

**Barking – Gospel Oak Rail User Group presentation to
London Assembly Transport Committee – 10 July 2018
“Priorities for the rail network”**

General

TfL / London Overground vast improvement on previous British Rail and Silverlink. Difference largely due to better funding (now being squeezed) and very positive “can do” management attitude (but this now less evident)

Positive experiences of using our rail service

Off-peak trains generally punctual (but sometimes run early – despite BGORUG complaints)

Trains are clean

Stations staffed at all times

Platform shelters have been improved – but still inadequate

Step-free access has improved – but still a long way to go and lift reliability is poor

Oyster / contactless fares system – with cash still accepted

Negative experiences of using our rail service

Immediate crisis – delayed introduction of electric trains + withdrawal of diesel unit = (since 2 July) cancellations & overcrowding + bad information (see separate paper)

Inadequate frequency

Too short traffic day

Need for interchange at Gospel Oak – a weak terminus

Too few step-free access stations – 5 still only accessed by steep staircases

Inadequate shelter at stations – only Barking has proper canopy

The top three things that would improve your rail service

In addition to urgent resolution of immediate crisis -

Improved train service -

Genuine “turn-up-and-go” - at least 10 mins frequency all day (present = 15 mins, late evening = 20 mins)

Extend traffic day to match Tube – say Blackhorse Road (main Tube interchange station) 0530 – 0100

Shorter journey times to take advantage of better new electric train performance – something TfL

have declined to promise

Extend west from Gospel Oak – direct trains at least to West Hampstead & Willesden Junction (major interchanges), preferably to planned Victoria Road station for connection to Crossrail, Heathrow & major new Old Oak employment area.

Night service Friday / Saturday – at least for new Barking Riverside section

Improved stations -

Step-free access at all stations

Effective weather protection canopies at all stations

Maintain present policy of all stations staffed at all times

Review station names to better reflect actual locations & interchange opportunities (potentially a London-wide issue)

Serious study of entrance / exit capacity at Blackhorse Road in light of adjacent re-development.

Serious study of new Tufnell Park station – for Northern line interchange (and taking account of train service proposals as above).

Communications

Better information about delays, cancellations, lifts out of service and timetable changes.

Better liaison with and quicker response to BGORUG – and moderation of TfL's overly self-confident “We know best” culture.



Note for London Assembly Transport Committee
Tuesday 10 July 2018

An immediate crisis

Introduction

1. Since the advent in 2010 of Class 172 2-car diesel units running every 15 minutes London Overground's Barking – Gospel Oak line has been a great success. Such a success that “PIXC-busters” - extra trains using the line's only operational spare unit – were quickly introduced to moderate peak overcrowding.
2. Continued traffic growth needed a permanent solution. Hence electrification, using new Class 710 4-car electric units, was eventually agreed.
3. Network Rail should have completed the electrification work in summer 2017, and the new 710 units ordered from Bombardier by TfL were due for introduction from around new year 2018.
4. Network Rail were a year late with the electrification, but it has now been completed. However this well-publicised delay masked the fact that testing and safety approvals of the 710 units were also late. This work remains incomplete and TfL's latest announcement is that they will start passenger service “by November”.
5. In the meantime, the leasing company which owns the 172 diesels arranged for them to be leased to West Midlands Railway in time for the latter's new timetable commitments in December 2018.

The problem

6. From 2 July - just a week ago - one of the eight Class 172 two-car diesel units was reclaimed by the leasing company in preparation for transfer of the entire fleet to West Midlands Railway in readiness for their December timetable.
7. This has left us with no spare train to cover for failures, and resulted in TfL (without any publicity) withdrawing the PIXC-busters.
8. By the end of the week the inevitable happened. A train failed and could not be repaired in time for service, so there were extensive cancellations. These caused 30 min. gaps in service, severe overcrowding, passengers left behind unable to board, and accumulated late running as trains stood over their scheduled time at stations as passengers struggled to get off and on.
9. At the time of writing (Monday afternoon 9 July) - things seem OK, although with the PIXC-busters absent morning peak trains ran late because of overcrowding. (*Late note – several cancellations occurred during and after the evening peak because of problems with a unit.*)
10. Until the new 4-car Class 710 electric units are introduced, the lack of a spare train means our passengers will be hostage to any failure and bad days can be expected to occur repeatedly. TfL's “by November” introduction date could mean them being almost five months away, and the

industry track record for predicting when new train will be ready for service means that any dates quoted must be taken with a large pinch of salt.

11. We are also at risk of further Class 172 trains being taken away, as they will need modification before entering West Midlands service.

12. All this was entirely predictable, but TfL have no contingency plan to deal with it - or if they have then they have said nothing about it.

What should be done?

13. At once, TfL should investigate a range of options for introducing at least one 4-car electric train as soon as possible, and as a back-up look at ways of reducing the risk of the remaining Class 172 diesels breaking down.

14. These investigations must take the positive “how can we?” approach which characterised TfL's development of the London Overground roundly ten years ago, rather than the “it's too difficult” mentality which seems to have crept in more recently. We attach to this note a table of possible ideas.

15. Lack of rapid action will be damaging for TfL and the Mayor. This will be particularly so given that the Mayor is currently re-stating his plan to take over responsibility for more of the London rail network, and is claiming to be able to run large and complex systems such as South Eastern and the beleaguered Thameslink better than DfT and the present operators. If TfL can't run the simple six train 35 mins. journey Barking – Gospel Oak service properly, such claims risk ridicule.

16. More important for us, as the user group, is that our passengers cannot be left to daily overcrowding and late running, and risk of worse if just one 172 unit fails, for an indefinite period when by rights (after many months of replacement buses during Network Rail's extended electrification work) they should have been benefiting from a vastly improved service months ago.



05.07.2018 - 06.48 completely full before departure from Barking due failure of 06.33

Ideas for TfL to speedily and positively consider

FIRST CHOICE - Introduce at least one 4-car electric train now

<u>Proposal</u>	<u>Operational issues</u>	<u>Other comments</u>
1. Reduce a Class 378 (North London line) 5-car unit to 4-car.	<p>No driver training required as BGO drivers already know this stock.</p> <p>No special maintenance arrangements needed.</p>	<p>If present utilisation of 378s is tight, NLL service can be maintained by temporarily introducing 'stepping-back' at Stratford.</p> <p>Gauging and electrical compatibility already proved by Network Rail test runs with this stock (except Gospel Oak platform).</p> <p><i>Achievable in one week?</i></p>
2. Hire a Class 387 unit from GWR.	<p>Operationally and electrically similar to 378, so little staff training needed.</p> <p>Like 378s, 387s have train-mounted in-cab CCTV for door operation.</p>	<p>Recent TfL takeover of Paddington – Hayes service and delays in GWR electrification may mean that GWR can release a 387 with little or no pain.</p> <p><i>Achievable in two weeks?</i></p>
3. Hire a Class 379 unit from Greater Anglia.	<p>Operationally and electrically similar to 378, so little staff training needed.</p> <p>379s appear to have train-mounted in-cab CCTV for door operation.</p>	<p>GA could use (or hire) currently spare 317s or 321s in lieu of 379.</p> <p><i>Achievable in two weeks?</i></p>
4. Use a Class 315 spare from TfL Rail.	<p>Continue to maintain at TfL's Ilford depot.</p> <p>Drive by TfL Rail drivers, with LO conductor driver for route knowledge.</p> <p>LO conductor driver to check platform at curved platforms (only two), or provide additional driver to operate doors from rear cab.</p>	<p>TfL Rail drivers are accustomed to working 315s at straight platforms without OPO equipment – as are LO's Chingford / Enfield drivers.</p> <p>TfL Rail should have spare drivers due to delay in introducing their full service to Heathrow.</p> <p>LO should have spare drivers due to delay in starting training on 710s.</p> <p><i>Achievable in two weeks?</i></p>

NOTE - More options for obtaining one or more four-car electric units from the many current units of this type presently in store would be possible, but would be more complicated than any of the above.

SECOND CHOICE – Better utilisation of Class 172 diesel units

5. LO to revise maintenance arrangements for the maintenance set so it can be released for service at least for Monday – Friday peaks.

Maintenance set to operate PIXC-busters, or at least stand as crewed spare at Upper Holloway loop.

6. Re-schedule Sunday services to allow more maintenance time on Sundays – in support of Option 5.

Accelerate the timings to take account of lower Sunday passenger numbers (and recent speed restriction improvements) and thus enable 15 minute service to be operated by five units instead of six.

If 15 minute service not feasible, reduce to 20 minute service. This would be a 'last resort' option.



Class 315 4-car electric unit on TfL Rail Liverpool St. - Shenfield service – several of which are now spare following introduction of new Crossrail trains