
Secretariat memorandum

Author : Robert Nichols

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LTW508

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Waterloo station redevelopment

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform members of proposed changes to London Waterloo station and consider issues affecting passengers.

2 Background

- 2.1 Waterloo station is Britain's busiest station, and suffers from considerable crowding both on the concourse, and especially on the trains that serve it. There are 19 platforms varying in length from 8 to 12-carriages long, in addition to five platforms in the former Waterloo International station of much longer length. Of these, only platform 20 is in regular use, with platforms 21 and 22 being used occasionally.
- 2.2 It is planned to reconstruct several of the platforms at Waterloo to accommodate at least 10-car trains on every platform, along with some improvements to the track layout to allow greater flexibility. It is also proposed to work on the concourse, in particular to integrate the former Waterloo International platforms which are currently separate from the rest of the concourse. Plans to extend all platforms to 12-car length were dropped as this would have resulted in the demolition of most of the historic Lower Marsh area, as well as prohibitive cost.
- 2.3 The improvement work is long overdue, having originally been expected to be complete before the London Bridge works. Once complete it will provide a welcome capacity boost for passengers. The integration of the Waterloo International platforms will provide a reputational boost as well as a capacity one, as the impression of these platforms lying dormant next to Britain's busiest station has long been an easy target for critics.
- 2.4 Preparatory works are due to start this year, with bridge strengthening works to allow more frequent trains to use Waterloo International. Substantial works that would affect passengers are expected to begin in December 2016, including a blockade over the Christmas/New Year period, with the closure of platforms 1-4 for reconstruction and the opening of platforms 20-24 into full service by mid-2017. The exact timings are still to be confirmed, including the date by which the works are complete.

3 London TravelWatch concerns

- 3.1 Our main concerns are based on the experience of the London Bridge works, which have not proceeded with passengers at the forefront of the planning process. It is vital that Network Rail does not repeat the same mistakes at Waterloo as at London Bridge.
- 3.2 Areas of particular concern include Network Rail's ability to demonstrate that they have designed the works to ensure that passengers can move around Waterloo station itself seamlessly, with adequate signage at all phases of the works, regardless of corporate brand. Information must be available at all times to show the reason for the works, but also the probable scale of disruption and the risks.
- 3.3 The risk to service reliability may be even greater than with London Bridge, with fewer diversionary routes, more passengers and an extremely tired signalling system that is overdue for renewal. It is imperative that Network Rail thoroughly analyse their key assets and gold plate them as necessary, and also if diversionary routes are going to be used, that these are brought up to the standards of a more frequent route in advance of the works.
- 3.4 The timing of the works also gives rise to two further potential issues. The works at London Bridge will continue until 2018, although the connection between London Bridge and Waterloo will be reinstated by August 2016, easing most of the interaction between the two projects. Second, the current SWT franchise expired in July 2017, meaning that the majority of the planning and early phase of the project will be happening at the same time as a franchise renewal competition. This is not ideal as the incumbent operator will have some of their focus on the franchise renewal and the very short term, and less than would otherwise be the case on the longer term. Any new franchisee, or Stagecoach if they win the new franchise, will take over the operations at a time of significant disruption and recent experience of other franchises has shown this to be a challenge.

4 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 4.1 There are no equalities or inclusion implications arising from this report.

5 Legal powers

- 5.1 Section 252B of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 Act requires London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) to consider, and where it appears to it to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to any service or facility provided by or for users or potential users of railway services provided wholly or partly within the "London railway area" as defined under the provisions of the Railways Act 1993.

6 Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising from the report.