

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT LIAISON COMMITTEE

Wednesday 5 October 2016 at 7.03pm

PRESENT: Councillors Liam Curran (Chair), Suzannah Clarke (Vice-Chair), Chris Barnham, Janet Daby, Alan Hall, Mark Ingleby, Stella Jeffrey, Roy Kennedy, Hillary Moore, John Muldoon, Timi Ogunbadewa, Jacq Paschoud, Paul Upex, James-J Walsh, Simon Moss (Transport Policy and Development Manager) and Sarah Assibey (Committee Support Officer)

Also Present: Mike Gibson (Southeastern Railway), Larry Heyman (Thameslink), Jackie Regan (Stagecoach), Angeline Verrillo (Go Ahead London), Dave Walsh (TfL Bus Operations), Richard Holland (Downham Assembly), Ilse Towler (Sydenham Society) and Michael Abrahams (Forest Hill Society)

1. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair

Councillor Curran was elected for Chair for the Municipal Year 2016-17
Councillor Clarke was elected for Vice Chair for Municipal year 2016/17.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Questions and responses regarding Rail Issues

3.1 Could we have an update on the reopening of London Bridge station through trains to Charing Cross and any possible impact on punctuality for Southern and South Eastern? (*M. Abrahams, Chair of Forest Hill Society*)
Mr Abrahams added that this question was asked a few months before there was an update on London Bridge station and that from his perspective it appears to be doing remarkably well.

Mike Gibson gave the following response on behalf of Southeastern Railway:

Since the commencement of the new timetable, Cannon Street trains no longer stop at London Bridge due to the Thameslink Railway works being done at the station, although Charing Cross trains can. Within the first week or so, there were a few infrastructure related issues, mainly signal failure which Southeastern took Network Rail to task on. The issues relating to the operation of the new points has now been resolved. Southeastern have been reaching a performance figures of up to 94-95%

over the last few weeks, which, considering half of the capacity at that station was lost, the figures are satisfactory.

3.2 Can we have an update on Thameslink services through the Catford Loop line? The short trains and lateness have been raised by the “Cinderella Line” Group and been the subject of many councillors’ concerns. Stations include: Beckenham Hill, Bellingham, Catford, Crofton Park? *(Cllr Hall)*

Cllr Hall added that although nothing can be done regarding the timetables, could there be an update on the delays and cancellations, and also questioned the possibility of increasing the frequency of trains?

Larry Heyman gave the following update on behalf of Thameslink:
My Heyman stated his regret on behalf of Thameslink for the poor performance experienced on a regular basis but assured that the issues are being addressed as well as they can be.

Thameslink are in the process of moving from a fleet, which in the case of Class 319 (which are the dominant units on the Catford Loop) are close to 30 years old. Thameslink are currently in the process of moving on to brand new fixed formation 8 car, Class 700, which are being built by Siemens, in Germany. Thameslink currently have a total of 9 in service of which 7 are 12 car and 2 are 8 car. They are currently all being run on the Bedford to Brighton Line- some running full length, some from Bedford to Three Bridges. By the end of October to beginning of November 2016, Thameslink plan to introduce some of the 8 cars on the Wimbledon-Sutton Loop. Thameslink are aware that it was a disappointment to Catford Loop passengers that they were not receiving this service first, but the decision was based purely on passenger numbers and the level of over-crowding experienced:- this new service should be introduced on the Catford Loop early next year. Siemens are contracted to build the trains and maintain them. These trains are very heavily reliant on software and there are updates on this software almost every weekend to try and deal with any faults that may be experienced.

There have been a number of Electrostars on Catford Loop which are a newer model. They are 3-4 years old and in comparison to the 319 trains, have air conditioning and 2+2 seating, which allows more passengers to board trains.

There is a consultation running until the end of 2016, and full details are available on the Thameslink website for direct links to the consultation. Thameslink encourage everybody to express their views. For 2018, Thameslink are proposing 2 trains p/h between Sevenoaks and London Blackfriars via the Catford Loop, and during peak hours, the service will extend through the core and so will serve at stations to Welwyn Garden City. At that stage, for the first time, after leaving St Pancras, trains will be going through what is called the canal tunnel, onto the Great Northern East Coast mainline calling at a number of stations through to Welwyn Garden City.

There will also be 2 trains an hour on the Catford Loop, running from Orpington towards Kentish Town. During the peak hours, those services will be extended through the core to serve stations to Luton. So together, there will be an all day, 4 trains per hour service on the Catford Loop. All trains will have 8 carriages.

Mr Gibson gave the following update:

In terms of the Southeastern service through the Catford Loop, there are proposals that current fast trains coming from the Kent coast into Victoria, stop at stations on the Catford Loop such as Crofton Park. Southeastern are currently awaiting a final sign off from our board. If this proposal is signed off, this service shall begin in December 2016- otherwise, it will begin May 2017. This service will be 2 morning peak services, stopping at Catford Loop to London Victoria.

Michael Abrahams commented that on the consultation that is ongoing, the proposals mentioned are far less welcomed at many stations on the Catford Loop, because there will be a reduction of peak services, from what is now 15 trains over the 3 hour peak, reduced to 12- taking into consideration the demand for increase with the London Bridge links on the Thameslink. He asked that this point be taken into account with Lewisham's response to the consultation.

Cllr Upex asked if the Thameslink weekend service will change after 2018 as there are no trains from Crofton Park to St Pancras. Mr Heyman responded that this is information he will find out and then respond. He also confirmed that from 2018 the London Bridge to Brighton Thameslink services will recommence, with dedicated platforms at London Bridge.

The following actions were agreed:

- RESOLVED: Cllr Hall suggested that, formally through the Chair and Simon Moss, as a Council we should ensure that we respond to the Thameslink consultation mentioned by Larry Heyman
- The initiatives and proposals, by both Southeastern and Thameslink are welcomed, the Council would like to be formally updated and the Committee ensure that it gives any positive feedback that may be helpful.

3.3 Please could the committee discuss the changes to the Southeastern timetable over the second half of this year? We understand that, due to London Bridge works, the main central London trains will be changed so that some only stop at one central London station (Cannon St) whereas others will stop at 3 (London Bridge, Waterloo East and Charing Cross). Currently, most trains stop at 2 each (London Bridge & Cannon St, and Waterloo East and Charing Cross). These changes, particularly during rush hour are likely to make commuters' lives much more difficult with the main trains with 3 stops becoming increasingly overcrowded. As many of

the rush hour trains are already horrifically overcrowded, these changes could present a real issue. (*Cllr Hooks*)

Mike Gibson responded with the following:

There is a new timetable, which usually takes 8 or 9 weeks to embed. In the meantime, Southeastern measure passenger usage of trains using software that is fitted to a percentage of services which effectively weighs the train and informs of when and where they are busiest. With that information, the timetable and train lengths may then be adjusted to suit commuter needs.

The fundamental issue is that there is not enough rolling stock- there have been no new trains on the network since 2009 and those are the high speed services from Ashford to St Pancras (which are not of use for local people). An application has been put in to the Department for Transport (DfT) for additional rolling stock, 2 years ago, of which Southeastern are still awaiting the decision.

Heidi Alexander, MP for Lewisham East has been very helpful in liaising with the DfT on our behalf and any input from the Council to the DfT would be helpful. Passenger numbers have increased by 40% over the last 10 years- the service specification for this franchise was set by the DfT in 2002 and the DfT did not take account of this huge increase in passenger numbers. The escalating cost of house prices forces people out into places like Dartford, Gravesend and Medway towns which puts increasing pressure on Southeastern services. Any backing we could get from this council would be much appreciated

The following actions were agreed:

- RESOLVED that the Council will support Southeastern's application for more trains to DfT

3.4 We would like to press for late night Overground trains running south of New Cross Gate on Friday and Saturday nights. An extension to Crystal Palace, even for an hour. At present the last Southern train passes through Forest Hill at 00:50, but the last Overground train passes through Forest Hill at 00:15 (M. Abrahams)

Representatives from London Overground Rail Operations (LOROL) were unable to attend the meeting but sent in a written response to the question above (see appendix).

Michael Abrahams expressed that it was unfortunate that there are no prospects for late night Overground trains, particularly with the Tube now running a late night service on many lines.

The following actions were agreed:

- RESOLVED: The Chair expressed that as a Committee and as a Council, the body should find out what is a solution to this in the long term. The committee will pursue this in hope for a future plan to be made regarding late night Overground services
- It was suggested that the Council contact DFT to suggest to Network Rail that the late night maintenance works on this service done every day be moved so that a late night service can be run on the weekends, particularly just Friday and Saturday.

3.5 What can Lewisham do to make the exit from Forest Hill station safer? We have seen some temporary traffic lights on Perry Vale and believe that a permanent pedestrian crossing at this location would be improve safety for passengers approaching and leaving Forest Hill station. (*M. Abrahams*)

Simon moss responded with the following:

This situation has offered an opportunity to review how it works- there is a process for assessing request or ideas for new pedestrian crossing locations.

RESOLVED that the suggestion can be added to this prioritisation process for future review and consideration for the next financial year. That will include an assessment of feasibility, cost and need.

4. Questions regarding Bus Issues

4.1 It would be useful to have a timetable of transitioning buses to electric/hybrid (and generally quieter, less polluting) buses - particularly on routes 185, 176, 172, 171, but others would also be welcome. (*M. Abrahams, Chair of Forest Hill Society*)

Referring to the written response given by TfL (see appendix), Mr Abrahams stated he was pleased with the 185 update, especially as it is a high frequency route. However, the 176,172 and 171 routes all run on routes that have particularly high levels of pollution and the frequent buses are a major contribution to this pollution. It would make a big difference to see those transferred over to electric/hybrid buses sooner rather than later.

The TfL report states that all boroughs were briefed on this and wider planning issues at the pan-borough Buses Network Seminar in Elephant and Castle on Sept 22 2016.

The Chair asked that the representative who attended for Lewisham feedback what was reported after the meeting.

Cllr Paschoud asked what can be done about the frequency of the 185 route as the bus is typically packed throughout the day, even during off-peak times. Ms Verrillo and Mr Walsh stated that the frequency of the route is 8-11 minutes which is already very high. Ms Verrillo made note of the query and take it too the performance team at the bus' particular garage.

4.2 I wanted to know the policy with regard to pushchairs on buses. Can pushchairs be left standing in the disabled area if there is no wheelchair needing that area - or do all pushchairs have to be folded down inside the bus? I have been told that some drivers insist that pushchairs are folded down. (Cllr Clarke)

Jackie Regan and Angeline Verrillo gave the following responses: TfL invite individual cases from passengers with concerns. There is currently a course around London for bus drivers based around passenger perception- it is a TfL course to ensure drivers are aware of what they are doing and what they are supposed to do. They are also given a red handbook which they should refer to, if they are unsure of what to do in different situations and under certain circumstances. Pushchairs do not need to be folded in the event that there is no wheelchair needed in that area. Cllr Clarke suggested that perhaps some drivers ought to be reminded of this in training to avoid unnecessary hassle for those boarding buses with pushchairs. Cllr Daby also suggested that any passenger in that situation should take the details of the bus driver to report such individual incidents or queries to TfL, to which Ms Verrillo agreed. Both representatives suggested that taking note of the bus route, number, time and registration plate number (where necessary) would be useful information, to which Dave Walsh concurred.

The following closing statements were made:

- Cllr Hall requested an update on the Bakerloo line extension and mentioned that the deputy Mayor had been recently liaising with the new TfL Transport Supreme, so an update on will or can this line be extended to Canary Wharf or other locations.
- Cllr Walsh also suggested an update on the District Light Railway (DLR) potentially becoming a 24 hour service from 2021. He asked that this is done as soon as possible as the applications for this service are due in April 2017 so any input the Council would want to have would need to be discussed soon.

- Simon Moss reported that there has been a lot of development in rail strategy in 2016 and there have also been a few reports from the National Infrastructure Commission. The Council is undertaking a rail study to assess its own position and prioritise its own developments- the aim here is to pick up on some of these new ideas like the 24hr services, Bakerloo line extension etc, and will be reporting back to the relevant Committees including the Public Transport Committee.

The meeting closed at 7.56 p.m.