



Chris Coghlan MP

Member of Parliament for Dorking and Horley
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

The Rt. Hon. Heidi Alexander MP
Secretary of State for Transport

26th January, 2026

By email.

Ref: CC11289

Dear Secretary of State,

Roll-out of contactless ticketing across National Rail stations

I am writing on behalf of my constituents affected by the December 2025 roll-out of contactless “tap-in / tap-out” ticketing to National Rail stations in my constituency – Dorking, and Box Hill & Westhumble – and Leatherhead station in neighbouring Epsom & Ewell constituency.

Your Department’s press release of 17th November 2025 promised “more convenient, more accessible and more flexible” ticketing, and assured my constituents that contactless fares would deliver “the cheapest fares on the days they travel” and “make it easier to access work.” In practice, the opposite is happening for many local passengers.

Since the changes were introduced:

- Commuters have seen the cost of a typical unrestricted day return to / from London Victoria rise, whether buying a simple daily ticket or using contactless.
- Redefined peak and off-peak periods have led to dramatic fare increases for hundreds of travellers every day. For example, the 08:43 departure from Dorking, arriving at London Victoria at 09:49, is now charged at a peak fare (£29.20 return), while the same train boarded at Holmwood station - further from London but outside the new contactless area - is charged off-peak (£18.50 return). Similarly, the 09:15 from Dorking attracts a £29.20 peak fare whereas passengers boarding at Epsom (£15.50) - and all stations into London - enjoy an off-peak out-bound fare. Each example is plainly unfair and inconsistent.
- Completely different fare structures now apply at Dorking Main and the nearby Dorking Deepdene station, a three-minute walk away. So, Travelcards bought at Dorking Main are now restricted to routes via Epsom only, further confusing passengers and restricting choice.
- Evening and weekend leisure travellers have lost discounted fares that were previously available, and are now paying significantly more.
- Railcard holders cannot benefit from tap-in / tap-out fares because Oyster cannot be used at local rail gates. It is absurd that a passenger can use Oyster on a Transport for London bus in my constituency, but not on the train from the adjacent station.
- Despite higher walk-up and contactless fares, many passengers still find it cheaper to purchase tickets online, minutes before departure, from third-party retailers offering split-ticketing and Railcard discounts. Contactless is therefore often not “the best fare available on the day”, contrary to the claim in your Department’s own publicity.

These examples are drawn from numerous complaints raised with my office. I welcome the policy aim of extending contactless ticketing in principle. However, the design, implementation and communication of these changes have left my constituents facing higher costs, greater complexity

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and less flexibility at a time when household budgets remain under severe pressure from the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

I understand from earlier written answers that an evaluation of the contactless roll-out in the South East is underway. In light of the serious and immediate impacts on my constituents, I ask that you:

1. Treat the issues above as case studies in your review, and confirm the timetable for completing this work and the consultations being undertaken with affected communities.
2. Explain why the extension of contactless has not been accompanied by enabling Oyster at local National Rail stations, as is already the case at nearby stations such as Epsom.
3. Set out what immediate steps the Government will take to ensure that my constituents are not unfairly disadvantaged by the introduction of tap-in / tap-out fares, despite the headline freeze in regulated rail fares.

My constituents deserve a system that is genuinely simpler, fairer and more affordable, not one that drives up costs through confusion and inconsistency. I look forward to your urgent response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Coghlan".

Chris Coghlan MP