

## BARKING-GOSPEL OAK LINE USER GROUP

www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk

### JUNE 2006 NEWS UPDATE

#### MAJOR SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS FROM MONDAY JUNE 12th!

We are delighted to announce that from June 12th, major improvements are being made to our Monday-Friday train service, thanks to Transport for London funding support. At the height of the morning and evening rush hours, a 20-minute interval service will operate. And in the evenings, a half-hourly service will operate right through until the last train (apart from a one-hour gap between the 22 08 and 23 08 from Barking). This is excellent news - we have been campaigning for improved services for many years, and the new timetable is the best any of us can remember. A number of rush-hour trains are retimed, so regular travellers should check carefully or they may miss the one they usually catch. Weekend services are basically unchanged, but we hope subsequent improvement packages will include these as well.

#### THE BEGINNING OF A WHOLE NEW ERA!

At our meeting on May 9<sup>th</sup>, our guest speaker was Hugh Chaplain (Head of Rail Franchising at Transport for London), who outlined TfL's plans for the Silverlink Metro group of routes from autumn 2007 onwards. Fasten your seatbelts and hold onto your hats – this is heady stuff. Basically, by December 2010 TfL intend to have 4 trains per hour running on the Richmond-Stratford route, plus 4 trains an hour on a new Queens Park-Stratford route via Primrose Hill and Camden Road. Our service is also planned to become 4 trains per hour, running between Barking and Clapham Junction via Willesden Junction. The idea is to get this vastly-improved service pattern in place in time for it to bed down before the Olympics – but obviously it will bring massive benefits to the whole area for years afterwards. Stations will be improved and extended where necessary to accommodate longer trains, and other infrastructure improvements will be carried out in collaboration with Network Rail. Our line could even be electrified!

Obviously all this won't happen at once, but modest service improvements are being considered for the near future, stations will be upgraded in the first 2-3 years, and all stations and routes will accept the full range of Oyster fares (including prepay) from Day One. Tenders to run "North London Railway" (as the routes will be known) will be invited this month, and TfL will announce the winner in summer next year, to take over operations in late summer/autumn 2007. So for those who have a soft spot for our line's branch-line atmosphere: make the most of it, because it will be very, very different indeed a few years from now!

#### BACK TO THE PRESENT

A few years ago, who'd have thought our line would ever be numbered among the **most reliable** in the country? It's true – Silverlink's performance has improved still further recently, with 19 out of 20 of our trains arriving within 4-5 minutes of scheduled arrival time. No train operator ever hits 100% - there are always some delays due to things like struggling freight trains, trespassing, passengers arguing with staff etc – so to hit the region of 97%+ is a real achievement. Remember you can always check whether the service is running OK by ringing 0208 963 6087 before you set out.

Silverlink have renewed their efforts to improve **fare collection** throughout their system, and revenue is up as a result. Their aim from now on is only to roster guards on our route who are qualified to issue tickets, though there may be occasions when a non-qualified guard has to cover (and there are still security issues about collecting fares on evening services). Remember: our line is NOT part of the Penalty Fare scheme (despite the misleading posters at stations which should have

been replaced by now), but passengers without tickets should buy one from the on-train conductor if possible. If not, anyone going beyond Barking or Gospel Oak (or changing onto the Tube at Blackhorse Road) should buy one there or they risk getting a PF on the next leg of their journey.

On the **management** front there have been a few changes. Managing Director Mark Steward has moved over to Silverlink County, to be replaced by Tom Joyner. Fleet Manager Paul Harding has also moved on (to C2C); Stephen Hopkinson is covering while a permanent replacement is found. We welcome Tom and (while he's here) Stephen; our thanks & best wishes go to Mark & Paul.

## **PROPOSED CYCLE RESTRICTIONS**

Silverlink have received a number of responses to their consultation exercise and are now going through them. They will then issue a revised set of proposals for comment before finalising the restrictions and putting them into force.

## **STATION TO STATION**

Work is well under way to replace the westbound shelter at **Walthamstow Queens Road** with the new type of enclosed "pod" waiting area – a shelter with glazed walls, a door and heating – to see how it fares at such a location. The inside wall of the other shelter is much better for its light-coloured repaint – as are the shelters at **Upper Holloway**. **Leyton MR** has had a litter-clearing blitz, and similar exercises are scheduled for other stations. We have objected to a developer-led proposal to demolish the booking office and station house at **Crouch Hill** – not only are they two of our few remaining historic structures, but the booking office may well be needed for TfL's station restaffing plans. Silverlink management are pressing their IT department and BT to find ways of improving the reliability of the information systems at **all stations** on the line.

## **NEW WOMEN'S SAFETY GROUP WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

SafetyNet, Waltham Forest's Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership, has asked Women's Design Service to find out how local women think safety could be improved in the area. They are looking for interested participants for several sessions over a 2-month period to discuss safety issues with other women, take part in local safety audits (including locations like Walthamstow Queens Road station), receive community safety training etc. If interested please contact Denize LeDeatte on 07960 151 383 (email [dledeatte@wds.org.uk](mailto:dledeatte@wds.org.uk)) or Wendy Davis at [wdavis@wds.org.uk](mailto:wdavis@wds.org.uk). Alternatively their office telephone number is 020 7490 5210 (ask for Hannah).

## **PLANNING A TRIP TO WALES THIS SUMMER?**

If so, try and work in a trip on the Heart of Wales line between Swansea and Shrewsbury, which goes right up through the middle of the country through superb scenery serving numerous villages and towns on the way. The perfect antidote to the hustle & bustle of London. We have established an informal twinning arrangement with their User Group, the Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association (HOWLTA). See [www.heart-of-wales.co.uk](http://www.heart-of-wales.co.uk) for all the details, including cheap fare offers!