

BARKING-GOSPEL OAK LINE RAIL USER GROUP

www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk

SEPTEMBER 2006 NEWS UPDATE

TfL: London Rail Concession

We have now met all the bidders to take over operation of the Silverlink Metro routes from Nov 2007. They are Govia (operators of Southern), MTR Laing (operators of Chiltern), NedRailways (main train operator in the Netherlands, also operators of Merseyrail) and the current incumbents, National Express Group. We have fed in our wants list and had some very useful discussions; we shall now await the next stage of the process.

Route Utilisation Strategy Published

Network Rail has just published its Cross London Route Utilisation strategy (RUS) which includes our line. We are still working our way through its 150 pages, but the salient points relevant to us are:

Short term (up to 2009)

Implement a series of performance improvements including raising the speed limits and gauge improvements.

Medium term ('09 - '14)

Increase to 4 trains per hour on our line

Sadly, it contains no plan for electrification – a major omission. We are also concerned at a rumour that our service might not go up to 4 trains per hour until after the Olympics. We shall expect that improvement to be implemented well before then!

Train Services

The extra TfL-funded trains are picking up traffic steadily, though the morning peak in particular has suffered an unfortunate number of cancellations in the last few months. There have also been some regrettable on-train incidents, which leads us to wonder about the current level of on-train security including BTP presence. This is one issue we shall hope to receive an update on at our next meeting on September 19th.

In the short term, TfL have been unable to secure Network Rail agreement to allow 3 trains per hour all day from December 06, as had been hoped – though the existing 3 trains per hour in the peaks will remain, with timings tweaked to give a more even spacing. We have urged TfL to try and get the remaining one-hour gaps in service infilled, plus an earlier start and later finish on Sundays. Both of these should be easily achievable “quick wins” in our view.

Penalty Fares

To recap, our line is NOT included in Silverlink's PF scheme. So people should not be afraid of being hit with a fine if they get on one of our trains without a ticket, but they should buy one at the first opportunity – and they should definitely buy one at Gospel Oak, Blackhorse Road or Barking if they are continuing beyond there on another train, as the North London Line, London Underground and C2C are all covered by PF schemes.

Station to Station

Walthamstow Queens Road's "pod" waiting shelter on the westbound platform is now open, and offers a much-improved waiting environment for passengers with glazed walls, a door and heating. To deter late-night ne'er-do-wells, it locks automatically in mid-evening and unlocks automatically early next morning (don't worry - anyone still inside when it locks can still get out!). TfL have chosen WQR to see how such a building fares at such a location, so let's hope it remains in a decent state. A cycle shelter has also appeared at the entrance. And we understand from Waltham Forest Council that the long-awaited direct pedestrian link between WQR's footbridge and Walthamstow Central should be constructed during this financial year, though the exact nature of the route through the carpark is once again under discussion. The link has been a principal objective of ours for many years, and we and others have urged that it be named Ray Dudley Way, in memory of one of the most dogged and enthusiastic campaigners for its construction who sadly died last year.

No further news yet on the planning application to demolish Crouch Hill's booking office & station house to build a shop and flats; it is now grinding its way through Islington's planning process.

We have been complaining for many months that Barking has no signage to its lift from the platforms; we are now taking this up again with the new Station Manager. (The lift is actually underneath the footbridge at the end of Platform 1, which most of our trains use).

Sunday, Sept. 17th – Leytonstone Car-Free Day Festival

Pedestrians reclaim Leytonstone Town Centre for the afternoon, with bands, stalls, activities & fun for all the family! Take the train to Leytonstone High Road and turn left outside the station (10 min walk approx). Further details on the Council website - www.walthamforest.gov.uk

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday September 19th, 7 15 pm to 9 00 pm at Barking Town Hall.
Silverlink Metro Route Director Tom Joyner will be attending, to update us on current issues and take questions. All welcome!

Barking-Gospel Oak Line User Group, 35 Carr Road, London E17 5ER