

26th April 2001

SRA Boost for Summer Rail Travel

The Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) is teaming up with the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) to encourage passengers to return to the railway with a marketing campaign featuring press and television advertising and roadside poster sites.

The campaign, which is due to be launched in June, will remind people of the key benefits offered by rail travel and encourage them to return to the network after the problems of recent months. Passenger levels on many lines, especially commuter routes in the South East, are now above spring 1999. In other areas, numbers are rising but have yet to reach pre - Hatfield levels, especially on the inter - city routes most affected by speed restrictions and interruptions since the accident.

The purpose of the advertising is to encourage passengers on longer distance routes to return, and is in line with the SRA's objectives under the Transport Act 2000 to promote the use of the rail network and to encourage its development.

The progressive recovery of the national rail network was marked this week with the return of the normal timetable for the West Coast Main Line and Cross Country routes (Virgin Trains) and the Norwich Main Line (Anglia). This leaves a small number of routes running with emergency timetables, notably the East Coast Main Line (GNER) and West Anglia Great Northern as well as commuter services from Liverpool Street (Great Eastern) and services to Devon and Cornwall (Great Western). The Rail Regulator has required Railtrack to restore full access from the start of the summer timetable on May 21st.

Mike Grant, the SRA's Chief Executive said:

"There are clear signs that people have returned to rail in ever increasing numbers since the network has started to return to almost normal service. But the picture on some routes - long distance in particular - is less certain, and the industry has to make a concerted and united effort to win customers back from motorway and air travel.

" It is our role, with the industry, to promote and encourage use of the rail network. That is why we are sponsoring this national marketing campaign - the first under the National Rail banner since privatisation.

"I expect it to play an important part in setting the industry back on track towards repeating, and eventually bettering, the spectacular growth trends enjoyed for most of last year " .

George Muir, ATOC Director General, said:

"This is the first time that such an initiative has been undertaken under the National Railbanner and we hope it will encourage people back on to the network.

"The campaign has been devised to act as a sign-post for the railways and will allow individual Train Operating Companies to plan and implement localised promotions and other initiatives to communicate the fact that the industry is recovering."

Notes to Editors

1. This is the first time that the privatised rail industry has pooled resources to promote the railway at national level. The results will be carefully monitored to see how effective the advertising is and whether it should be repeated.
2. The agency, McCann Erickson, was appointed last week to develop and implement the advertising campaign, working to a budget of £3 million. The train operators are spending an additional £25million on related local media campaigns.
3. National Rail has been developed through ATOC to explain how all 26 train companies work together to make travel across the country as easy as possible.

**For further details contact the Department for Transport Rail Press desk:
020 7944 3108**