



GTR 2018 Timetable Consultation  
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8 December 2016

## **London Borough of Lewisham Response to the GTR 2018 Timetable Consultation**

Dear Sir / Madam,

Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) has launched an extensive consultation which sets out proposed changes to the timetable which will be operated by GTR in 2018, following completion of the Thameslink Programme. The Council welcomes proposals to increase frequency on some lines; however, these benefits are presented alongside reductions in frequency and connectivity, which the Council wish to object to.

Many Lewisham residents rely heavily on train services in order to manage work, family and social life, to a greater extent than residents in many other London boroughs. It has been clear for some time that train services for the Borough are in need of substantial improvement. One example is the currently unacceptable infrequent service on trains serving Crofton Park, Catford, Bellingham and stations beyond, which has been highlighted by the 'Cinderella Line' campaign and Vicky Foxcroft MP.

Our impression is that the changes to the Catford Loop services do not go far enough, nor do they align sufficiently with wider train services. Furthermore, other changes proposed, such as on the Sydenham line, have a sharply detrimental effect on residents. The Council's response is set out according to the specific questions posed in the consultation, which are appended to this letter. However, the Council also wishes to submit the following general comments on the consultation.

## **General Comments on the Proposed Timetable and its Assumptions**

The Council is host borough to a significant increase in housing development. This development will continue to increase in future in order to meet London Plan targets, as well as delivering additional Housing Action Zones along the Thameslink Corridor.

The current proposal for service enhancements aims to satisfy demand that has built up on the network under its current state but this consultation makes no mention of the continued growth in passenger demand that new housing will generate into the future. The Council is particularly interested to understand what provision will be made for further intensification of services on the Sydenham and Catford Loop Lines in future, serving areas such as New Bermondsey, Catford and Sydenham. This is especially important to provide interim support for growth in the short and medium term until the Bakerloo Line Extension can be delivered beyond Lewisham to Hayes.

The Council is concerned that journey and routing evidence used to inform timetabling is informed by current travel patterns, which are impacted by the continued disruption to Southern services and the restricted service being operated on Thameslink due to the works at London Bridge. The Council also supports the view of the Cinderella line campaign that demand on Catford Loop services is underestimated. We would request that, as new rolling stock is introduced, automated passenger counts taken on board are used to inform capacity provision on the route.

In general, this consultation covers an extensive area and is presented in a way that makes accurate assessment difficult; residents have expressed their frustration with the sheer complexity of the consultation and its proposals.

Additionally, discussions with GTR on the Timetable Proposals have revealed that dwell times will be extended at stations, resulting in slower journey times. The Council seeks an explanation from GTR as to the reason for these extended dwell times in light of the need to make optimum use of network capacity until the Bakerloo Line Extension is fully delivered.

Yours faithfully



Simon Moss

cc. Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London; and Val Shawcross, Deputy Mayor of London

## **LBL Consultation Responses to specific questions**

### **14. Do you support proposals to approach engineering works differently?**

Whilst the focus on later services at weekends would align with the Night Tube and London's night-time economy, this should not be achieved at the cost of shorter operating hours during the week. Early and late trains are particularly important to shift workers who would otherwise be unable to access employment opportunities in central London.

The Council feel that more evidence is needed as to who is on affected services and their journey purpose, before an informed view can be taken on any alteration to current service principles.

The Council also note that service TL1 is proposed to be a 24 hour service and would seek to understand why other services cannot be operated beyond current service hours.

### **16. Do you support the proposal for Thameslink services on the North Kent line serving Greenwich, Abbey Wood, Dartford and Medway Towns?**

**Greenwich Service TL10** – Whilst this would provide an increased frequency to Deptford station, the Council notes that this will be achieved by operating trains across flat junctions between London Bridge and the North Kent Line. Our understanding was that the civils works to the London Bridge approach were designed to remove these conflicting movements so the introduction of this service undermines the investment in this location. Furthermore, it introduces unnecessary risk to operational reliability, which should be avoided.

In the longer term, development and population growth around Deptford may require the provision of additional capacity so would seek that the Thameslink Timetable was flexible enough to bring in this increase when required.

### **17. Do you support the proposed increase in frequency of Thameslink services on the Catford Loop line?**

The Council supports the proposal to increase frequencies on the line to 4tph on weekdays and Saturdays; however, it is essential that this increase be matched on Sundays where demand is comparable to Saturdays.

Providing all services on a regular 15-minute headway would be strongly preferable as it would provide a truly turn-up-and-go service, comparable to that of other high-quality services such as London Overground. The Council would also seek to ensure coordination with connecting services at Peckham Rye and Denmark Hill, so as to increase connectivity from these stations, especially to south west London.

#### 29. Comments on the Thameslink Metro Route TL8:

This provides 2tph along the Catford Loop: This service would only operate beyond Blackfriars during Monday to Friday peak periods.

#### 30. Comments on the Thameslink Metro Route TL9:

This provides 2tph along the Catford Loop: This service would only operate beyond Blackfriars on Monday to Saturday daytimes (not peaks). This service excludes a stop at Kentish Town, preventing passengers from changing to the Northern line at this more convenient interchange than the alternative endured at St Pancras International.

Terminating TL9 at Blackfriars during peak times introduces conflicting movements across flat junctions in order to reach the terminal platforms on the western side of Blackfriars station. The Council would question why this operational risk is being considered, as it will surely result in compromised reliability, with knock-on impacts across the all south London services. We note that TL11 and TL12 services from Sutton approach Blackfriars on the western lines but are proposed to cross the same flat junction in order to reach the core section, adding even more conflicting movements. The Council objects to these services 'swapping' paths and would seek that TL8 and TL9 use the core section at all times, whereas TL11 and TL12 terminate at Blackfriars, where seems logical.

#### 32. Comments on the Thameslink Metro Route TL11:

In order to remove conflicting movements on the network south of Blackfriars and to remove operational risk, TL11 should terminate at Blackfriars station.

#### 33. Comments on the Thameslink Metro Route TL12:

In order to remove conflicting movements on the network south of Blackfriars and to remove operational risk, TL11 should terminate at Blackfriars station.

59. Are you in favour of introducing a faster all day service between Caterham and London Bridge instead of a stopping service via Sydenham?

The Council objects to the reduction of stopping services along the Sydenham line.

Historically, the majority of passengers on this line change trains at London Bridge to reach destinations on the Thameslink network. Current operational restrictions are suppressing this movement. The proposal assumes that those passenger travelling into central London chose not to change at London Bridge.

The assumption that the removal of this stopping service will mean that some passengers would divert onto the London Overground services to Canada Water (changing onto the Jubilee line) ignores the consequence that passengers will be forced to pay higher fares to use the London Underground network. Furthermore, London Overground trains are already extremely busy when calling at these stations. The consultation refers to the provision of longer trains on the London Overground network; however, this enhancement has already occurred and the trains continue to be exceptionally crowded. Removing the stopping service to London Bridge that is formed of 10 carriage trains is clearly not going to be satisfactorily replaced by the existing 5 carriage trains on London Overground.

The Council would also have reservations about crowd management activities that would be introduced at Canada Water, worsening the journey experience further.

60. Do you support the diversion of stopping trains between New Cross Gate and Norwood Junction via Sydenham from East Croydon to West Croydon instead?

This proposal severs the convenient link from Sydenham line stations to East Croydon, Gatwick Airport and beyond, requiring passengers to change at Norwood Junction to travel south. Norwood Junction provides a particularly poor interchange experience, with narrow staircases, no step-free interchange and confined circulation space. For the benefit of the 1,880 passengers currently making this movement per day, the Council would seek to maintain this link, as it would reduce the effective frequency of this journey possibility.

One aspiration of the Thameslink Timetable was to reduce duplication on the network and yet this proposal duplicated the existing London Overground service between New Cross Gate and West Croydon.

61. Do you support the diversion of stopping trains between London Bridge and Selhurst via Peckham Rye, Tulse Hill and Norbury from West Croydon to East Croydon, Purley and Caterham instead?

The Council objects to this proposal as it replaces the services on the Sydenham Line detailed in Question 60.

67. Comments on the Southern Metro Route SN3 (South London Metro):

The Council objects to the diversion of these services to West Croydon and seeks to maintain the link to East Croydon to facilitate interchange to services to Gatwick Airport and beyond at the current frequency.

87. Any final comments on the 2018 proposals?

### **Proposed Extension of the London Overground from New Cross to Lewisham.**

The Council supports TfL's proposed extension of the London Overground network. In order to deliver this extension, sufficient paths need to be identified between New Cross and Lewisham: whilst this consultation does not relate to services on this section of the network, the Thameslink Timetable will impact on services towards London Bridge and could inhibit this scheme from being delivered. We would refer to TfL's statement on this scheme:

*"Initial work undertaken by TfL has concluded a need to await the outcome of the detailed Thameslink timetable, expected in 2017. After this time the feasibility of incorporating extended London Overground services amongst existing National Rail services can be more accurately assessed."*

### **Proposed Extension of the Bakerloo Line**

The proposed Bakerloo line extension would serve New Cross Gate, providing an interchange for passengers on services along the Sydenham Line onto the London Underground. The Council would wish to ensure that any assumptions used in the development of the Thameslink Timetable capture the need to accommodate increased passenger flows to New Cross Gate in future, subject to delivery of the Bakerloo line.