

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
The Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

1st May 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

As trade unions representing workers across the whole of the rail industry, we are writing to express our deep concerns over apparent plans to increase the levels of service on our rail network, without due consideration to both the mixed messages this sends and the range of measures needed to protect rail workers and the travelling public.

The government's advice around the lockdown — that staying at home helps save lives, and that only key workers should travel on public transport when absolutely necessary — remains unchanged. During the period of lockdown, service use has dramatically fallen. This has undoubtedly helped the UK to contain the pandemic.

We have severe concerns over attempts by operators to increase service levels. Firstly, it sends out a mixed message that it is okay to travel by train despite official advice suggesting otherwise. This mixed messaging could be dangerous and lead to the public flouting the rules on travel and work.

Secondly, there is no agreement on how actually services can be increased whilst protecting workers and passengers. This includes protections through social distancing, adequate and appropriate PPE and determination of essential and non-essential tasks. We have engaged in dialogue with the government throughout this crisis and our members have ensured that the railway can play its part in getting the country through the pandemic. We have helped ensure that key workers and goods are able to be moved where they are needed. But we have a duty of care to our members, and to those who rely on our industry. We will not accept new working patterns that put the lives of railway workers and passengers at risk.

To be clear: We are not convinced that there is any basis at this time for a safe escalation of services.

We therefore call on the government and operators to work with us in establishing where there is a real demand to increase services and, where that demand exists, how it can be delivered safely. There will have to be an industry-wide agreement with the unions that any increase in services does not increase danger and risk of virus transmission for our members, passengers or our communities.

Seeking a blanket increase in services as part of a symbolic and premature drive to apparent normality, at the potential risk of countless lives, is completely unacceptable to us.

We look forward to your response to these important matters.

Yours sincerely,



**Mick Whelan**  
General Secretary, ASLEF



**Manuel Cortes**  
General Secretary, TSSA



**Mick Cash**  
General Secretary, RMT

