

February 2007 News Update

TIMETABLE UPDATE

Our new timetable – the most frequent in living memory – seems to be bedding down well. The extra morning and afternoon/evening trains are very welcome – and are picking up patronage as people get used to the new times. We are still pressing for the remaining one-hour gaps on Saturday & Sunday evenings to be filled in from the next timetable change in May – they are inconvenient, unnecessary, and catch a lot of people out. There is also a train which leaves Gospel Oak on Mon-Fri evenings at 23 00 and runs empty to East Ham depot – we've asked why this can't run in passenger-carrying service, thus fulfilling our long-held aspiration for a later eastbound service.

Meanwhile Transport for London (TfL) have narrowed the bidders down to two, to run the London Rail Concession (that's Silverlink Metro to you & us) from November 07. These are GoVia (operators of Southern) and MTR Laing Rail (parent company of Chiltern). Both will now be invited to present a "Best and Final Offer", and the winners will be announced in summer. We are meeting them both again in early March to discuss what we want to see included in their final bids.

LATE-FEBRUARY ENGINEERING WORKS CANCELLED

The track works which were due to disrupt our line on the weekend of Feb 24th/25th have been **cancelled**, so trains will run as normal then. A weekend engineering shutdown is however still scheduled for March 24th/25th, when once again we shall be faced with the absurdity of having replacement buses provided on the Saturday but not the Sunday. This is because Silverlink are contracted to provide a service on winter Saturdays – but the winter Sunday service is not a contractual obligation, and in fact is paid for by TfL, so Silverlink aren't obliged to run anything then. That may be obeying the contract to the letter, but it's not exactly in the spirit of maintaining a decent service to the travelling public. We've asked both Silverlink and TfL to look at this again, so that passengers do not suffer any more inconvenience than necessary.

FARES PLEASE!

For many years, fare collection on our line has been erratic to say the least. Silverlink are now mounting a concerted effort to address this situation, so expect to see more conductors and inspectors doing the rounds over the coming weeks.

STATION TO STATION

The developers who applied to demolish the booking office and station house at **Crouch Hill** and build flats have appealed against Islington Council's

decision to refuse permission, and it will now go to a public enquiry. As TfL plan to reopen the booking office, it would be the height of absurdity to allow it to be knocked down now! **Leyton Midland Road, Leytonstone High Road and Wanstead Park** are all having their platform walls repainted, which should brighten them up significantly. We have also had a site meeting with Silverlink at Leytonstone, when we looked at the offputting, tatty and inconspicuous entrance and discussed ways of improving it. These include moving the “double arrow” station sign from the wall to the bridge pillar, putting up an information display, and asking Waltham Forest Council to resite the rubbish bins – it’s completely inappropriate to have these at a station entrance. Negotiations are proceeding on the **Walthamstow** Pedestrian Link between Queens Road and Central; Transport for London regard it as a high priority and we are assured funding for it is secured once all the approvals are in place. **Gospel Oak** is having ticket gates fitted. We’ve heard that promise many times before, from a succession of managers, but none has ever succeeded in cracking it properly. If this latest effort succeeds – and more importantly is maintained - we shall be delighted. **A number of our stations** have substandard cheapo-cheapo poster boards which let in water and are easily vandalised; we have asked Silverlink to replace these with decent ones. And following correspondence with Network Rail about the build-up of litter behind platforms and fences at a number of stations, we are delighted to see the hit squad has been sent in to clear it. Now the challenge will be to keep it that way!