

Southwark Rail Users Group

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Response to DfT Consultation on the South Eastern franchise

September 2012

The Southwark Rail Users Group (SRUG) covers train services serving stations at Peckham Rye; Nunhead; South Bermondsey; Queen's Road, Peckham; Denmark Hill; East Dulwich and North Dulwich. There are some 600 users on the SRUG mailing list, many linked to members of their families and friends who are also users of the local railways.

The terms of reference of SRUG include keeping track of planning for rail services and to lobby for improvements to services and stations. Peckham Vision is the local community group working to improve Peckham town centre.

It is convenient to consider for the purposes of the DfT Consultation all train services through Peckham Rye station, since that station is common to the services through the other stations listed above. These are:

- South London Line (SLL) Metro services provided by Southern between London Bridge and Victoria – to be withdrawn in December, 2012 and replaced by LOROL services to Clapham Junction *via* Queen's Road, Peckham and the East London Line
- First Capital Connect (FCC) Thameslink/Southeastern services *via* Elephant & Castle, Blackfriars, St Pancras and beyond
- Southeastern services to Victoria *via* Nunhead
- Southern Metro services *via* Tulse Hill, North & East Dulwich to London Bridge.

6. Schemes, stakeholders and other initiatives

Community Rail Partnerships

Q.1 What improvements do stakeholders believe could be made on the combined franchise through partnership working between Network Rail and the new operator?

Para 6.4 asks bidders to indicate how they propose to work with communities over the life of the franchise. This franchise manages two stations in our area – Denmark Hill and Nunhead. Denmark Hill is in the middle of major works under Access for All and there has therefore been considerable partnership working between the rail companies and the local community, including the major hospitals Kings College and South London and Maudsley (SLAM). This close working clearly needs to continue under the new franchise. At Nunhead there has been poor liaison with the community which needs to be improved significantly under the new franchise. There are local community groups there such as Nunhead Voice which are keen to play an active role but there needs to be a coordinated and effective liaison approach from the franchisee which so far seems to have been missing.

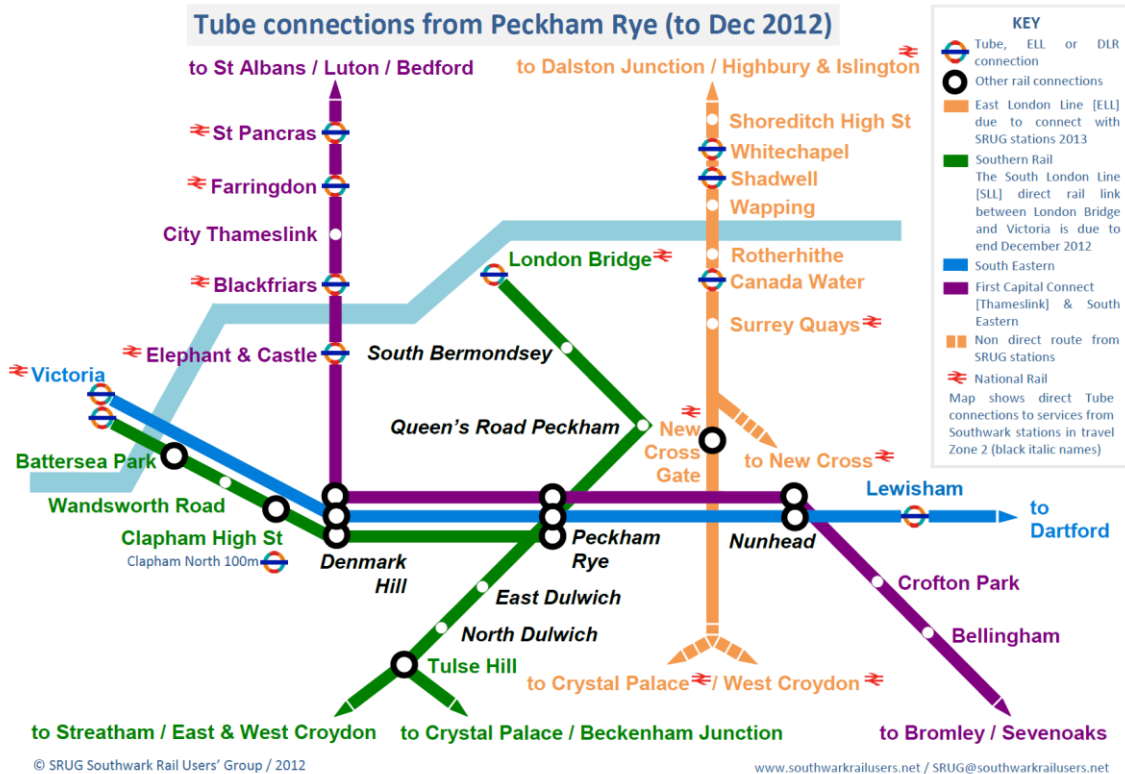
Other local aspirations

Q.3 Are consultees aware of any other rail or non-rail development schemes that might affect the new franchise?

There is a major development scheme planned for Peckham town centre to change the setting of Peckham Rye station by recreating the original public square in front of the station to make best use of its high quality heritage features and to realise the significant potential of the station as the gateway to the town centre. This is a joint Southwark Council, GLA and Network Rail scheme based on the work of the local community over many years to achieve these changes to benefit both rail users and the town centre itself (see [Peckham Vision](#) website). A significant stimulus to this new project is the Peckham Vision resident-led successful restoration of the [Old Waiting Room](#) in Peckham Rye station.

This station is currently managed by Southern Rail, and will be managed by the new Thameslink franchisee. There has not always been coherent information provision about the services provided by the two TOCs - Southeastern and Southern - currently coming through this station. From December 2012 there will be a further train company – LOROL – operating the East London Line. It is essential that the information provision and marketing of all the services from Peckham Rye is improved and that each of the TOCs including South Eastern should be required to participate positively in coordinated work on this with the local community. Because of the poor information provision and marketing of these services, as a community initiative, SRUG has developed its own rail user map (see below*) to publicise the good tube connections available from Peckham Rye station (and the other 6 stations covered by SRUG). We wish to link this with a more user-friendly provision of information about local rail services. This needs a collaborative approach, from all three TOCs including South Eastern, with this community user-led initiative.

* *map overleaf*



See Appendix for further notes on the purpose of this user-initiated map.

7. The franchise specification- Train service requirements

7.3 We agree with your intention that, where possible and appropriate, you will specify the new franchise in a manner which allows the operator more commercial freedom; however, there must be adequate control to ensure that services are not worsened.

Q.5 Which aspects of the specification, in addition to those services operating on HS1 network would stakeholders wish to see mandated and which aspects of the specification could be left to the discretion of the operator?

SRUG wishes to see a requirement that services are maintained at all **our** stations on at least a frequency of 15-minute intervals for Victoria and Blackfriars/St. Pancras, and with hours of service comparable to that obtaining on similar sections of the London Underground.

Train services need to be both regular and frequent to encourage confident and consistent use.

It is well-known that, when a train operator franchise changes, the new franchisee invariably goes to great effort, and thus at significant cost to the future fare-paying passenger, in re-branding and applying new house colours/corporate livery to everything in sight – trains, stations, staff uniforms, publicity and stationery. This is totally unnecessary. There was a move within Government to prevent this re-branding in the future but it is not reflected in the consultation and it should be.

Q.6 What changes to services would stakeholders propose, why and would these provide economic benefit?

The impending loss of the regular SLL service from London Bridge *via* Battersea Park to Victoria is to be much regretted, for which the LOROL ELL service is no adequate replacement, especially with the highly inconvenient interchange necessitated at Clapham Junction (both physically and time-wise), requiring crossing from one side of that extensive station to the other between LOROL and Victoria platforms. Accordingly, our answer to Q.5 applies.

In greater detail, for over 144 years, since 1st May 1867, there has been a direct service between London Bridge and Victoria *via* Peckham Rye. Currently the service runs every 30 minutes (2 trains per hour - tph) all day and evening, 7 days a week. That will most regretfully end in December, 2012 when the East London Line extension (ELL) comes into operation with 4 tph between Clapham Junction and Surrey Quays. This will provide new journey opportunities, but will detrimentally reduce the direct services to London Bridge and Victoria. While there will continue to be a seven-day a week service to London Bridge *via* Peckham Rye, Queen's Road, Peckham and South Bermondsey, albeit reduced from 6 to 4 tph off peak with irregular timing, the remaining services to Victoria would have big gaps. The regular service between Peckham Rye & Denmark Hill and Victoria will be reduced to a mere 2 tph and limited to during the day, with no services in the evenings or Sundays. This is unacceptable.

At Denmark Hill, losing its direct London Bridge services means that especial inconvenience will thus be caused to the many staff, patients and visitors of the major teaching hospital of King's College Hospital and the adjacent South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, who rely on the SLL services both to Victoria and London Bridge (particularly since hospital services are shared with Guy's Hospital at London Bridge) throughout the day and in the evenings and weekends.

The three hospitals are developing into a major Regional London centre, so that the total cut of the link with London Bridge and the drastic reduction in the services to and from Victoria is very poor planning. It is thus essential that losses caused by the withdrawal of the SLL services be compensated in some way, and restored fully after London Bridge station is rebuilt.

SRUG has no particular comment on destinations of present Southeastern and Thameslink services beyond Peckham Rye save to say that it is known that the services both *via* Bromley South and Lewisham are essential and thus should be retained and enhanced as full, all-day, 7 day services.

Other South Eastern services

Q.11 What improvements would respondents like to see made to other South Eastern services, what is the rationale for such proposals and would these provide economic benefit?

For the reasons given above, SRUG requests a frequent, all-day Victoria service, every day, serving at least Denmark Hill, Peckham Rye and Nunhead at a minimum of 15-minute intervals. This can be done by maintaining and expanding to a full, seven-day and late evening service the Victoria – Dartford service, usefully serving Lewisham as it does, as well as introducing a Victoria – Bellingham/Bromley South

2tph service. In addition to providing 4tph to Victoria for Nunhead, Peckham Rye and Denmark Hill, it would also increase the service intervals on the poorly-served Catford Loop line via Nunhead (only every 30 minutes at present off-peak).

Better stations and better connections & Equality Act 2010

Q.18 What is important to stakeholders in the future use and improvements in stations?

Q.21 What local accessibility and mobility issues do stakeholders see and how they might be addressed?

Denmark Hill: Much fruitful work is being achieved at Denmark Hill on accessibility in liaison with the hospitals and the local community, but much work still remains as at September 2012. The new franchisee needs to work very closely with the hospitals and local community to continue this close liaison. As at Peckham Rye, with the new franchises, this station will be served by three TOCs – South Eastern, LOROL and the TSGN (Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern) franchise. Close collaboration by the TOCs is essential to coordinate their timetables to achieve good interconnections between all three services at Denmark Hill, and also with the London Bridge services at Peckham Rye.

Nunhead: There have been sporadic renovation attempts over the last several years. These improvements seem to have been ad hoc and reactive, with no apparent long term plan for sustainable station upkeep. A coherent plan is needed covering all station improvements in maintenance, passenger facilities, and accessibility, to be developed by the franchisee in close collaboration with the local community and Southwark Council, to include for example improvements to lighting; seating and cycle parking; repair of the platform canopy; completion of platform wall and canopy painting; reopening of platform waiting room and access to toilets; additional ticket machine; ticket office opening hours; consistent maintenance schedule for planting at station entrance. The local community also wants to discuss the way to meet the requirements of Access for All for example by creating changes outside the main entrance, using Network Rail-owned land.

Subsidiary SRUG Comments on the Consultation

A. Clause 5.1 includes the objective that it is ensured that train services perform to the highest practicable reliability and punctuality standards and continue to be amongst the most reliable and punctual services on the network. At the same time, we are told in the TSGN franchise Consultation that achievement of the 24 tph density of service on the Thameslink core route is an extremely demanding challenge and the decision has been taken that the service will operate reliably only if Automatic Train Operation (ATO)6 technology is deployed between St Pancras International low level and London Blackfriars. Thus we are told that development of ATO cannot begin until the new Thameslink trains are available, so it will not be possible to introduce the 24 trains per hour service until December 2018 at the earliest.

Members of SRUG have suggested that this decision is misguided and should be reversed, since it ought to be completely possible for train drivers and infrastructure with revised traditional signalling to cope with 24 tph **without** employment of ATO, as is commonly achieved elsewhere, both on the London Underground, in Continental Europe and in e.g. Japan (where they run 11-car trains up to 30 tph without ATO).

By reversing this decision, the great advantage is that the existing rolling stock cleared for use through the core route will be able to continue to be used, including some South Eastern stock, whilst avoiding the expense of equipping a specialised set of rolling stock and associated lineside infrastructure for ATO. ATO is an extravagance to be avoided in these straitened times. The TSGN Consultation statement that it will not be possible to introduce the 24 trains per hour service until December 2018 at the earliest thus becomes redundant.

In any case, delays through the core route are more likely to be passenger-originating than any train service shortcomings. However, one also suspects that there will be inevitable delays whilst the planned trains for ATO take time to reset their on-board computers switching between ATO and manual operation at both ends of the comparatively short ATO section, thereby cancelling out any time and efficiency of train operation perceived to be achieved through the ATO section, whilst also providing ample opportunity for trains to fail in service at those changeover locations. The concept is fine for an Underground line running end-to-end under ATO control but not simply for the sake of a short stretch connecting vast stretches of conventional railway.

B. Members of SRUG are very concerned at the revelation that, during the Christmas and New Year period 2014 to 2015, Network Rail will disconnect the Spa Road Junction (Bermondsey) and Metropolitan Junction (between London Bridge and Blackfriars) for a period of **three years**, with resultant extreme inconvenience to passengers of the SLL, let alone everyone else, who wish to access Waterloo and Charing Cross on the one hand and later Cannon Street on the other hand.

It was always the ideal of a railway civil engineer to try and maintain train services at all cost, no matter what infrastructure had to be rebuilt, re-modelled or replaced. An absolute maximum of a few weekends of disruption is all that was required (or five weeks-worth in the case of track reconstruction in the Cannon Street area). LT Underground proudly performed credible work in this regard since the 1920's with scarcely any interruption to passenger services. What has gone wrong?

C. The Consultation appears not to have recognised that a major part of the problems discussed in Chapter 7 concerning Cannon Street services will be as a direct result of the Thameslink "Improvement" Works, whereby several empty trains that have run for generations from incoming a.m. and for outgoing p.m. main line peak Cannon Street services will no longer be able to travel *via* Metropolitan Junction to/from Blackfriars Train Road to and from their depots at Victoria Grosvenor Road and Grove Park, and there will be no room to push them through New Cross for Grove Park trains and no other convenient way to Victoria Grosvenor Road. This will likely mean that such Cannon Street services will have to be permanently diverted to Blackfriars terminating platforms (and no further because the trains will not be equipped for ATO), thus putting pressure on the route *via* Nunhead (as there is now no route to/from the terminating platforms directly *via* London Bridge), let alone the inconvenience to those long-distance passengers whose destinations have traditionally been Cannon Street. SRUG does not wish to see its services compromised by this detrimental piece of planning to the railway infrastructure. What has just been explained will thus also affect the long-distance South Eastern Cannon Street commuters, who are likely to have to use Blackfriars instead.

Southwark Rail Users Group- September, 2012

cc to Passenger Focus, & London Travel Watch

Appendix

Peckham Rye & adjacent stations are already well connected to the Tube but few seem to know that.

Peckham Rye, Denmark Hill and Queens Road, Peckham will be on the TfL Tube map from December 2012, when the East London Line rail service from Canada Water links with Clapham Junction via Peckham Rye (4 trains per hour). See map 1 below. This Tube map will show these three stations cut off from central London, because it shows only TfL rail services, which go east and west and not into central London.

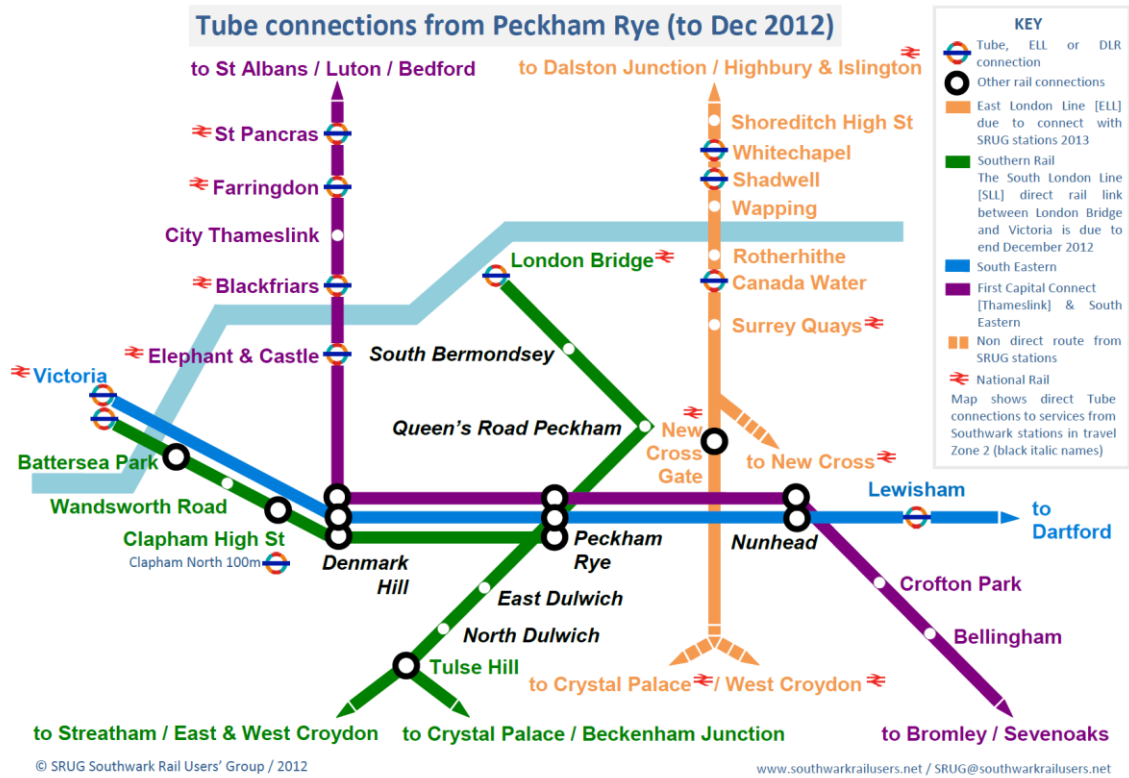


Map 1. SRUG extract from TfL produced Tube map showing the map with the ELL from Dec 2012

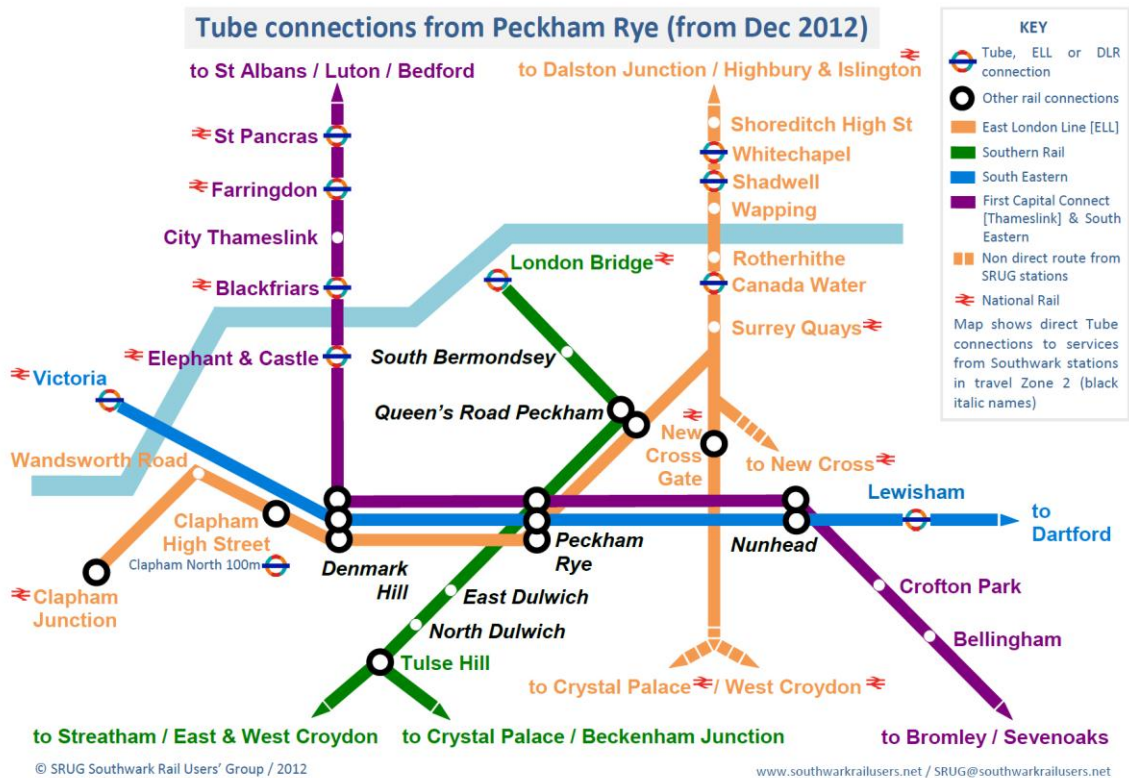
Connections to the Tube

But in fact the three stations are directly connected, within 10 to 15 minutes, to six Tube lines in central London. Map 2 (next page) shows the services today August 2012 with the South London Line (SLL). Map 3 shows the services after December 2012 with the SLL replaced by the East London Line extension (ELL). The maps show the many short direct connections there are now from these Southwark stations to the Tube in central London, via rail services run not by TfL but by other rail companies.

It is well known that many rail users navigate London's transport system with the aid of a mental image of the Tube map. When a place is or is not on the Tube map therefore affects how they view where that place is and how easy or difficult it is to travel there. We have therefore developed this map to show users how well connected Peckham Rye, Denmark Hill and other neighbouring stations are to the central London Tube system. We have been testing it and developing it for a year, and had a positive user response.



Map 2.SRUG map showing the services before the end of the SLL and the arrival of the ELL in Dec 2012



Map 3. SRUG map showing the arrival of the ELL, and loss of the SLL

Local Tube-like rail services are vital to realise Peckham Town Centre's potential, and to serve the London regional hospitals in Camberwell

This inner London area has no Tube and we use our local rail services as a substitute. This is in theory a good solution as they are directly connected within 10 to 15 minutes to the central Tube network – Victoria, District, Circle, Bakerloo, Jubilee, Northern. The problem is that the services are in part infrequent, irregular and not every day or every evening. The aim must be to make these local services, as soon as possible, Tube-like in their frequency and regularity - 7 days a week, early morning to late evening, and for off-peak 4 trains per hour (tph) to Victoria, 4tph to St Pancras, and 6tph to London Bridge, (& more tph on-peak).

Peckham Rye needs to be and could be like a *turn up and go* station. The town centre is coming alive with cultural and creative life, and has great historic assets and great gifts coming together in a new vibrant local economic seam. Keeping and improving direct connections to central London Tube stations is vital to build on that, and attract the innovative quality commercial investment to complement it that Peckham town centre needs. In addition, Kings College & SLAM (South London & Maudsley), in the neighbouring area, are two major London regional hospitals at Denmark Hill and need to be well connected into the London rail/tube system. This is why we need to:

- Save our direct Victoria services
- Keep & improve our direct St Pancras services
- Improve our London Bridge services
- Align their regularity to be like the Tube

We need also to publicise and market these services much better for the benefit of local residents and visitors, and for Peckham town centre itself and the major hospitals at Denmark Hill.

Appendix produced by Peckham Vision in association with Southwark Rail Users Group

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