

PUBLIC TRANSPORT LIAISON COMMITTEE		
Report Title	Questions Regarding Rail Issues	
Key Decision	No	Item No 3
Ward	All	
Contributors	Committee Support Officer	
Class	Part 1	Date: 12 January 2017

1. Summary

This report informs members of the questions put forward ahead of the meeting to be addressed either in writing or in person.

2. Question regarding rail issues.

- a) After quite a few years whilst the refurbishment of London Bridge was taking place, passengers from Forest Hill Station were unable to make a connection to either Waterloo East and/or Charing Cross at London Bridge.

However, this autumn, the connection was re-established with the following exception- there would be NO connecting trains between 4.30pm to 6pm on weekdays.

When I queried this with staff at London Bridge I was informed that this was because it was "Peak Travelling Time". This is a Catch 22 if I have ever heard one, as why remove an important connection just when passengers wish to take advantage of it? (Councillor Wise)

I am writing to express my concern about Southern Rail's proposal to further reduce the service from Forest Hill to London Bridge. I am concerned that TfL are about to repeat mistakes they made when the Overground/East London Line was refurbished, particularly underestimating demand from South East London.

<http://www.southernrailway.com/your-journey/timetable-consultation>

There used to be 6 trains an hour at peak times. This was "temporarily" reduced to 5 trains an hour due to the renovation of London Bridge. Southern now propose to reduce it to 4 trains an hour at peak times. This will affect services from all stations on this route ie Forest Hill, Sydenham, Honor Oak Park, Brockley and New Cross Gate.

I would argue the London Bridge via Forest Hill service should be increased rather than reduced because:

- the interchange at Canada Water is already overcrowded, as are Overground trains, and cuts will force more passengers to change at Canada Water. There is only one direct escalator down – clearly TfL underestimated of the use of this station when it was refurbished
- the alternative Overground trains are woefully inadequate, being 5 carriages instead of 10, and Canada Water was only designed for 4 carriage trains so rear doors don't work.
- Forest Hill in particular is one of the busiest commuter stations in London, busier than West Croydon or Norwood Junction. When mainline stations and interchanges are excluded it is near the top, with Brockley not far behind.
- more than 14 million passengers a year use the Forest Hill/London Bridge line from Sydenham, Forest Hill, HOP and Brockley.
- Two of the peak hour trains from Forest Hill are likely to be cancelled frequently, because they will be the “loop” service from London Victoria. This service is regularly cancelled because when it is running late, it is put onto the fast line, so the service will be very unreliable, forcing more people to go to Canada Water.
- I fear the data used for this consultation is flawed and may have been taken from the period since 2014. Please do not underestimate the impact this will have. Passenger numbers will have been reduced because
 - Services were reduced due to the London Bridge renovation
 - It was no longer possible to change at London Bridge for onward services to Charing Cross and London Cannon Street. Many passengers (myself included) stopped using Forest Hill and used a different line entirely (and used a service which is not suitable now).

My passenger numbers are taken from official statistics:

<http://orr.gov.uk/statistics/published-stats/station-usage-estimates> (Perry Vale resident)

- b) The Hayes Line Service operated by South-Eastern, seems to be particularly susceptible to: cancellation, delays, technical failure, overcrowding, congestion, last minute platform changes (Waterloo East), inoperative on board announcement systems, & reductions in carriage numbers. Why is this? What performance measures are there of this services with regard to these issues and how well does the service fair against other routes. (Councillor Walsh)

Reply to Cllr Walsh's Question

Performance (delays and cancellations)

In brief, it's fair to say that performance across all lines in the last quarter of 2017 has been nowhere near the standard we want to achieve or our passengers expect and the Hayes Line has been no exception.

Across all routes we have been affected by a series of infrastructure-related issues including signal and power circuit failure, landslips, weather and adhesion-related performance problems and over-running engineering works.

Over riding this are the on-going Thameslink related works at London Bridge we have reduced capacity at and on the approaches to the station by around 50%. This means that when things go wrong, our recovery options are limited meaning services have to be diverted to other London terminals.

However, while these issues are outside the train operator's direct control a blame game is meaningless as passengers simply want a service they can rely upon and we and other train operators welcomed the Secretary of State's announcement earlier this month requiring Network Rail to better integrate its operation with ours to improve efficiency.

A performance improvement plan is in place which from Southeastern's side includes:

- Recruiting more conductors and onboard managers
- 100 new drivers in training
- More resources at our control centre
- Focus on right time railway by eliminating the minutes lost that add up to knock on delays
- Recruited more platform staff to help passengers
- Working with Network Rail to remove temporary speed restrictions
- Working with Brighton University on a live information flow to be fed directly into our systems to provide more up to date information
- Educating passengers on the best course of action to take when a passenger falls ill on the train
- Invested in fleet improvements by replacing components likely to fail

From Network Rail's side:

From research it has undertaken, they have established that the first eight miles out of Cannon Street and Charing Cross heading out of London is where over 40% of all delays occur. Accordingly, Network Rail has begun a 12-18 month programme to renew, upgrade or enhance those track, electrification and signalling equipment assets which are the main causes of those delays.

Network Rail is also increasing coverage of their rapid response teams who in some cases are now able to call on dedicated BTP resources to allow the use emergency blue lights to get to sites quicker to fix

infrastructure failures or respond to trespass, vandalism or fatality type incidents.

In addition, Network Rail have set up remote condition monitoring on all critical junctions in the London area so asset performance can be monitored in real time and proactive intervention measures can be undertaken before components fail. It is estimated that without the remote condition monitoring, 45% more failures to the infrastructure would occur.

Technical failure

This is one area we can claim some success. Due to changes in maintenance schedules and the introduction of diagnostic software on trains (which allows engineers to identify and replace a part before it fails) unit reliability across our fleet of Class 456/466 networkers (the trains used on the Hayes Line and other metro routes) is the best it's ever been.

However, I do not doubt your experience and if you could give me dates and times you travelled when services were delayed or cancelled due to train failure, I'll investigate and give an explanation.

Congestion

Since we were first awarded the franchise in 2006, passenger numbers have increased by around 40%, the bulk of this growth being in peak commuter numbers. And it's fair to say that growth on this scale was not predicted by the Department for Transport when it set our franchise specification in 2002/3. To meet the demand, we are operating around 300 additional services (and the same is true for other operators serving the London Bridge corridor and Victoria).

Unfortunately, the track and signalling capacity has not increased concomitantly. Trains are bunched very close together at intervals of just a few minutes and even a small delay to one train will have a domino effect on other lines and services as trains stack up behind one another waiting for a platform slot.

This explains why train punctuality is always better at weekends and Bank Holidays when fewer services operate and routes are clearer.

The position will improve once the Thameslink programme works are completed in 2018.

Over crowding/reductions in carriage numbers

As explained, passenger numbers have increased by around 40% over the past ten years. However, save for the high speed trains from Ashford serving St. Pancras, (which arguably are of no benefit to commuters travelling from the borough of Lewisham), we have had no new rolling stock.

We have done everything possible to mitigate this. Thanks to revised maintenance techniques the engineering team has managed to put more trains in passenger service than ever before. And we match capacity with demand by taking units of the less busy trains and add them to the busier ones. There is no overall reduction in carriage numbers and all available units are in passenger service.

The need is for more rolling stock and around 18 months ago we put a business case to the Department for Transport for additional resources and we look forward to a positive decision. MPs in our franchise area, including Heidi Alexander have lobbied the DfT on our behalf and representations from other stakeholders including Lewisham Council would be very welcome.

Inoperative on-board announcement systems

Before trains leave the depot in the morning all on board systems including the PA system operated from the driver cab will be tested to ensure they are in working order. Drivers are also required to make announcements and this is particularly true when services are delayed or disrupted. However, I'll be honest and say that some drivers are better at this than others.

If you could let me have examples including dates and times where on-board train announcements were either non-existent or inadequate I will investigate.

Last minute platform changes, Waterloo East

As explained above due to our operating more peak services to meet growing passenger demand, routes to London terminals are increasingly busy. This is particularly true of services to Cannon Street and Charing Cross where, due to the Thameslink works, performance has been affected by the loss of half the capacity at London Bridge.

During peak periods trains are very tightly bunched and if one service is delayed this will have a knock-on impact on others meaning they lose their platform slot and have to be diverted to another. The control room will make long line announcements giving as much notice as possible to passengers, but I appreciate this is inconvenient to those so affected.

- c) Please may we have an update on the Bakerloo Line Extension?
Following the GTR consultation how are services performing on the Catford Loop Line? (Councillor Hall)