Rail investment vital to meet demand as journeys reach 1.7BN a year

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Rail industry leaders have highlighted the value of Britain's multi-billion pound investment in the railway as passenger numbers continue to reach record highs.

Train journeys across Britain rose by almost four per cent overall, up 60million to nearly 1.7billion, in the last financial year*.

Against a backdrop of low petrol prices for motorists and slower growth in the economy generally, revenue from passengers grew by more than five per cent to £9.3billion in 2015-16 thanks to the increase in journeys - generating more money to be spent improving rail services and to meet the extra demand.

Britain's railway is undergoing one of the biggest investment programmes in its history to provide much-needed extra capacity, more services and better journeys.

Paul Plummer, chief executive of the Rail Delivery Group (RDG), which represents train operators and Network Rail, said:

"Rail keeps Britain moving, but our network is very busy at times due to a big increase in services as passengers numbers have doubled. It is vital that we invest and plan long-term for this ever-growing demand.

"Billions of pounds are being spent to improve reliability and increase capacity, reversing decades of under-investment. Money from fares is helping to build the bigger, better, modern railway that Britain needs, giving customers faster journeys and improved facilities.

"While there has been growth overall in the past year, these are challenging times. There has been a slowdown in the rate of growth in some areas of the rail market and we are analysing how factors such as a worsening economic outlook or continued low petrol prices may be affecting train travel."

Figures from the RDG show that between April 2015 and the end of March 2016:

- There were 60million more journeys made than the previous year – a 3.7 per cent rise to 1.7billion, more than 4.6million a day on average;
- Journeys on Anytime and Season tickets accounted for more than one billion of the total;
- Journey growth in the last 12 months was greatest in London and the South East, up 4.2 per cent to almost 1.2billion. Long-distance routes saw a 3.3 per cent increase in journeys (to 139million) and regional routes 2.3 per cent more (to 379million).

Demand for fully flexible and first class fares grew significantly over the last year. The year-on-year growth includes an almost eight per cent rise in journeys on unrestricted Anytime tickets, which can be used on any train.

Off-Peak first class journeys rose by nearly ten per cent to 1.4million, with Anytime first class journeys up more than three per cent to 3.7million.

Journeys by commuters with Season tickets rose by almost two per cent to 658million.

Ends

Notes to editors

*Figures cover the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and are taken from the rail industry's central ticketing system, Lennon, which records 98 per cent of all train journeys.

Figures published by the independent rail regulator show that the number of rail journeys across Britain has doubled in 20 years.

On average, 97p in every £1 of every fare goes back into running and maintaining the railway. Click here to find out more.

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