

RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT:

“A new approach to rail passenger services in London and the South East”

Introduction

1. This response from [REDACTED] concentrates on matters affecting the users of the four stations on the Greenwich line (Deptford, Greenwich, Maze Hill, and Westcombe Park). We do not comment on matters that only affect other areas of London and the South East.
2. Our response also takes account of the announcement made on 21 January 2016 that responsibility “for inner London rail services that operate wholly or mainly within Greater London” will transfer to TfL. The precise services or geographical area are not specified, but, for the purposes of our response about services on this line, we have assumed it includes all our trains except for a few peak hour services that extend beyond Dartford
3. Latest ORR figures of estimated station usage show that, in 2014/15, there were 7.1m users of these four stations, an increase of 5.5% over the previous year. This number will certainly continue to rise as a result of large housing developments in the Greenwich and Deptford area. Since 2014, 7,080 new homes have either been built, or are being built, in the vicinity of at least one of the four stations. A further 15,000 are planned for North Greenwich which will impact on Maze Hill and Westcombe Park. Greenwich is a major tourist destination for London and home to the University of Greenwich and Trinity/Laban and other educational establishments, with over 38,000 students. The proposed cruise liner terminal at Enderby’s wharf will also add pressure. The transport infrastructure has to be able to cope adequately with this rising ongoing demand.
4. The consultation document sets out aspirations that are difficult to disagree with, but offers little in the way of detail. Whether those aspirations can be met will depend upon the detail. As is currently the case, Network Rail will continue to be responsible for the infrastructure, and for the allocation of train paths, which is likely to severely restrict the ability of any operator to bring about the improvements aspired to. The allocation of train paths is a key issue, and Greenwich line users feel their interests are often disregarded. One test of the new proposed partnership will be how any operator pursues the interests of their users in negotiating train paths with Network Rail, and how potential conflicts with other mainline operators will be resolved.
5. We note that the consultation document refers to responsibility for services transferring to TfL, and to the creation of a “London Suburban Metro”. Whilst it also refers to the undoubted success of London Overground, it does not say that the South Eastern services will be run by London Overground. As an operational entity, London Overground is run by LOROL, currently a joint venture with MTR Corp and Arriva. Even though London Overground assumed operational responsibility for the West Anglia suburban routes last year, we have made no assumption that they will do the same for the South Eastern routes. The consultation document does not specify what geographic area is meant by “London Suburban Metro” and clarification

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

is needed on whether the services on this line will be operated by London Overground or by another concessionaire.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS 1 - 6

6. For convenience, the six questions raised in the consultation document are set out below, together with the Users' Group response. Further comments then follow.

Question 1

Do you agree with the principle of a partnership to better integrate the specification of rail passenger services across London and the South East?

Clearly, better integration of train service specification is a good principle. How effective the partnership is in practice will depend upon at least six things:

1. how it prioritises limited resources;
2. how it resolves conflicts between the competing demands of inner suburban rail users and longer distance passengers;
3. the relationship with Network Rail, who provide the infrastructure and the train paths upon which the services operate;
4. An operational framework, management structure and philosophy appropriate for suburban services;
5. how the variation in fares within the London zones will be managed to minimise any disadvantages; and
6. how it would improve integration with other TfL services, including buses and the DLR.

Question 2

Do you agree with the principles that the partnership will work to? Are there any specific issues that have not been captured?

There are three principles set out:

1. more frequent services, better interchange and increased capacity
2. greater reliability for all passengers
3. high standards of customer service

We do not disagree with these principles, but it is misleading to imply that they will flow naturally from the creation of a partnership.

Track capacity into the London terminals will remain the same after the Thameslink programme is completed in 2018. Whilst there is scope to re-model off-peak services to use spare track capacity, there is no such scope in the peak hours as the lines into Cannon Street and Charing Cross are already operating at maximum capacity. For example, services on the Greenwich line, which only go to/from Cannon Street, have already lost 1 morning peak and 3 evening peak services as a result of the rebuilding work at London Bridge, as these paths were needed for main line services. In the draft August 2016 timetable, a further 5 services are to be withdrawn in each peak hour, so that other stations down the line can maintain a peak hour service to/from London Bridge. Increased passenger capacity can only come from more rolling stock to lengthen trains, and that depends upon capital investment being authorised by the Government or new leasing arrangements.

The partnership will only have a limited role in improving reliability. Disruption brought about by train failures, or slow despatch due to train overcrowding, can be improved by the train

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

operator, but disruption caused by signal failures, points failures, engineering work, or poor preparation for adverse weather, is down to Network Rail.

TfL Overground stations do generally provide a better customer service than SouthEastern. If the same standards are to be applied, then that is to be welcomed. If every station is to be staffed all day, this does raise questions about resourcing the extra staffing required, what the responsibility of those staff will be, security for staff lone working, and the future of ticket offices. These issues will need to be addressed.

A fourth principle should be “good communication”. The present customer service screens do not always assist passengers. Common problems are:

- a. trains showing as due in 1 minute, then suddenly becoming due later
- b. trains showing as delayed, that then “vanish” altogether from the display
- c. the first train to arrive constantly changing, causing confusion as to which train actually arrives first
- d. no information at all when the line is closed, just a “welcome” message!
- e. at times of disruption, no reliable advice on alternative routes

The provision of accurate information, linked to live running, should be a priority.

Question 3

Do you agree with the proposed governance arrangements?

The concession arrangement adopted by TfL for the Overground (and to be adopted for Crossrail) brings benefits for passengers, provided TfL can continue to use the revenue stream for future investment.

We note the operator of inner suburban services will only have to “take into account” local views; and that the partnership can only “recommend” service specification. This seems to give Network Rail, who allocate the train paths, the final say (as they have at present). If the partnership is to bring real benefits to passengers, there must be some provision to challenge decisions where local views are disregarded or where a recommended service specification is not accepted.

Question 4

What form do you propose the input from local authorities and LEPs could take?

This is not for us, [REDACTED], to comment on. There should though be some arrangement [REDACTED] to have an input on all service-related matters. In the past, we have been able to provide comments on service specification in the franchise and on draft timetables. These are one-off events, but some provision should be made for a continuing input on local issues. We have welcomed SouthEastern’s stakeholder forums held six-monthly, and would want TfL, or the concessionaire, to continue these.

Question 5

Do you agree with the safeguards for transfer of inner suburban services to TfL, as set out here?

No. At a minimum we would seek to ensure that the existing franchise provisions on Southeastern as the operator are maintained or enhanced. The proposed safeguards effectively give longer distance users a veto over the needs of suburban commuters. The provision that there is “no adverse impact on frequency, journey times, and stopping patterns of longer distance services” effectively locks in the present ratio of longer distance and suburban services, as there is no spare capacity into and out of Cannon Street in the peak hours. There

needs to be a balance, but if population growth is higher in the suburbs than in the more rural destinations, there has to be some means of re-ordering the services to reflect changing demands.

Question 6

Are there other outcomes you might expect to see achieved?

Improved evening services at the same frequency of existing off peak services of 6 trains an hour, including the mirroring of TfL late night frequencies and later station closures.

Further comments

7. Appendix II of the consultation document sets out “possible improvements in support of a London Suburban Metro”. Ignoring the improvements already planned, the medium and long term improvements identified for South East London are shown as:

“Potential improvements under new train operator contracts

- *Reliability improvements*
- *All-day staffing, integrated fares, station deep cleans and refreshes, train refurbishment*
- *Off-peak service enhancements*

Long term: what could be delivered

Potential further improvements

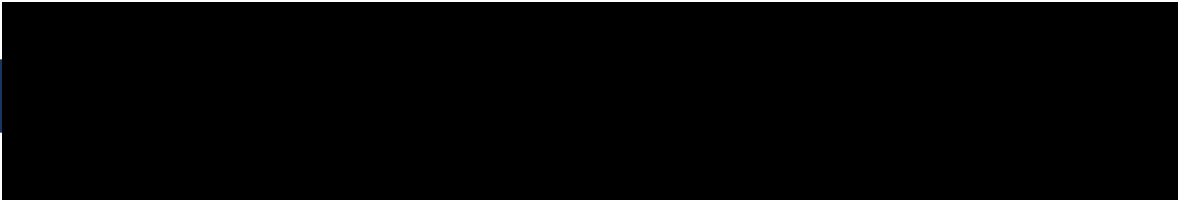
- *New interchange at Brockley*
- *Potential for other upgrades like Lewisham hub*
- *Better signalling, new high-capacity trains on inner suburban routes*
- *12-car operation as the norm*

Total end result: service / capacity enhancements

- *Reallocation of capacity released by possible Bakerloo line extension being developed by TfL*
- *Service from Lewisham to central London increases from 23tph to over 70tph including Bakerloo and DLR”*

The medium term improvements are to be welcomed, but new trains and 12-car operation are in the long term, however long that is. The Bakerloo line extension to Lewisham has yet to be approved, and TfL are quoting “the early 2030s” as implementation. These improvements can best be described as aspirations rather than a firm promise.

8. Resourcing. We are concerned about resourcing. We note the Government has announced it will phase out the resource grant to TfL by 2019/20. This represents 6% of TfL’s annual budget, and we have yet to see what the consequences of this cut may be on TfL services, and so how this may impact on train services in south east London. The Transport Commissioner reported to the Board that the cost reduction programme needed to be accelerated. It is difficult to reconcile this with the improvements for London foreshadowed in the document, which will all have a cost that may not be covered by increased revenue as a result of service improvements.



9. Fares. Fares integration is a welcome outcome to the proposed transfer, and Freedom passes, that can be used after 09.30 on current Southeastern services, could be extended to match the other TfL modes. Ironing out irregularities, and reducing single trip Oyster/contactless fares, are possible gains, but there may be losers too. Some fares could increase as a result of integration, particularly for season ticket holders, and TfL need to be open about this. The current annual season ticket to London Terminals from Greenwich is £760, and from Westcombe Park £1008, whereas an annual ticket including Zone 1 is £1 520 in both cases. Similarly, monthly season tickets would increase from £96.80 (Westcombe Park) and £73 (Greenwich) to £146. If fares integration means that London Terminals season tickets would no longer be available, this would double the cost of an annual or monthly ticket for Greenwich commuters. Such an increase is unacceptable. Season tickets that do not include travel within Zone 1 should continue to be available, and steps should be taken to minimise any fare increases as a result of integration.



10. Zones. In addition to fares integration, there should be an improved alignment of fare zones. For example, North Greenwich is in Zone 2, whereas Maze Hill and Westcombe Park, which are about the same distance from London Bridge, are in Zone 3. If Stratford can be placed in Zone 2, then so should Charlton. There needs to be a consistent approach to zonal boundaries and transferring metro services to TfL provides an opportunity to achieve that.

11. Services. The consultation document sets out some goals, but, understandably, fails to go into detail about particular lines. We are concerned that these goals, if taken literally, may disadvantage some passengers. For example, the aim of a 15-minute frequency is already exceeded on the Greenwich line during the day Monday to Saturday, where there is a 10-minute frequency until 8pm. This is very popular, and we would not want to see that frequency reduced, as it helps to balance out the disadvantage of the cessation of direct Charing Cross services. The frequency is maintained by the Cannon Street – Cannon Street services that run via Crayford or Barnehurst and Woolwich. These services also provide useful direct train links. We would not want to see our current franchise service agreement being sacrificed just to achieve a “single, clear, identifiable route” that the consultation document envisages.

12. Rolling stock. SouthEastern have agreed to lease old Thameslink stock to increase capacity next year, but the document does not say whether TfL would be able to order new rolling stock for the SouthEastern lines. We know that TfL already has authority to order 24 additional Class 710 four-car units from Bombardier as part of the contract for new rolling stock on the West Anglia and other Overground routes, but this would be far from sufficient to replace the current SouthEastern rolling stock. As already noted above, new rolling stock is a long-term aspiration.

13. Stations: Currently Southeastern lease the stations from Network Rail. London Overground has 112 stations but only owns 10 of these. Would TfL seek to acquire key stations in the Metro area e.g. Greenwich, Woolwich Arsenal to improve customer amenities, where there is already an interface with TfL services? Would TfL improve interchange facilities? How will the interchange between Woolwich Arsenal and Woolwich Crossrail stations be managed?

14. Conclusion. With no new rolling stock, no opportunity to increase peak hour capacity, and with Network Rail continuing with its present responsibilities, the transfer of services to TfL

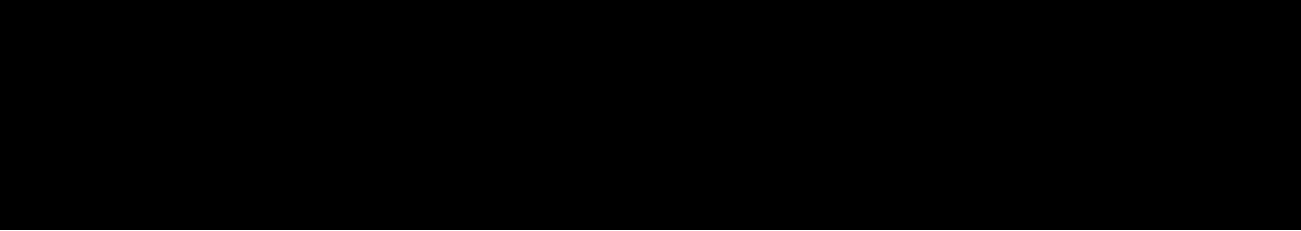


will see little improvement for Greenwich line passengers beyond the improved staffing on the stations. Whilst, if this is up to present London Overground standards, this is something to welcome in itself, it does not merit the political hype surrounding the announcement on 21 January.

Summary

15. For Greenwich line passengers, the following questions arise from a transfer of services to TfL:

1. If TfL take responsibility for the Greenwich Line, will it be added to the London Overground network and branded as such?
2. If so, will the present TfL standard of having staff at all stations during operating hours be applied, with a “turn up and go” service for customers requiring assistance?
3. Will fares and tickets be aligned immediately? How will differences be handled? Will improved ticket machines be supplied?
4. What is the policy regarding ticket offices and gating of stations? Apart from Deptford, all Greenwich line stations have multiple access points so gating would be difficult to achieve without loss of access., especially for people with disabilities.
5. Will TfL exercise their option to purchase additional Class 710 units to enhance the present Southeastern fleet? Do these have selective door opening, to ensure any 12-car trains can call at Woolwich Dockyard?
6. For how long is it the intention to continue using the Classes 465, 466 and 376 trains?
7. When the 2015 timetable was introduced, the Greenwich line lost 1 morning peak and 3 evening peak services, to make room at Cannon Street for main line services that could stop at London Bridge. The draft August 2016 timetable sees a further 5 trains withdrawn in each peak from the Greenwich line (these are to be diverted to run from Charing Cross via Blackheath and Charlton). Will TfL restore peak services on the Greenwich line to their pre-2015 level?
8. The commitment to maintain the frequency, journey times and stopping patterns of longer distance services, effectively vetoes any additional peak hour metro area trains, yet there is huge population growth in the Greenwich area. This commitment is unfair on shorter distance commuters, and there should be a mechanism for allocating train paths to where the demand is greatest.
9. Due to capacity problems at Dartford, the Greenwich, Bexleyheath and Sidcup line frequencies during the day can only be maintained by retaining the “loop” Cannon Street – Cannon Street services. Can this be assured?
10. Where services are currently better than the 15-minute frequency guarantee, will this be continued? The 10-minute daytime frequency is essential as Greenwich line trains go only to Cannon Street.

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11. What are TfL's intentions regarding the opening of Cannon Street station once London Bridge is fully operational again? Cannon Street should remain open every day until the end of services, as at present.
 12. How will TfL ensure that there is an improved interchange at London Bridge for Greenwich line and Jubilee Line passengers going to Charing Cross?
 13. What impact, if any, does TfL see the opening of Crossrail having on Greenwich Line services?



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