



**18<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2016**

**Sent:** Sunday, 18 September 2016, 1:49

**Subject:** FINAL SECTION OF BARKING - GOSPEL OAK LINE CLOSURES IN EARLY HOURS OF SATURDAY MORNING

Dear member,

Apologies, for the lack of news from BGORUG in recent times, but your committee has remained active, mainly trying to shift an unmoving TfL in its resistance to improving the lot of the lines' passengers during and after the closures.

The latest RAIL 809 magazine reports that 1,700m (68%) of the track needing to be lowered has been completed and that following complete closure work will start on lowering track in Crouch Hill Tunnel and the covered way at Junction Road Junction (underneath Dartmouth Park Hill). It is also reported that a new power switching station has been completed at Gospel Oak, work has started on a second at South Tottenham, while a third will be built near Barking.

In an attempt to update members I reproduce some my report to the Executive Committee meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> September:

*Work has continued, mainly at the Walthamstow track lowering sites. Paved track has been installed between the former Blackhorse Road station site to Suffolk Park Road (bridge 60) and between Shrubland Road (bridge 68) to just short of the Yunus Khan Close access gates (MP8½ - site of former Queen's Road signal box).*

*The lifted section of up line (Blackhorse Road – MP8½) has been reinstated and the down line removed over the same distance. The leading edges of Walthamstow Queen's Road platforms have been lowered but the rearward part remains to be lowered and there is no clear sign yet of the final track level.*

*Electrification masts, together with some cantilever gantries, have been installed between Blackhorse Road (bridge 56) and at least as far as Northcote Road (bridge 62) and from Queen's Road (bridge 70) to Boundary Road (bridge 71). A few weeks ago Network Rail #GOBE tweeted that they had installed 89 OLE masts. This must be well over 100 by now but considering over 550 are required, the slow rate of progress must be concerning. There is very little sign of any work on the viaduct section from Boundary Road (bridge 71) to country side of Wanstead Park. Leyton Midland Road station has received new passenger staircases. Just before this meeting a Tweet was received stating that there was activity at Wanstead Park station.*

*The project has received a lot of attention in the rail industry press. In addition to the article in RAIL 800 (11<sup>th</sup> May), RAIL also attended a Network Rail press visit to the Walthamstow work site on 20<sup>th</sup> July and provided a write-up in RAIL 806 (3<sup>rd</sup> August). BGORUG has been supplied with pdfs of both articles which are posted on the website. While RAIL is a generalist magazine, the September issues of both Modern Railways and Rail Engineer also reported the Walthamstow site visit and their reports had considerably more detail. Both magazines have agreed to provide pdfs of their articles once the editions they appeared in go out of print.*

*Both the Modern Railways and Rail Engineer articles revealed the following:*

- *NR's original plan was to do the work in weekend possessions over two years but the complex requirements for lowering the track at several sites eventually ruled this out;*
- *Originally 10 track lowering sites were proposed but this has been whittled down to four main sites:*
  - o *A 200m section between Upper Holloway and Crouch Hill, achieved in a few weekend possessions during April and May 2016;*
  - o *A 320m section including Crouch Hill tunnel (bridge 15 Mount Pleasant Villas to country side Crouch Hill tunnel);*
  - o *150m section of Harringay curve;*

- o 1750m section between Blackhorse Road station (MP7¼) and Yunus Khan Close (MP8½). It was the 17 over line structures in this section and the need to lower the track by up to 0.5m that dictated the longer possession east of South Tottenham;
- Originally slab track was to be laid throughout the Walthamstow site but this was finally reduced to 2x250m sections at each end of the site. Slab track will also be used in Crouch Hill tunnel. Special transition sections are needed at each end of slab track sections.
- NR is responsible for the works at Walthamstow Queen's Road station (the platform waiting rooms were dismantled by the manufacturer and are being overhauled and stored at their South Wales factory) although TfL is responsible for platform lengthening at Gospel Oak, Harringay Green Lanes and South Tottenham, elsewhere works merely involve reinstating closed sections of platform;
- To maintain existing signal sighting the OLE masts have been placed 2.5m away from the nearest running rail instead of the standard 1.6m. In spite of this, two signals have had to be re-sited and a new banner repeater signal installed. Resignalling is proposed for Control Period 6 (2019-2024) and this would allow an increase in headways and line speeds;
- The OLE being used is the NR Series 2 design, as used between Liverpool and Manchester and is suitable for speeds of up to 100mph.

### Rail Replacement Bus Services (RRBS)

During the summer it became apparent that TfL were looking to make savings on the cost of operation of the RRBS. TfL staff were conducting passenger counts (classically after the schools had broken up for the summer holidays!) and TfL Revenue Protection staff were conducting checks at Barking and East Ham. This latter raised the question of how Penalty Fares could be imposed on a RRBS when there was no means of paying a fare on the bus and closed stations had no ticket retailing facilities. Enquiries revealed that a valid ticket on a TfL RRBS was defined as a possession of a valid paper ticket, paper or Oyster Travelcard or sufficient Oyster PAYG credit to cover the cost of the journey being undertaken (in this case TfL zonal rail fares).

Informed Sources were stating that the intension was to reduce Route T (Barking – Walthamstow) to at least every 15 minutes all day on weekdays (currently every 10-12 minutes until 21:00, every 15 minutes thereafter) and possibly every 20 minutes. Route J (Seven Sisters – Highgate Road) was due to start operating every 15 minutes on weekdays from 26<sup>th</sup> September. It was already operating at 30 minutes intervals at weekends and public holidays with abysmal loadings.

Around the last couple of weeks or so the TfL webpage relating to the #GOBE closure showed the post 23<sup>rd</sup> September RRBS arrangements as being:

- **Route T:** Every 20 minutes weekends and public holidays and every 15 minutes during weekdays;
- **Route J :** Every 30 minutes weekends and public holidays and **every 20 minutes during weekdays**

Further contact with informed sources revealed that the TfL website was correct except that it had been agreed between Arriva and TfL that Route J would initially operate every 15 minutes on weekdays, but that loadings would be monitored and that if they were low, weekday frequency would be reduced to every 20 minutes from 31<sup>st</sup> October. The TfL website was subsequently amended to reflect that the weekday frequency of Route J would be every 15 minutes.

### Fares Protection

The last press release was issued on 8<sup>th</sup> June and like all previous PRs on this topic was ignored by all media. It seems to be too complicated an issue for anyone to understand apart from those experiencing the problem.

In answer to questions from Jennette Arnold, the Mayor made this written statement following the Mayor's Question Time of 20 July 2016:

"Following your meeting with the Deputy Mayor for Transport, TfL has now changed the definition of a regular user to someone making five or more non-Zone 1 trips over the eight week period before the closure began.

This should mean a far greater number of customers will receive automated refunds and will minimise the need for anyone have to claim a refund. Any customer who contacts us for a refund will be added to the list of regular users, meaning they will then receive refunds for the duration of the closure."

So far this revised definition of regular user has yet to appear on the TfL website.

#### **BLACKHORSE ROAD ACCESS FOR ALL SCHEME**

On 20<sup>th</sup> June an email was received from an assistant to Stella Creasy MP attaching a letter from the DfT dated 16<sup>th</sup> June advising that the BHR scheme had been subject to review and its programming was now under consideration, but it was possible that it could be delayed until CP6 (2019-2014). I therefore submitted on 24<sup>th</sup> June to Stella Creasy a list of 6 questions which I asked to be submitted to Secretary of State.

As a result of an exchange on Twitter with Cllr. Clyde Loakes on 29<sup>th</sup> June, I was supplied with a copy of an email from TfL (JP), dated 29<sup>th</sup> June that stated the BHR scheme was going ahead and work would start imminently. Subsequent photos supplied by member KF does seem to confirm that work has started.

#### **RELATIONSHIP WITH TfL**

As agreed at the last EC meeting, an email was sent to [Redacted] on 12<sup>th</sup> August. On 5<sup>th</sup> September [...] emailed to advise that he was leaving TfL on 9<sup>th</sup> August and that Stakeholder Communications Executive (Rail), [Redacted], would, henceforth, be our nominated contact at TfL. [...] has previously substituted for [...] when the latter was on leave.

This change of personnel is unlikely to herald any improvement in the current breakdown of the relationship with TfL and it is believed that the future rests with the intervention of London Assembly Members.

Further attempts have been made to interest the press and these are attached as pdfs. Network Rail organised a visit to Walthamstow Queen's Road for the railway press on 20 July and this resulted in articles in *RAIL*, *Modern Railways* and *Rail Engineer*. There are links to two of these articles in the attached 12 September press release (note 1). *Modern Railways* have promised a pdf when their September edition goes out of print. The attached 19 September press release has a link to an August update to our 'fares protection' paper (note 4).

Kind regards

Glenn

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