



Photo: R. W. Cole

Southern Region diesel-electric set No. 1205 near Ash on December 3, working a crew-training trip between Reading Southern and Redhill. It is composed of driving trailer No. 577509 (leading), from a "2EPB" electric set, and ex-Hastings line trailer No. 560509 and motor brake 560006. Such trains will displace steam operation between Reading and Tonbridge on January 4 (See notes below)

Reading-Tonbridge line dieselisation

A DIESEL SERVICE will replace steam passenger trains on the Reading-Tonbridge line from January 4. It will bring an improvement in overall journey times and, in some cases, more late-night trains. There will be a basic hourly interval service with variations in the morning and evening peaks. All fares will in future be second class only. But Southern Region warn that the line—listed for possible closure in British Railways Reshaping Report—must earn more money to survive. Posters advertising the new service state: "The decision to retain—and modernise—this through cross-country link can only be justified if more people use it". The availability of a limited supply of multiple-unit stock at this time for the service avoided the capital expense and delay of building special sets. Other ways of reducing costs on the day-to-day running of the line are being considered, including the possibility of issuing tickets on trains.

The basic service will be operated by three-coach diesel-electric multiple-units, supplemented by a few trains hauled by diesel locomotives. The diesel sets will be formed of a driving vehicle (22 seats) and second-class trailing vehicle (52 seats) as used on the Hastings diesel service, plus a converted trailer vehicle from an electric multiple-unit set with a compartment for mails and parcels, and seats for 66 passengers. This gives a total of 140 second-class seats a train. The three coaches on the trains hauled by diesel locomotives will be more modern than the present stock and will seat 144 passengers (24 of these seats are in first-class compartments, but they will be open to all passengers).

Diagrammatic maps will be displayed in the carriages. They emphasise the network of main-line connections

which can be made by using the Reading-Tonbridge line, listing the "interchange" stations as *Reading* (for Oxford and the West Midlands, Bristol and South Wales, Taunton and the West of England, Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton, and Slough), *Wokingham* (for Staines and London), *Ash* (for Aldershot and Alton), *Guildford* (for Woking and London, Portsmouth and Isle of Wight), *Redhill* (for Croydon and London, Brighton, Hove, Eastbourne and Worthing) and *Tonbridge* (for Sevenoaks and London, Maidstone and the Medway Towns, Ashford and the Kent Coast, Tunbridge Wells and Hastings).