

BARKING-GOSPEL OAK LINE USER GROUP
www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk

JUNE 2007 NEWS UPDATE

SATURDAY NIGHT EXTRAS AN INSTANT HIT

The enhanced Saturday evening service was launched in style on May 26th with the inaugural 20 55 from Gospel Oak, which carried a special headboard to mark the event. Commenting on the additional trains, Route Director Tom Joyner said, "We now have a step change in the Saturday evening service. A half-hourly service is much more attractive than an hourly one so we hope that over the coming months we will see an increase in the number of people using the late evening trains. With the help of Transport for London, we have gradually been increasing the service on the route – in December the weekday peak frequency was increased to every 20 minutes and at the same time the weekday late evening service went half-hourly. Saturday has now been brought into line.

"The Gospel Oak-Barking line is a very important local rail service and we have recognised this with the recent increase in services. The punctuality on the line has also been increasing with the most recent figures showing 97% of peak trains arriving on time and 93.3% of trains all day being on time."

As the User Group for the line, we are delighted that Silverlink have made this improvement, which we have been urging for a long time – even on the first night when few people knew about them, the extra trains were being used. It's yet another step in the transformation of the line from London's Cinderella Railway to a vibrant and busy link. The extra Saturday Night trains will make it even easier for Cinderella to go to the ball and dance the night away!

MID-JUNE ENGINEERING WORKS CANCELLED!

Hurrah! The weekend engineering shutdown scheduled for June 16th & 17th has been cancelled, so trains will run normally.

REVENUE UPDATE

Silverlink's recent crackdown has brought in significant extra revenue, as well as giving habitual non-payers notice that the line can no longer be considered a free ride. Passengers have also welcomed the reassurance of an increased staff presence on the trains (though some are still not being covered as they should be). Silverlink intend to continue the revenue exercise into the summer, which we welcome wholeheartedly.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

At our last meeting, the local British Transport Police team gave us a useful update on their aims and activities. The team officers have stations as their home beat, and deploy resources according to the intelligence and information they receive. They also ride on trains (conductors announce when they are on board and encourage passengers to speak to them about any issues), and have mounted several successful operations at stations including scanning for knives etc. There is not actually a high incidence of reported crime on our line, but the fear of crime is always going to be there, especially on unstaffed stations with less-than-brilliant lighting. If you witness or experience anything that you think should be reporting to the BTP, the number to ring is 0800 40 50 40. Don't hesitate or fear your information may not be important enough to bother them – they really do want to hear from you.

SERVICE RELIABILITY

Silverlink have taken over Willesden depot themselves and moved our trains back there. Performance has improved, and cancellations due to crew non-availability are at an all-time low. However, our trains are still unacceptably grubby externally a lot of the time, and we have urged Silverlink to try and sort this out. Nobody wants to have to peer through filthy-dirty windows! Don't forget - you can ring the Help Point line on 0208 963 6087 before setting out, to check how the service is running.

STATION TO STATION

South Tottenham's tatty railings are being repainted at last....**Walthamstow QR** has another waiting "pod" shelter – but still no news on the construction of the pedestrian link with Central – now NINE YEARS overdue!....When oh when will we get decent leakproof poster boards at **Leyton MR** and other stations???.Another development proposal for **Crouch Hill's** street-level station buildings has been submitted – much more modest than the last one, and retaining much of what is already there. Details from Islington Development Control (020 7527 2000) quoting Application No P071350 – closing date for comments is 28th June.

SO WHO WILL TAKE OVER FROM NOVEMBER?

Will it be Govia (operators of Southern) or MTR Laing (parent company of Chiltern)? It looks like the announcement will come towards the end of this month. Watch this space!

AND FINALLY.....HOLIDAYING IN WALES THIS SUMMER?

Try and fit in a trip on our rather-more-scenic "twin", the Heart of Wales line, which runs from Swansea and Llanelli up to Craven Arms and Shrewsbury. A lovely run through fine countryside, stopping at many towns and villages en route. Check out www.heart-of-wales.co.uk for all the details!

++++++ Late Update ++++++
TfL UNVEIL PLANS FOR BARKING-GOSPEL OAK LINE

At a meeting of Rail User Groups on Monday night, TfL gave some detail of what they and their chosen operator MTR Laing Rail are planning for our line once they take over in November. The main points are as follows:

- We shall get earlier start and later finish (Mon-Sun) from Dec 07. (We also asked for the 1-hour gaps on Sun nights to be infilled).
- From Dec 09 we shall get 4 trains per hour Mon-Sat (plus Sundays from Dec 10)
- Stations will be refurbished to the equivalent of what they looked like originally, by end 2010 (so presumably we get long canopies back!).
- New CCTV and long-line PA systems at stations
- All stations staffed from first train to last
- Ticket machines at all entrances
- New (23-metre car length) 2-car Class 172 diesel trains from 2009. We said 2-cars wouldn't cope; they said the option was there to increase to 3. They also said they'd check that the spec allowed conductors to operate from any door.

Quite a lot of good news there!