



DfT Consultation on the South Central Franchise – August 2008

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, Hammersmith & Fulham and Wandsworth and the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, all of which are served to some extent by South Central {Southern} services). 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 on the London elements of the franchise area.

Capacity and Services

We particularly welcome the proposals to help reduce overcrowding by adopting many of the recommendations of the South London RUS. This predicts a 20% increase in passenger usage by 2019, not including the suppressed demand which is also believed to exist at present. We are keen to see the introduction of ten and twelve car trains as early as is practically possible, and would wish to see all two car services increased to at least four cars.

We believe that the overcrowding problem could be overcome in part by allowing more trains to stop at Clapham Junction, thus increasing interchange opportunities and reducing the need for many passengers to travel into central London termini.

The implementation of the East London Line phase 2 extension would also be a great benefit to orbital travel across south London, although we recognise the need to end the service between London Victoria and London Bridge as a result of this new facility. We would hope that the new franchisee would be required to look at alternative route options in order to maintain this service in some form.

We would also like to see consideration given to the possibility of stopping some main line services at Balham to provide interchange with the Northern Line.

It has been noted that there is increased demand on Sundays and public holidays. We would wish to see increased services on these days (to at least the equivalent of a Saturday service) to cope with these extra passengers and

discourage the use of the car as an alternative transport option on days when parking restrictions tend to be more limited.

Stations & Ticketing

We believe that there is significant scope for improvements to signage & information made available at stations, with greater recognition given to interchange options (particularly at stations served by more than one operator). This should be complemented by better on-board announcements and improved information about forthcoming engineering works.

Accessibility should be given a high priority, with the franchisee being encouraged to work with Network Rail, London Boroughs and partnerships such as SWELTRAC and SELTRANS to ensure co-ordination and economies of resources on schemes to improve routes into stations and interchange with other modes. This would include increased cycle parking facilities, which are lacking or inadequate at several stations.

There is scope for improved ticketing facilities, including longer opening of staffed ticket offices. We strongly support the roll-out of Oystercard 'pay-as-you-go' ticketing, particularly in conjunction with gating at all stations.

A review is also required of the stopping points of shorter car trains at some stations, where some trains stop a considerable distance from entrances/exits as well as waiting rooms and lifts.

General Improvements

Communication with stakeholders is an important issue and is especially relevant to local authorities. A strong commitment to maintain and strengthen current links should form an integral part of the new franchise.

We would welcome the introduction of new rolling stock, such as that which is to be introduced on the London Overground service. Better provision should also be made for the carrying of bikes on trains.

We support the aspirations that have been expressed by TfL to bring the South Central franchise up to the standards now being achieved on the London Overground service. This has seen vast improvements in reliability (now at 94.7%), reported crime has fallen by 40%, virtually all stations have received or are due to receive a 'deep clean' and revenue has risen by 17% with ticketless travel down to less than 3%. Given the absence of a tube service to many parts of South London, mainline rail services, such as those currently offered by Southern, are key in terms of our efforts to affect modal change.

Our final points relate to the West London Line. This is an important north-south link which will also provide excellent interchange with the Central Line through the new Shepherds Bush station. It also helps to alleviate congestion at Victoria and Euston stations by providing a by-pass to Central London

travel. We maintain our previously expressed view that the restoration of through services to Gatwick Airport should be a priority for the new franchise holder.

Conclusion

Whilst welcoming many of the proposals for the new franchise agreement for South Central, we believe there is scope for the inclusion of more cogent and robust enhancements to certain elements of the proposals.

There are a number of measures that could help alleviate overcrowding, such as more trains stopping at Clapham Junction and additional Sunday and Bank Holiday services. Direct services from the WLL to Gatwick Airport are also important to us.

We believe that the improvements that have already been seen on the London Overground (less than nine months after TfL took over the service) are a good template for which to aim when finalising the terms of the new South Central franchise.

GNF – 14/08/08