procurement practices. The Department for Transport's review of rail franchising is also considering ideas for addressing passenger concerns regarding crowding levels.

Taking the services within the scope of your FoI request in order:

1. **06:12 service from Didcot Parkway to London Paddington (248 passengers in excess of its capacity of 395)**
   In May 2010 FGW changed the type of train used on this service (to a 2+7 HST), which increased the number of standard seats to 440, with much more standing room for passengers. More recent figures (spring 2010) showed loadings of 459.

2. **07:42 service from Reading to London Paddington (326 passengers in excess of its capacity of 533)**
   This is a very popular commuter service into Paddington. FGW would like to strengthen this service, although is unable to do so with current levels of rolling stock without adversely affecting other services. The company is speaking to the Department about ways to address the issue.

3. **18:30 service from London Paddington to Weston-super-Mare (205 passengers in excess of its capacity of 395)**
   This is the first off-peak evening service to the West Country. FGW reports that this was its busiest train last autumn and it is very aware of the problems on this service last year. This train became an off-peak service in September 2009, and demand increased. In May 2010 FGW reclassified this as a peak service, to help distribute passenger flows more evenly, which has helped resolve the problem.

4. **18:22 service from London Liverpool Street to Clacton-on-Sea (262 passengers in excess of its capacity of 524)**

From the May 2010 timetable NXEA now operates this service utilising 3x321's with a capacity of 876 seats. At 12 carriages, this service is at the maximum length for the route, with current loading of this train averaging 58 per cent.

5. **18:49 service from London Euston to Northampton (244 passengers in excess of its capacity of 492)**
   The service was extended to a 12-car train (maximum length for the route) from 12 April 2010.

6. **07:43 service from Henley-on-Thames to London Paddington (110 passengers in excess of its capacity of 225)**
   FGW recognises the capacity issues on this service, particularly for customers travelling from Twyford. The company is speaking to the Department about ways to address the issue. Latest figures (spring 2010) show a significant reduction in loadings to 267.

7. **07:32 service from Woking to London Waterloo (357 passengers in excess of its capacity of 738)**
   This 12-carriage train (Class 450) is the maximum length for any train on the SWT network. The spring 2010 count reveals that the load factor on this particular train has fallen slightly by 5 percentage points to 143 per cent. There are alternative services from all stations served both 20 minutes earlier and about 10 minutes later (the later train arriving at Waterloo 7 minutes later) both of which have a current load factor of less than 100 per cent (from Woking there are trains every few minutes at this time of day). There are no track capacity or rolling stock resources to mitigate this with any additional services.

8. **06:00 service from Bristol Temple Meads to London Paddington (180 passengers in excess of its capacity of 395)**
   FGW recognises the capacity issues on this service from Reading, which is one of its most popular trains. The company is speaking to the Department about ways to address the issue.

9. **07:10 service from Oxford to London Paddington (171 passengers in excess of its capacity of 395)**
   FGW recognises this is one of its busiest services. The company is speaking to the Department about ways to address the issue.

10. **18:45 service from London Paddington to Reading (116 passengers in excess of its capacity of 270)**
    The number of carriages on this service has been temporarily reduced to allow FGW to carry out an £8m refresh of its 16x fleet. This will return to a 5-carriage train once that work is completed.

You may be interested to know how we work out capacity allowances. For shorter journeys, when the journey time between the London terminus and the first/last stop is less than 20 minutes, the total capacity figures given in the

attached tables take account of the number of standard seats plus standing allowance for particular types of rolling stock. For longer-distance services where there is a 20 minute or more gap between stations, capacity is usually calculated as the number of standard seats only. A number of slower services, which serve a number of intermediate stations en route, have their capacity calculated as "seats plus standing" in line with the definition above.

A PiXC table based on the 2009 autumn counts is publicly available and has been published by the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) in Chapter 2 of their National Rail Trends 2009-2010 Yearbook at:

http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.2026

If you are unhappy with the way the Department has handled your request or with the decisions made in relation to your request you may complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter by writing to the Department's Information Rights Unit at:

Zone D/04
Ashdown House
Sedlescombe Road North
Hastings
East Sussex TN37 7GA
E-mail: FOI-Advice-Team-DFT@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Please see attached details of DfT's complaints procedure and your right to complain to the Information Commissioner.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

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Your right to complain to [DfT/Agency] and the Information Commissioner

You have the right to complain within two calendar months of the date of this letter about the way in which your request for information was handled and/or about the decision not to disclose all or part of the information requested. In addition a complaint can be made that DfT has not complied with its FOI publication scheme.

Your complaint will be acknowledged and you will be advised of a target date by which to expect a response. Initially your complaint will be re-considered by the official who dealt with your request for information. If, after careful consideration, that official decides that his/her decision was correct, your complaint will automatically be referred to a senior independent official who will conduct a further review. You will be advised of the outcome of your complaint and if a decision is taken to disclose information originally withheld this will be done as soon as possible.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Exemption 43 in full

1. Information is exempt information if it constitutes a trade secret.

2. Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it).

3. The duty to confirm or deny does not arise if, or to the extent that, compliance with section 1(1)(a) would, or would be likely to, prejudice the interests mentioned in subsection (2).

Public interest test

Public interest test factors for disclosure	**Public interest test factors against disclosure**
There is a public interest in knowing how crowded train services are: • Promoting accountability and transparency in the spending of public money in managing train overcrowding. • Promoting accountability and transparency for decisions taken by DfT. The current coalition Government has promoted the ideal that information should be made public rather than not, and that Government should be more transparent.	**Commercial confidentiality** These data are commercially sensitive. Most rail services in the UK compete with other public transport services and making rail data available would provide unfair commercial advantage for most of these competitors. As more data are made public, it is easier to allow analysis of revenue and of the growth in revenue: for example by route; by time of day; by year. Like any commercial organisation, detailed revenue and patronage information is of high value to the operators' competitors and the release of this information would prejudice their ability to compete. Train operators were consulted by DfT in March 2009 over the specific issue of data confidentiality and data access/sharing with reference to the passenger count information they share with the Department. It was concluded that permission was not given to share individual operators' data with any party other than DfT except with express permission. Permission has not been given

	in this instance. The train operating companies are separate commercial entities, and although they operate services on behalf of the Government, we are not obliged to release any information that could prejudice a private company's commercial interests. At a very general level, there is a public interest in protecting the commercial interests of both the private sector (which plays an important role in the general health of the economy) and the public sector (whose commercially-related functions need in any event to be exercised in the wider context of the public interest). DfT is in the process of procuring a centralised passenger counts database. The database will be a DfT asset used for transport planning. It is being developed with the voluntary assistance of the TOCs on the condition that the data they make available for the database are not made public in such a way that there could be damage to their financial positions or reputation. If the train operators feel that the Department is not treating their commercial data with care, there is a risk that they will stop supplying any information that they are not obliged to under the terms of their Franchise Agreements with the DfT. This would have an impact on DfT's ability to carry out its policy and planning functions, and would limit the information available to the Department when franchises are being let.
<u>Decision</u> To release this information would damage the commercial position of the Train Operating Companies, and would adversely affect DfT's working relationship with the industry.	

The ten most overcrowded train services arriving at or departing from London during the morning and afternoon peaks: Autumn 2009

Warning - Figures should be treated with extreme caution (please see notes below)

Rank	Train Operating Company	Departure time of service	Origin station	Destination station	Arrival time of service	Standard class passenger capacity[1]	Standard class passenger load[2]	Number of standard class passengers in excess of capacity[3]	*Standard class load factor[4], per cent*	Number of cars
1	First Great Western	06:12	Didcot Parkway	London Paddington	07:26	395	643	248	*163*	8
2	First Great Western	07:42	Reading	London Paddington	08:44	533	859	326	*161*	5
3	First Great Western	18:30	London Paddington	Weston-super-Mare	20:55	395	600	205	*152*	8
4	National Express East Anglia	18:22	London Liverpool Street	Clacton-on-Sea	20:04	524	786	262	*150*	8
5	London Midland	18:49	London Euston	Northampton	19:53	492	736	244	*150*	8
6	First Great Western	07:43	Henley-on-Thames	London Paddington	08:29	225	335	110	*149*	3
7	South West Trains	07:32	Woking	London Waterloo	08:19	738	1,095	357	*148*	12
8	First Great Western	06:00	Bristol Temple Meads	London Paddington	07:44	395	575	180	*146*	8
9	First Great Western	07:10	Oxford	London Paddington	08:24	395	566	171	*143*	8
10	First Great Western	18:45	London Paddington	Reading	19:45	270	386	116	*143*	3

Source: Train Operating Companies

Notes:

(1) The number of standard class seats on the train for journeys of more than 20 minutes. For journeys of 20 minutes or less, an allowance for standing room is also made. The allowance for standing varies with the type of rolling stock but, for modern sliding door stock, it is typically approximately 35 per cent of the number of seats.

(2) The number of standard class passengers on the service at its most crowded point on the journey into or out of London.

(3) The difference between the standard class passenger load and the standard class passenger capacity.

(4) The number of standard class passengers in excess of the maximum allowable standard class passenger capacity for that service, expressed as a percentage. For example, a train which has the same passenger load as the passenger capacity would have a load factor of 100%.

- The "ten most overcrowded trains" list is generated from arrivals into London during the morning peak (07:00-09:59) and departures from London in the evening peak (16:00-18:59) for London and South East commuter services only.

- For Autumn 2009 we have insufficient data to cover off-peak and regional services.

- The overcrowding figures for the top ten services are derived from **one-off** measurements of the passengers on each train on **a particular week day**. They are not an average representation of overcrowding on the service over a period of time.

- The majority of the passenger load numbers in the table are obtained by manual counting and so there is a significant risk of human error.

- As these figures are a one-off snap-shot from Autumn 2009, they do not provide a reliable, accurate guide to **current** overcrowding. For example, extra capacity has already been introduced on some services.

- Some of the services in the top ten list are atypical, in as much as they are services/routes on which additional capacity cannot be provided without unrealistic changes to infrastructure.