



23rd April 2008

Mr R Morris,
Senior Consultant, Heathrow Airtrack,
CJ Associates,
26 Upper Brook Street,
London W1K 7QE

Dear Mr Morris,

Heathrow Airtrack - Initial Public Consultation

I refer to your consultation document on Heathrow Airtrack, which you sent to John Slaughter of Wandsworth Council, who represents SWELTRAC at the Airtrack Forum. I am writing with SWELTRAC'S comments on the project and on the consultation document.

SWELTRAC is a sub-regional transport planning partnership covering 12 local authorities in the south and west London area, and in Surrey. These include Surrey Council, the Borough of Spelthorne, and the London Boroughs of Hillingdon, Hounslow, Richmond upon Thames, and Wandsworth, all of which are directly affected in some form by the Airtrack proposals. Each of these authorities will have responded directly to this consultation, but we are also pleased to have the opportunity to offer the views of the SWELTRAC Partnership as a whole.

SWELTRAC has long campaigned for a direct rail link from our area to Heathrow Airport, to avoid the circuitous routes that are currently necessary to access the airport by public transport, and to relieve congestion on local roads. It therefore welcomes the proposals in principle, provided that the new services provide additional capacity on the affected rail corridors, and they do not adversely affect current services. You will appreciate that current services into Waterloo are extremely crowded and need to be augmented before new services are introduced. It is also important to us that Airtrack is built to improve access to the existing airport with Terminal 5 operational, and that the project is not regarded as a mitigation measure for unacceptable further expansion to the airport.

SWELTRAC, Transport Planning Service, Civic Centre, 44 York Street, Twickenham. TW1 3BZ

Whilst it is important that the proposed service provides a rapid link to the airport, it also needs to provide access to the airport for local people living along the route. BAA are therefore requested to add additional stops to the service at Vauxhall, Putney, Whitton and Ashford, to avoid the need for unnecessary interchanging along the route. This stopping pattern would make it the same as the Windsor Line services, and would presumably make Airtrack easier to accommodate on the network.

Sufficient capacity needs to be safeguarded on the network to enable a 4 trains per hour service to be provided by South West Trains between Twickenham, Teddington and Kingston. Twickenham Station needs to be redeveloped to provide an attractive gateway for Twickenham town centre and the rugby ground, and this could allow a 4th platform and running line to be provided to improve line capacity and operational flexibility for Airtrack.

Early consideration needs to be given to the method of operating the train service and whether a new depot and workshop will be required for the Airtrack train fleet: any new facilities will require full consultation with the relevant local authority. On the issue of overhead line versus third rail electrification, it is important that maximum flexibility is planned for the network, to allow a versatile service to be provided and to enable the system to be easily extended at a later date. It is important to avoid the need for trains to stop between stations to change over power supply, as happens today on the West London Line, as this slows down the service, makes it less attractive and reduces line capacity.

The possibility of extending the Heathrow Express service to Staines is welcomed in principle, as it would provide improved public transport access across west London, open up new journey opportunities, and reduce pressure on local roads.

We appreciate that your consultation focuses specifically on the major new works between Staines and Terminal 5, but we wish BAA to be aware of our views at the earliest opportunity to feed into the next stage of your work.

If you have any queries about this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

**Gavin French,
Partnerships Manager**

cc. heathrowairtrack@cjassociates.co.uk