

## **BARKING-GOSPEL OAK LINE USER GROUP**

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### **News Update, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2008**

#### **Rail Improvements put back to 2014**

London Overground rail users were pleased to hear that a further £54m was to be invested in their overcrowded and congested rail routes, which run from Stratford to Camden, Willesden, Clapham Junction and Richmond, and Barking to Gospel Oak.

But they were quickly disappointed to find this money was to fund a scheme once planned for completion before the 2012 Olympics, but now being put back to 2014!

The plan was to renew three bridges in the Camden area and restore 4 railway tracks from Camden Road towards Caledonian Road, to accommodate more freight and passenger trains.

This government money was presented as part of the Chancellor's package to boost the economy and get Britain out of recession during 2009. If this urgent expenditure is delayed until 2013, it will not boost either regional or national economies through the construction of essential new infrastructure.

Regular passengers are naturally disappointed that the London Overground scheme is still being "de-scoped", a technical euphemism (techno-babble) for cutting costs.

If the scheme were to start during 2009 as it was originally planned, and shown on Network Rail plans dating back to 2006, this could bring up to £40m worth of work to the steel fabricators and engineers of South Wales or the North East, to help these local economies out of depression.

The remaining £14m of government money, coincidentally the same amount Network Rail was "fined" by the Rail Regulator for delays in finishing work over Christmas 2007- 8, is about half the cost of electrifying the Barking-Gospel Oak Line. This is the last remaining non electrified passenger line in north east London and an alternative route for North London Line freight, much of which is also electrically hauled.

This project would also boost our electrical engineering sector, as the first stage of the Government's commitment to a programme of railway electrification, announced by Ruth Kelly in her final speech as Transport Secretary to the Labour Party conference.

#### **More engineering work in 2010**

Network Rail recently published its 2010 engineering work schedule (Rules of the Route) for the London Overground routes (North London and Barking-Gospel Oak Lines). Passengers will suffer the inconvenience of many more weekend service disruptions following on from those already endured in 2008 and 2009, when it was hoped that all the work would be completed before the Olympics (the North London Line will be closed for four months from Christmas 2009 to Easter 2010).

The delay to the Camden bridge and track works will mean more delays after 2012, and the electrification of the Barking-Gospel Oak Line still awaits government approval and funding. This is neither good for passengers, London or the wider economy.

#### **BGOLUG Secretary in BBC repeat**

The recent appearance of our Secretary with Edwina Curry on BBC 1 London & South East's "Down the Line" is being repeated on BBC 4 on Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> December at 8.30 pm, re-titled as "Beeching's Tracks". Not wishing his trip with Edwina from Gospel Oak to Stratford and back to be missed, Richard advises this is on Freeview Channel 9, Freesat 107, Sky 116 and Virgin Cable 107!