

BARKING-GOSPEL OAK LINE USER GROUP

Chairman: Alderman Frederick Jones, Barking & Dagenham Council
Secretary: Richard H Pout B.Sc. Econ. MILT, (020) 8348 5064, 07970 722991
Assistant Secretary: Glenn Wallis, (020) 529 2361, 07789 791224

www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk
info@barking-gospeloak.org.uk



2nd December 2010

BGOLUG WEBSITE UPDATE

Events are happening thick and fast at the moment and I am doing my best to keep you up to date with what is happening, so expect several of these updates in short order! I have to publicly thank our webmaster, Phil Robinson who is doing a fantastic job at getting the updates quickly onto the website after I email them to him. Graham Larkbey has revised the "Refreshment" page and the station details are being updated before being moved from the "Introduction" page to a page of their own. Most of the info on the Home page will then be moved to the "introduction" page which will then be renamed "About BGOLUG".

Attached are the latest additions to the website.

- 1) Website home page pop-up with latest news and engineering works dated 25/11/10
- 2) Update to the News page dated 25th November
- 3) Report to London Borough of Barking & Dagenham Public Transport Liaison Group
- 4) Latest website home page pop-up dated 02 December 2010

OUT AND ABOUT

While Secretary Richard Pout was observing the Transport Select Committee grill Transport Secretary Phillip Hammond on Wednesday 24th November, I was off to Barking Town Hall for a meeting of the Public Transport Liaison Group.

Leyton Midland Road

The internally illuminated ex BR NSE Chafford Hundred pole sign has had its "temporary sign" metal plates removed and replaced with permanent solid Overground roundel signs so even though the sign could be illuminated, it won't be. In accordance with the latest TfL London Rail policy, the national rail logo (double arrow) has been banished from the station.

Some hideous spear topped galvanised aluminium gates at least 8 feet tall have appeared by the 'up side' stairs. These gates will rarely be closed and while open the one attached to the viaduct wall protrudes out, narrowing the foot-way to platforms, blocking poster boards on the viaduct wall and the newly installed metal permanent station name-board mounted above the poster boards.

For another unfathomable reason two of the Oyster validators have been removed, there is now only one at the foot of each staircase. Between the staircases, under the arch is the new departures summary dot matrix indicator, a very useful addition.

Up on the platforms the main features are the new enamel "Underground style" "You are here" line diagrams, the new Customer Information System (CIS) displays and the new bright lamps. The new automated CIS public address is very effective although it does sound a bit more mechanical than the old one. Unfortunately there are still several defects in the shelters and the seating, compared to Crouch Hill which has also just been finished.

Shelters At Crouch Hill the shelters are fully glazed, unlike at Leyton Midland Road, where glazing has been restored at each end to allow the new CCTV cameras a view inside but the perforated steel "Swiss cheese" panels remain in the front, making the interior gloomy and passengers feel vulnerable because they cannot be seen from the platform. "World of Oyster" maps and other posters are attached to the rear walls of the shelters at Crouch Hill, but the shelters at Leyton Midland Road are bare. Of course we have been asking for all of these *Macemain* type shelters to have the manufacturers lighting kit installed for over 10 years. Finally, we have the problem of the new safety standard that says drivers must stop 20 metres short of a signal so that they can clearly observe it. This affects both Leyton Midland Road AND Crouch Hill as the stopping points for trains on the No. 1 platforms have been moved so that trains now stop BEFORE they even reach the shelter! As soon as we realised that this would happen with the 2009 resignalling, we asked for the two shelters to be moved to where the train would actually stop. Of course, we were ignored.

Seating About two years ago each station received a ration of one 4-seater platform seat unit and two 4-seater benches per platform. At Crouch Hill these were installed on the platforms but at Leyton Midland Road the metal bench running the length of each shelter was removed and the two 4-seater benched installed there so that Leyton Midland Road, which is every bit as busy as Crouch Hill, if not busier, has less seats.

Leytonstone High Road, Wanstead Park and Woodgrange Park

Contractors have now moved into these stations as part of the year late Phase III Station Improvement Programme. All that platform seats and shelters are fenced off while new electrical conduit is attached to the rear walls of the platforms. Wanstead Park and Woodgrange Park have had their lights disconnected and the temporary lighting provided seems very inadequate, especially on the stairs at Woodgrange Park

Barking

Lingering too long in the station bookstall, I was half way down the stairs to Platform 1 when the 16:17 departed, exactly on time, for Gospel Oak. The peak service had started nearly an hour earlier, so I was somewhat incredulous when the platform departure indicator changed to "Next train 16:47 Gospel Oak". A check with the timetable poster confirmed what I knew all ready, there should be a 16:32 train. I had seen the two peak sets that stable at East Ham Depot on the way into Barking but thought, wrongly as it turned out, that they had already entered service. I said to the young lady studying the timetable next to me, "They've cut the 16:32!" I was overheard by a male passenger who must have come from the subway at the other end of the station who intervened, "That usually goes from Platform 8, it will say so on the bridge". So I accompanied him onto the footbridge and sure enough on the departures display by the stairs to Platforms 5 and 6 was "16:32 Gospel Oak Platform 8".

I then spent around 10 minutes redirecting at least 20 passengers who came down the stairs to Platform No. 1 back up the stairs and across to Platform No. 8. I have no doubt that the departures display above the ticket gates was showing the 16:32 as departing from Platform No. 8, but a large number, used to their train going from Platform No. 1 never looked. When they got onto Platform No. 1 they looked at the indicator there and accepted that the next train was 16:47. The automated public address did announce the 16:32 as departing from Platform No. 8, but only once, about 4 minutes before departure time.

Over the years I had heard from various guards tales of stampedes of passengers rushing over the bridge at Barking in the mornings when for various reasons the first two trains had swapped platforms or on Saturday afternoons when trains run into and depart from Platforms 7 and 8 to keep the drivers' route knowledge up to scratch, but it was the first time I had seen it first hand.

I have written to train operator c2c as they manage Barking station, asking that the CIS system be reprogrammed so that the Platform No. 1 indicator will show when a Gospel Oak departure is leaving from another platform and for several CIS automated public address announcements also be made. It appears that c2c no longer has a staffed public address at Barking so the automated CIS systems must cope. I am awaiting a reply from c2c. I have also advised LOROL.

Blackhorse Road

The first thing noted was the fact the shelter on Platform No. 1 was in darkness. The bike ramp on the footbridge steps to the platform still has its sign, now around 15 years old, announcing that the cycle ramps were provided by Waltham Forest Council. Ever since London Underground assumed responsibility for this station three years ago, posters have been a problem. LUL removed all the service information from the shelters and replaced it with various Underground posters. The timetables and system maps were moved outside and attached to the low wall at the foot of the stairs so that passengers have to stoop to read them. The map cases are not waterproof and both "World of Oyster" maps were soaking wet.

The platform lighting was upgraded some time ago and makes the original 1981 lighting on the footbridge look rather dim.

In the Ticket Hall there were signs that LUL's staff cuts were taking effect. At 17:00, the ticket office was closed and two harassed staff were trying to supervise the UTS gates, show passengers how to use the self service ticket machines and answer general enquiries. On display by the entrance to the Overground platforms was a mobile display board with a very faded Underground poster, "First and last trains from Blackhorse Road" which showed Barking and Gospel Oak trains as well as the Victoria Line. I didn't have time to check all the times but they looked correct except for the last train to Barking. This was obviously the 23:25 ex Gospel Oak which was withdrawn and replaced with an earlier train on 20th February and replaced with a still earlier one from 1st June. I have written to the local LUL Victoria Line manager and await a response. I have also copied in LOROL.

Trains

I travelled on or observed Class 172 units 002, 004, 005 and 008 and not one carried any rail maps inside at all. I wrote to LOROL about this and was told that posting maps inside trains was not a priority.

BGOLUG IN THE PRESS

As many local papers shed staff and contract, it is getting harder and harder to obtain any coverage in the local print media, even when you are "spoon feeding" them emails and press releases. That said, we have managed to get into two local papers recently.

The photo in the Waltham Forest Guardian was unfortunate as it looks as if I am enjoying our members' misery! In fact, the Eric Morecambe/Benny Hill lookalike photo was taken well over a year ago when the Guardian reported Waltham Forest Council's success in the High Court in enforcing the planning condition on the Exeter Road Estate owners to provide the footpath to link Walthamstow Queen's Road Station with Walthamstow Central Station's car park across their land. More about that later. The more observant of you may have made out that I was wearing a Silverlink tie and a LOROL lanyard, I always believe in dressing for the occasion! You can also see one of the old Sprinters running into the station behind me. I did not say that the line is repeatedly closed for engineering work, it seems that since being branded 'Overground' we get tarred with the North London Line's brush.

GUARDIAN SERIES WEBSITE

WALTHAM FOREST: New trains causing more problems

4:08pm Friday 12th November 2010

- [By Safira Ali »](#)

Same text and photo as below

WALTHAM FOREST GUARDIAN NEWSPAPER 18TH NOVEMBER 2010 EDITION

'Teething' troubles on new overground trains



Glenn Wallis says reliability has 'crashed' since new trains were introduced on the Overground

COMMUTERS in Waltham Forest are suffering further due to the introduction of so-called 'state-of-the-art' new trains.

Overground travellers using the Barking to Gospel Oak line, which has stations in Walthamstow,

Leyton and Leytonstone, have suffered delays over the last two weeks, after the old fleet was replaced as part of a multi-million pound upgrade.

This follows repeated problems on the Victoria line as new trains are phased in.

There were reported delays on the Overground line, which is repeatedly closed at weekends for engineering work, last Monday, Friday and Wednesday mornings.

One of the trains actually broke down and had to be taken out of services during morning rush hour. Both the Victoria Line and Overground trains are built by company Bombardier and undergo 1,000 miles worth of testing.

Glenn Wallis, of the Barking to Gospel Oak Line User Group, said: "There have been some horror stories.

"Because they are new trains we expected their reliability to dip, but it has crashed.

"They are modern trains with new electronics. We assume it is teething trouble and because the crews are new to them.

"On Friday a lot of passengers were waiting for the trains and didn't know what was going on.

"There was huge disruption at Walthamstow Queen's Road Station after 8am. One member said a journey that should have taken her 15 minutes took her an hour extra.

"It feels like it is going back to the bad old days of the Silverlink trains."

A TFL spokesman said: "The trains were extensively tested with 1,000 miles of trouble-free running before being put into public service.

"However, it is well recognised in the transport industry that all new equipment, no matter how well tested, must go through a settling in period when put into a live operating environment and these new Class 172 trains are no different.

"To speed up the settling in period and improve train reliability as scheduled, extra engineers and technicians are positioned at stations and on the trains during peak periods."

BARKING & DAGENHAM POST WEBSITE



Barking commuters' dismay as new Overground trains suffer teething problems

[Sukran Sahin, Reporter](#) Tuesday, 23 November, 2010

16:03 PM

COMMUTERS on London Overground's new trains have compared their journeys with the "jaws of hell" after severe disruptions on three consecutive working days.

Photo and text same for website and print edition

BARKING & DAGENHAM POST NEWSPAPER 24TH NOVEMBER 2010 EDITION

Revamped rail route 'is just like the jaws of hell'

Members of the Barking-Gospel Oak Line User Group (BGOLUG) are demanding answers after trains are thought to have broken down on November 5, 8 and 9, leading to travel chaos and delays. But LOROL (London Overground Rail Operations Ltd) told the group that it was "not practicable,

appropriate or desirable for any company to have to debate every operational minutiae in this public matter”.

Passengers hoped that the replacement of the 25-year-old trains with a fleet of eight brand new Turbostar diesel trains just over a month ago would spell an end to commuting misery.

But on the morning of November 5, rail users at Walthamstow Queen’s Road waited half an hour because a delayed westbound train was too packed to let anyone on.

A member of the user group said: “I managed to get on and it resembled the jaws of hell. However, when it got to South Tottenham we stopped and were told to get off as it was now carrying on to Gospel Oak without stopping.

“The service has been unreliable in the past few weeks in both directions. I feels like it’s going back to the bad old days of Silverlink.”

On the morning of November 8, a train had broken down, leading to cancellations of all services on the westbound line at about 7.15am.

On November 9, user group secretary Graham Larkbey was stuck at Woodgrange Park after his train from Leyton Midland Road was terminated there.

The group believes the problem is down to “design and construction problems” which led to “engine failures caused by bacterial growth in the fuel tanks which blocked fuel filters”.

All the fuel systems had since been cleaned and one train has been given a new fuel tank, according to BGOLUG.

A Transport for London spokesman said: “The trains were extensively tested with 1,000 miles of trouble-free running before public service, however, it is recognised in the transport industry that all new equipment must go through a settling in period when put into a live environment.

“To speed up the settling in period and improve train reliability as scheduled, extra engineers and technicians are positioned at stations and on the trains during peak periods.”

For more information, contact the group on glennwallis@btopenworld.com, or at www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk.

Glenn Wallis
Assistant Secretary
Barking-Gospel Oak Line User Group