

## **BRIEFING NOTE: The Future of Services to Olympia**

### **Proposal**

As part of the process for developing a more reliable timetable focused on better meeting passenger demand for the Subsurface Lines, London Underground propose to withdraw the weekday service between Earl's Court and Olympia throughout the bulk of the traffic day with effect from Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

A small number of movements to and from Lillie Bridge Depot would continue via Olympia in passenger service on weekdays between 05:50 and 06:33, and the station would remain open for unplanned use by diverted trains during disruption. The current service of three trains per hour (tph) all day would continue to operate at weekends.

This note provides background information on the benefits to other District line passengers and the effect on current users of Olympia.

### **Reliability Benefits to District Line passengers**

The key winners are all other District Line passengers, whose trains are significantly less likely to be impeded travelling through Earl's Court.

Olympia trains account for 9.9% of train movements through Earl's Court (District), but a mere 0.6% of passenger movements. Removal of the Olympia service would allow more straight-forward scheduling of services through Earl's Court and High Street Kensington and would reduce impedance at these critical locations.

The benefit of reduced impedance would reduce journey time for other passengers by a total of approximately 0.9 million hours per annum. These benefits are valued by customers at approximately £8m per annum.

The reduction in average journey times on the District line would vary for different groups of customers. On average people boarding in each line section would receive a benefit in waiting time. At Earl's Court in particular, a significant improvement is predicted in passenger delay as a result of removing the Olympia shuttle. For example, in the morning peak period, it is estimated that average total train delay (on arrival and awaiting departure) could halve in both directions.

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### **Enhancements to District Line services using the train previously used to serve Olympia**

The removal of Olympia services would free up one District line train which could be used elsewhere in the service pattern to enhance services on more heavily used routes.

From December 2011 the train would be used to provide an additional morning peak service from Wimbledon to Central London, the District line's most crowded route at this time of day.

In the evening peak the train would be used to provide an additional service in the more crowded westbound direction at the height of the peak period, boosting capacity through the central area and west of Earl's Court via Hammersmith, terminating at Ealing Broadway.

These additional services would reduce average District line journey times by 0.08 minutes in the morning peak and 0.14 minutes in the evening peak. These benefits are valued by customers at £2.0 million per annum.

### **Effects on passengers travelling to or from Kensington Olympia**

There are only five LU stations (Roding Valley, Chigwell, Grange Hill, Theydon Bois and Chesham) with lower weekday demand than the 1200 entries and 1100 exits at Olympia, but all five have no other rail services. The average LU train travelling between Olympia and Earl's Court has a load of only 23 passengers.

Since the operation of the Olympia service was increased to all day (having previously been for events only) in the mid 1990s, two additional rail routes to and from Olympia have been established following the opening of West London Line stations at West Brompton and more recently Shepherds Bush. At peak times the service from Olympia to each of these is now six tph and these routes provide faster journey times to many LU destinations. The off peak service to these stations is three tph.

The residential catchment area for Olympia is small and well served by adjacent stations Shepherd's Bush, West Kensington, Hammersmith and Barons Court.

During a recent two day suspension of the Olympia service due to a lack of District line rolling stock, 77% of a small sample of regular passengers were able to use London Overground or Southern services, 17% used alternative LU stations and 6% travelled by bus.

### **Exhibitions at Olympia**

Olympia events do cause demand spikes and the owners of the exhibition halls are key stakeholders for the service to Olympia, although in recent years some events have moved away from Olympia to alternative venues such as ExCel. The largest event previously held at Olympia, the Great British Beer Festival moved to another venue some years ago.

The existing three tph service is not ideally suited to events with 'hard finishes' where many passengers already use or could easily use alternative routes to and from exhibitions. Some passengers would actually save time by walking the 11 minutes to Barons Court rather than waiting up to 20 minutes for a District line train at Olympia.

LU would retain the capability to provide an ad-hoc service to Olympia for the busiest events. At off peak times sufficient trains are available for service from the District line fleet to provide a shuttle service between Olympia and High Street Kensington. At peak times trains to District line western branches could be diverted to provide a service to Olympia. Additional services would be resourced from the line's existing Pool and Cover Train Operators.

### **Impacts on passengers local to Earl's Court**

There would be a reduction in the frequency of services between Earl's Court and High Street Kensington. However, this reduction would have only a very marginal effect on most customers travelling over this link, because 91% of them make that journey on Wimbledon to Edgware Road trains, the frequency of which would not change and the reliability of which would be improved by the withdrawal of Olympia services.

At High Street Kensington fewer passengers would need to use the narrow exit from Platform 4 and for most of the day there would no longer be a 'which train is first' dilemma for Earl's Court bound passengers.