



Southern Rail Consultation on the Timetable Proposals for December 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, Hammersmith & Fulham 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 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.

West London Line Services

There are strong concerns amongst many Boroughs in South and West London relating to your new timetable proposals which result in the termination of the Watford services at Clapham Junction. This ignores the recommendations from the recent South London 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 will also result in more interchange being required at an already busy and congested station (Clapham Junction). The physical problems that would be encountered at certain platforms (particularly platform 17) will have a very detrimental effect on the journeys of disabled and less agile passengers, as well as people travelling to Gatwick Airport with heavy and bulky luggage. The extension of services to, at least, East Croydon, would assist in mitigating against some of these more physical problems.

The great value of this service is that it provides a strategic orbital route around London, allowing travellers to avoid the congestion and hassle of crossing central London via Victoria and Euston. The withdrawal of this link will encourage people to travel by road and the M25 motorway, which will exacerbate highway congestion and pollution, contrary to the objectives set for us by Government policy. SWELTRAC's main role has been to encourage greater use of public transport and sustainable travel solutions, to improve the environment for the area, and your proposals would undermine this work.

We therefore broadly welcome the restoration of services to Milton Keynes, but we are concerned that this should not be implemented at the expense of established services to Gatwick Airport and Brighton. It would also appear that

the timing of connections with the West Coast Main Line would not always be particularly advantageous to passengers.

Growth & Capacity

The South London RUS has identified a suppressed demand of up to 10% on existing services due to the current overcrowding. With forecast growth of 14% by 2019, we would support Wandsworth Council's desire to see an increase in the number of main line trains stopping at Clapham Junction in order to increase interchange opportunities. This does not appear to have been achieved in the current timetabling proposals, but we would flag up this issue as a priority for the future.

Conclusion

SWELTRAC shares the concerns of many of our Boroughs regarding the termination of the strategic Watford to Brighton service at Clapham Junction. This will create both extra passenger congestion and certain physical difficulties and we do not feel that any real justification has been offered for this curtailment of services – against the recommendations of the South London RUS. We believe this proposal will discourage rail travel and we would ask that this situation be urgently reviewed.

GNF – 2/1/08