



Network Rail Consultation on the Draft South London Route Utilisation Strategy

SWELTRAC is a sub-regional transport planning partnership covering ten Boroughs in the south and west London area. These include the London Boroughs of Croydon, Sutton, Merton and Wandsworth and the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, all of which are directly affected by these proposals in some form. Each of these authorities will be responding directly to this consultation, but we are also pleased to have the opportunity to offer the views of the SWELTRAC Partnership as a whole.

As a general principle, SWELTRAC welcomes any proposals which will improve public transport provision within the south-west sub-region. London Underground services are much more limited than in many other parts of the capital and car usage in the outer London Boroughs remains at a high level. Orbital bus and train services are limited within the area and there is a great reliance on radial train services into Central London. We believe that the RUS programme offers a good opportunity to identify and propose improvements that could be made to mainline train services across the routes under scrutiny.

We recognise the fact that the area covered by the South London RUS incorporates a number of planned or proposed major rail improvements which could have a significant impact on improving both services and capacity within the sub-region. We have offered particular support to the ELL extensions, the Thameslink programme and the proposed extension of Croydon Tramlink services. However, we are keen to ensure that these improvements and any other measures proposed within the RUS do not have a negative impact on any other services already operating on adjacent routes. Specifically, we would greatly regret any reduction in services operated by South West Trains through Clapham Junction.

West London Line Services

There are strong concerns amongst many Boroughs in South and West London relating to the new timetable proposals from Southern Trains which result in the termination of their Watford services at Clapham Junction. This ignores the recommendations from the RUS that these services should run at least as far south as Croydon. Our preference would be for these trains to run on to Gatwick Airport and ideally to Brighton. The current proposals not only present a great inconvenience to many passengers, they also result in more interchange being required at an already busy and congested station (Clapham Junction).

Growth & Capacity

We note that you have identified a suppressed demand of up to 10% on existing services due to the current overcrowding. With forecast growth of 14% by 2019 even without any improvements, the mitigation measures being proposed could result in this reaching closer to 25%. The capacity improvements being suggested would therefore have a negligible effect on the current overcrowding levels.

We strongly support any proposals to increase train and platform lengths and improve carriages such as to increase their passenger capacity. The removal of bottlenecks, such as speed restrictions and pinch points, would potentially allow for an increase in services to help meet the growing demand. We are hopeful that firm commitments to undertake these improvements will be forthcoming in due course.

Station Improvements

We welcome any measures to alleviate overcrowding at Victoria, and have been supportive of the proposed improvements at Clapham Junction – particularly the opening up of the St John's Hill entrance.

We have also long supported the proposals to improve West Croydon station in terms of both accessibility and interchange with buses and trams.

Conclusion

SWELTRAC generally welcomes the proposals contained within the Draft South London RUS. We would encourage the early implementation of any measures designed to increase capacity on these services and any subsequent or concurrent improvements to key stations such as Clapham Junction and West Croydon.

We share the concerns of many of our Boroughs regarding the termination of Watford services at Clapham Junction. We hope that pressure will be brought to bear upon Southern by all relevant authorities to seek to reverse this policy.

We would support all measures that will improve orbital rail travel around London.

GNF – 26/10/07