

SOUTH LONDON TRANSPORT STRATEGY BOARD

Response to Network Rail London & South East Route Utilisation Strategy Draft for Consultation

Introduction

The South London Transport Strategy Board represents the sub regional view of the seven South London Boroughs, Bromley, Croydon, Kingston, Merton, Richmond, Sutton and Wandsworth, with the Boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark included as associate members. In addition its membership includes Transport for London and South London Business. Our purpose is to promote and represent the interests of the south London sub-region, particularly with regard to strategic transport planning and direct investment in transport infrastructure.

Since its inception the Strategy Board has consistently emphasised the importance of efficient and sustainable transport networks as a factor in economic growth as well as its impact on community wellbeing, education, health, tourism and spatial planning. Through building a strong evidence base, the Strategy Board, through the South London Partnership, has sought to influence TfL's Sub Regional Transport Plan and has developed its own transport priorities for the sub region. These priorities are:

- Enhancing Orbital Travel
- Integrating Travel Options
- Improving Supply
- Influencing Demand

We welcome the opportunity to respond to Network Rail's draft Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for London and the South East.

As a preliminary comment, we note that, as with the Mayor's Transport Strategy and planning in London generally, the Draft RUS has a presumption against major development in South London. While some of our Boroughs are seeking to manage growth and overdevelopment locally we also believe that the levels of growth that have been assumed for some of the key urban centres in South London are too limited given, for example, the significant development within Croydon that is planned and the work that is being undertaken more widely by Boroughs such as Kingston. With the draft RUS predicated on low growth forecasts, the capacity issues on the rail network will be much greater than it states; consequently, there is a real risk that the document will fail to meet the challenge of delivering the required accessibility to employment, education and tourism opportunities in South London.

Our more detailed comments are set out below. We have presented our comments using the section numbering in the draft RUS document.

5.4.9 London Bridge Cordon

We welcome the proposals for platform and train lengthening to provide 12-car capability on inner services to London Bridge, which will go a considerable way to meeting current and forecast demand on these corridors. We are disappointed, however, that Network Rail is of the view that no frequency increase can be accommodated into London Bridge.

7.8 Gap E: Brighton Main Line

We are pleased to note the commitment to platform and train lengthening which is consistent with the Mayor's Sub Regional Transport Plan for South London. The introduction of calls at Clapham Junction on some peak Gatwick Express services is also welcomed, as this will improve access to employment at Gatwick Airport for South London residents and also enhance the attractiveness of the Clapham Junction area for employment.

We are disappointed that the Draft RUS contains no infrastructure proposals to address the forecast peak capacity gap on the Line. Whilst we acknowledge that there are currently funding and/or technological issues with potential solutions, we believe that these options should all remain open and under review until such time as technology is proven and funding more readily available.

7.9 Gap F: South West Main Line

We are very pleased with the proposals to use the former Waterloo International platforms for 10-car inner suburban operations. The Strategy Board has been supportive of the Waterloo International platforms being reintroduced for suburban services but is concerned that without confirmed funding achieving the proposed 2015 date will be difficult.

We note the options for longer formations on longer-distance trains. We would be concerned if this led to any adverse impact on the reliability of inner suburban services.

7.10 Gap G: Windsor Lines

We note the commitment to 10-car formations and to an additional train in the peak hour and also the strong case for additional trains in the longer term. As with the proposals for Airtrack, the key issue is the impact on level crossing downtimes on the Richmond Line. There is a pressing requirement for a technological solution to be identified and funded so that the benefits accruing from increased train frequencies are not offset by disbenefits from road user delays affecting local economies en route.

Greater consideration of the future enhancement of the Kingston Loop line and its services should be included to reflect the growing importance of Kingston as a sub regional centre.

We are also concerned that while the impact of the Olympics is recognised the potential impact of the 2015 Rugby World Cup on the Windsor Lines and Twickenham Station in particular has not been addressed.

7.11 Gap H: Elephant & Castle Corridor

We note the proposals to terminate Wimbledon Loop trains at Blackfriars rather than running through to St Pancras and beyond. While we acknowledge the technical argument put forward for this arrangement, we would point out that residents have made housing and employment location decisions on the basis of the current transport network and these individuals will be disadvantaged by the need to interchange onto what will be crowded through trains. Future extensions of Crossrail 2 could provide an alternative routing, but the loss of direct Thameslink services will be even more acute if Crossrail 2 becomes a longer term project.

7.12: Gap I: Orbital Routes

The Strategy Board is a long standing advocate of improved orbital services by all modes and we recognise the benefits to the South London economy that have already been delivered by the extension of the Overground. We fully support the planned extension to Clapham Junction and believe that there is a good case for further development, for example by linking through Clapham Junction to the West London Line and by extending the existing West Croydon Overground service to Sutton.

Importantly while enabling easier access to Docklands and the City and increasing opportunities for travel into the Central Activities Zone these initiatives also enhance travel on the East London Line corridor for jobs, leisure and retail to the west of the sub region. The issues associated with their delivery are primarily operational in terms of timetabling and rolling stock, with limited infrastructure requirements. We are therefore disappointed that there is no mention of new orbital proposals in the Draft RUS.

8.2 Gap J: Access to Heathrow Airport

We agree that the difficulty in accessing Heathrow Airport, other than from central London, is a strategic gap and we continue to be concerned about access from South London, notwithstanding the recent Feltham Gateway improvements.

We believe that Airtrack is the best way of significantly improving the accessibility of Heathrow from South London but, as commented previously, the issue of level crossing downtime must be resolved as an integral element of the overall scheme.

Proposals for the Old Oak Common Interchange offer a secondary option for access to Heathrow which we welcome. This would provide significantly enhanced access to employment opportunities at Heathrow from South London.

8.3 Gap K: Maximising the Benefits of Crossrail

We welcome the proposals for Crossrail and the benefits it will deliver overall for London. However, there will be only limited impact on the Boroughs in the South London sub region.

8.4 Gap L: Future Crossrail 2

We welcome the safeguarding of the Chelsea – Hackney tunnel alignment for Crossrail 2, although practical consideration must be given to issues of blight if programmes are delayed further. However we would urge that work continues to develop the full route into South London, particularly to Clapham Junction, Wimbledon and possibly Croydon, as a high priority so that local planning decisions can reflect and optimise future rail investment.

8.5 Gap M: Implications of High Speed 2

We strongly support proposals for a rail interchange at Old Oak Common which offers the potential to create a number of links from South London to High Speed 2, the Great Western Main Line and Crossrail. We would welcome links not only from Clapham Junction via the West London Line and from Richmond via the North London Line but also direct services from key locations such as East Croydon.

9. Freight

We note and welcome the proposals to improve freight routes to reduce running via the London rail network. We support increased use of rail for freight movements, subject of course to no adverse impact on passenger services, and would welcome proposals for establishment of a road-rail freight interchange in proximity to the M25 motorway.

General Comments on Gaps and Omissions

We are concerned that the RUS gives limited consideration to the stations across the network and particularly in South London. With increasing emphasis on achieving seamless interchange between lines and modes we are surprised that more thought hasn't been given to the level of investment required to ensure the free flow of passengers through our city. In many instances the fabric of the stations in our sub region need considerable investment and in particular meeting modern accessibility standards should be a higher priority.

The opportunity for developing and investing in new technology, particularly signalling, to achieve frequent metro style headways, needs to be re-examined in the time period of the RUS, recognising the increasing pace of technology change in railways elsewhere in the world.