

ching a new tform

ALLEN

ORT bosses from Reading
ment chiefs this week to
e case for cash for new
and platforms at Reading

g West MP Martin Salter,
Borough Council chief
e Trish Haines, Councillor
Howarth, and transport
manager Pat Baxter were
hose who met the Secretary
e for Transport Douglas
e and Minister for Rail

arrs on Tuesday.
ers of other organisations
up the Reading Station
Board, including
ship Board, the
nsport, the Department
for the South East, the South
ngland Development Agency
ERA, were also there.

Borough
Council
ated a bid to Network Rail for
g for the improvements in
t this year, and is awaiting a
on from the Government.

plan would see an extra four
rms created, freeing up train
ms and saving 39 minutes on
eys each day.

has already been backed by
ork Rail but still needs the
ment's approval.



THE CASE FOR CASH - From left, Councillor John Howarth shows Secretary of State for Transport Douglas Alexander the Reading station case for investment with Martin Tugwell of the Regional Assembly, Robbie Burns from Network Rail and council chief executive Irish Haines

Mr Alexander received a PowerPoint presentation on the Reading Station scheme and a copy of the document "Reading Station - The Case For Investment" prepared by the Partnership Board.

After the meeting, Mr Alexander said: "I'm very grateful to Martin Salter for bringing the Reading Station Partnership Board to meet with me this afternoon."

"They made a powerful case for investment which I will reflect upon carefully in the months ahead."

Cllr Howarth said: "The Secretary of State congratulated us on

putting forward a clear and powerful case to increase capacity and improve facilities at Reading station.

"Whilst no Government minister can prejudice the bids process, it was highly significant that the Secretary of State found time to hold a face-to-face meeting with the Partnership Board."

"It is very unusual for the Secretary of State personally to preview an application in this way, and this reflects the regional and national importance attached to the development of Reading station."

Mr Salter added: "Reading station

Delor boy Sir Cliff into 107fm

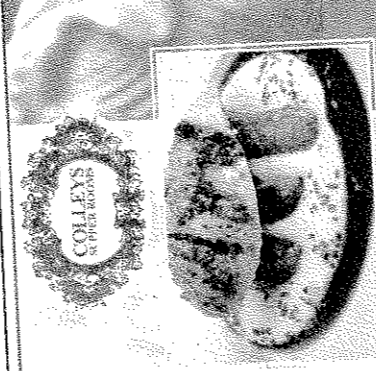


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BY ANNA ROBERTS
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Early Day Motion

THE Early Day Motion in full:

"That this House notes the travel chaos caused by the timetable introduced by First Great Western on December 10 2006; condemns the resulting overcrowding caused by the reduction in services and the use of the smaller capacity Adelante trains instead of the usual high speed trains; further notes that this reduction in service comes at a time when fare rises have again risen far above the rate of inflation; and calls upon First Great Western and the Department for Transport to take urgent steps to reintroduce sufficient capacity as soon as possible into the network to enable as many commuters as possible to travel on regular, reliable services."



BACKING ACTION - MPs Rob Wilson and Martin Salter

Mr Salter said the problems were entirely of First Great Western's own making and has met Derek Twigg, previous Parliamentary under Secretary of State for the Department of Transport.

He added: "It's a double whammy. The journey is taking longer and there is a far greater likelihood that you are going to have to stand all the way to London. They charge an arm and a leg to get into London. It's unacceptable. Unless First Great Western take urgent steps to remedy the situation of overcrowding and improving reliability questions will have to be asked about its suitability to continue to operate the franchise."

Mr Wilson added: "First Great Western has made one enormous mess of the timetable by reducing services and increasing costs. There have been huge rises in fares and the travelling public is often lucky to get a standing space on a train in return. I cannot understand the rationale for it."

MPs join forces

GEORGE HAMILTON
DOWN CENTRE REPORTER

READING'S MPs have joined forces to hit out at "unacceptable" timetable changes to trains coming through the town.

Labour Reading West MP Martin Salter and Conservative Reading East MP Rob Wilson added their names to an Early Day Motion attacking recent changes to which have increased timetable, which have increased overcrowding.

The changes have seen a reduction in train services to London and smaller trains being used - adding to overcrowding problems and increasing waits for trains.

Tuesday's Early Day Motion, tabled by Wantage MP Ed Vaizey, was also backed by Newbury MP Richard Benyon and Maidenhead MP Theresa May.

It called on the House of Commons to recognise the travel chaos caused by the new timetable, which went live on Sunday, December 10, and calls upon the Department for Transport and First Great Western to reinstate services and larger capacity trains.

MPs join forces to reintroduce sufficient capacity