

Southwark Rail Users Group (SRUG)

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Comments on the London and South East Route Utilisation Strategy

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Introduction

These are the comments of the Southwark Rail Users Group (SRUG) on the London & SE RUS, and concern the routes and stations in zone 2 in the inner south London area of Southwark, serving Peckham Rye, Nunhead, South Bermondsey, Queens Road Peckham, Denmark Hill, East Dulwich and North Dulwich. We take Peckham Rye as our focal point as all services through those other stations pass through this station. Peckham Rye itself has a high footfall as it is a major gateway for Peckham Town Centre. It also has a wide catchment in the local residential neighbourhoods, linked to the station by several bus routes.

Whilst we appreciate there is the South London RUS for considerations for our area, it is notable that there is no plan in any RUS to address the two large transport 'black holes' identified by Southwark Council in its transport plan, ie between Peckham Rye Park and Dulwich Park, and the North Peckham area.

The Cross River Tram plan, now shelved, would have met the gap in North Peckham. Although there has been a longstanding (i.e. pre World War Two) aspiration to extend the Tube to our area of London, this has remained only an aspiration. However, the distances and traffic congestion are too great for many people to make bus a competitive mode of transport into central London, especially at peak times. In the absence of the Tube, rail services in our area have become the equivalent of our Tube and vital for access to employment, regeneration and development, and social and cultural life.

Need for Integrated planning and management

Our overarching comment therefore is the need for integration in planning and delivery of rail services in our area. Transport services for inner south London are of course part of an integrated network. The RUS acknowledges this, but we stress that this point is vital to travel from inner south London. We feel that this is not yet the practice with several different rail organisations involved - DfT Rail Group, TfL London Rail, Southern Rail, South East Rail, London Overground and the Thameslink franchise. The integration of inner zone 2 rail needs seems to be on no planning and delivery agenda. TfL attends to orbital rail interests, which has resulted in the impending loss of the valuable South London Line, and the other agencies attend to the longer distance commuter needs for separately-provided services passing through our area. These can have a very considerable impact on all SRUG stations. For example for 4tph trains to London Victoria, there is at present a gap of just 5 minutes and then one of 25. For trains to London Bridge, sometimes the timetable produces gaps as varied as 5 minutes and 20 minutes. There is a sharp need for further

integration between all the agencies concerned - particularly on publicising, timetabling and planning of services.

The impact of the cut of the South London Line (SLL)

We note that the RUS states "On the South London Line, service changes as part of the London Overground extension to Clapham Junction are planned, and the RUS considers that the post-Thameslink Programme timetable is likely to provide the opportunity for a four trains per hour all day service to/from London Victoria at Denmark Hill and Peckham Rye". It points out this leaves a considerable gap of several years between the withdrawal of the South London Line (SLL) service in 2012 and the completion of the Thameslink Programme works at London Bridge which is not likely to be earlier than 2019. This disruption in services to Victoria is just not acceptable.

We believe that there has been a failure to grasp the significance of the role that the SLL plays, because of the lack of focus on the integration of rail travel in inner south London. It provides both radial and orbital links within the area as does the Tube in inner north London. This highlights an issue vital to inner south London travel - that frequent and regular connections to the central London stations London Victoria, Blackfriars, St Pancras and London Bridge, as well as the radial services between Victoria and London Bridge, are vital for access to employment, area regeneration, and social and cultural mobility.

Whilst we welcome the new journey opportunities and regular services promised by the extension of the overground rail East London Line (ELL) to Clapham Junction via Peckham Rye in 2012, they are not replacements for the vital links into central London via Victoria and London Bridge. The restoration of the South London Line link between London Bridge and Victoria should remain as a firm objective in the plan when the works at London Bridge are completed. In the meantime, the gaps in services to Victoria, that the loss in 2012 of the South London Line will cause, cannot be left for several years. **There must be adaptations to timetables of the existing services to fill these gaps from 2012.**

Inner South London Rail Service Needs

Connecting with central London

Bearing in mind that the rail overground services act as inner south London's Tube, and taking Peckham Rye as our template station because all services concerning SRUG pass through it, we need seven-day services into and out of central London, and with parity with the Tube for first & last trains on all our services. We are pleased with recent time tabling improvements to the services to and from London Bridge which move in this direction. We seek further improvements to provide these for all our services, and also to improve regularity and frequency by providing:

off-peak services:

- 6 trains per hour (tph) to London Bridge at 10 minute intervals;
- 4 tph to London Victoria at 15 minute intervals;
- 4 tph via Denmark Hill & Elephant & Castle to Blackfriars & St Pancras at 15 minute intervals;

peak-time services:

there is a clear need for additional capacity, with daily reports of overcrowding where passengers cannot board trains in the morning peak. Train lengthening and/or additional services need to be provided to address this.

Southward destinations

Existing services to south London, Kent, Surrey and Sussex destinations need to be maintained. In addition there needs to be:

- restoration of the 2 tph at 30 minute intervals to East Croydon; this is a vital link in itself, but also as a connection to and from Gatwick Airport, Brighton and the South Coast.

We are very pleased to see the need for a seven day railway in Proposal 12 of the Mayor's Transport Strategy, supported also by Southern Rail at their recent seminar.

Interchanges

Despite the positive aspects of the East London Line second extension in 2012 going through Peckham Rye to Clapham Junction, the picture for travelling westward from SRUG stations on the London Overground is less impressive. Major opportunities for integration have been missed

- at Clapham High St: the potential of the interchange between Clapham High St and the nearby Clapham North Underground Station needs to be fully realised. This interchange could be important for SRUG passengers travelling to destinations on the Northern Line south of Clapham. If the Victoria-Dartford services were also to stop at Clapham High St, the interchange would have even more potential.
- at Brixton: the potential for interchange with the South London Line as it crosses above Brixton station also needs to be realised giving access from and to Brixton from the east – Camberwell, Peckham, London Bridge and Docklands with the new ELL, and also another access to the underground (Victoria Line) reducing the load on Victoria station.
- at Battersea Park: because of platform lengthening, Battersea Park will no longer be served by South London line trains but is potentially close to the future Nine Elms station on the Northern line extension. Together with the proximity to Queenstown Rd, there is an opportunity for a three way interchange.
- at Clapham Junction: the possibility of Gatwick Express services stopping at Clapham Junction and the advent of Airtrack to Heathrow provide more potential links with the new ELL from 2012. For rail travellers from inner south London, these interchanges would be welcome, unlike the very unwelcome and unattractive interchange suggested by TfL for Waterloo or London Victoria.

Publicity about services

We are very pleased with the resumption of services across the river to St Pancras and beyond, and note the Thameslink Programme proposal that Catford Thameslink services will run via Nunhead, Peckham Rye and Denmark Hill through the Thameslink core and across the river to St Pancras and beyond, continuing this essential link. This link is, however, woefully under-advertised. As we compose this response, the boards at Peckham Rye station do not show these services travelling beyond London Blackfriars, their previous terminus.

The train pocket timetable booklet which brought together all the rail services through Peckham Rye and other SRUG stations was discontinued in 2002 by the two rail companies, and we were without any easily accessible integrated timetable information for many years. We are very glad to see that new timetable booklets on these lines are recently available again. Information like this is essential for rail passengers to make good use of the various services to organise their journeys at short notice. Many passengers are unaware of the rail travel opportunities available to them and there is much scope for improving this. We would urge all the rail companies to work with us to develop much more effective publicity and information

about the services through these stations. We suggest also that working with rail user groups and other stakeholders to improve service publicity and information becomes part of the franchise requirements.

Station names are also significant in encouraging rail use. Denmark Hill is a very busy station with lots of visitors because of the hospitals and educational institutions in that neighbourhood. The SE5 Forum in Camberwell proposes that Denmark Hill station should be marketed as 'Denmark Hill for Camberwell' as many people do not see the relationship through the current station name, and it is important to get Camberwell on transport maps. We agree and support that.

Ticketing

A related integration point is on ticketing. Despite the cumbersome fudges of the Oyster Extension Permit, we were delighted to see the extension of Oyster onto National Rail in Greater London and believe this has been a material boost to transport options in our area and to the attractiveness of rail travel from our area. We stress the importance of full integration between Oyster and any future extra-London ITSO smartcard schemes for those from our area who use National Rail services to travel outwards from inner south London.

Passenger growth by mode by station

We are very surprised to read that 'passenger growth by mode on a station-by-station basis is beyond the RUS scope'. Surely this has implications for stations such as Peckham Rye, that have had or will have their services added to in terms of operators with the advent of London Overground? How can a clear picture of return on investment be built up if RUSs do not have by mode / by station breakdowns?

Bakerloo Line extension

It is notable that only one of the 'Emerging conclusions', that on the extension of the Bakerloo line from Elephant and Castle, relates to south London at all and even that is likely to be decades into the future. We are pleased to note that the RUS supports this extension as, to quote from 7.11.4, it 'would reduce the capacity gap on National Rail lines'. Other key factors supporting this strong case for the Bakerloo line extension into south London are that it would provide access through central London without overloading the central section of the Bakerloo line, and at the same time provide a benefit of relieving National Rail lines to Hayes. This needs to be brought up the agenda by all parties concerned.

The minutes of the Southwark Council Public Transport Consultative Forum of 8th December 2010, concerning the Bakerloo Line extension, support these points:

- Strategic modelling has been undertaken; this has shown that it is possible to extend the Bakerloo line without detrimentally impacting on the level of service in the central section;
- The best business case is made by extending to the Hayes Line as this has the potential to replace and thus free up peak hour rail paths into London Bridge

SRUG is extremely keen to see development of this option, which is particularly fitting as the RUS itself cites that the Bakerloo line extension would offer benefits to both the National Rail network and the Underground (not to mention, of course, passengers). We would urge that arrangements are set in hand as soon as possible to bring together the rail organisations, rail user groups and other local agencies most concerned to start the preparations for planning the extension.

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