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Dear Sharon,

Future of Victoria – Bellingham Services

Thank you for your letter of 9 April 2009. I am sorry that you believe that London TravelWatch was not informed about our plans for the South London line.

The withdrawal of the South London line service which was not a TfL decision but proposed by Network Rail to accommodate the Thameslink works at London Bridge. Network Rail proposed an alternative service from Victoria to Bellingham in their Route Utilisation Strategy.

Our development work suggested that the East London line phase 2 (ELL2) to Clapham Junction largely duplicated the proposed service to Bellingham and would offer better value. The DfT and Secretary of State agreed with our analysis.

I have answered your six questions below.

1. Why was the Bellingham decision not announced as part of the ELL2 announcement?

TfL has always presented ELL2 as the best solution to the withdrawal of the South London line in 2012.

My understanding is that Route Utilisation Strategies are not binding documents, even when adopted by ORR. Rather they are advisory planning statements, and subject to considerations, notably in this case affordability. Simply put the DfT and ourselves could not afford both a Victoria to Bellingham and ELL2. Without the contribution from the DfT, the ELL2 project could simply not proceed.

There is still much development work on the final timetable to be introduced in over three years time and will discuss any changes with passengers and stakeholders.

2. When do you now intend to make a public statement?

I plan to make a statement nearer the time that the South London line services are anticipated to be withdrawn in 2012. At the moment there is an ongoing process with Network Rail and other operators to create a robust timetable that meets the needs of all railway users as far as possible in this part of south London. It is therefore premature to discuss detail at this stage.

3. Who made the Bellingham decision and was the Mayor a party to it, or aware of it, and who was party to decisions about the failure to announce it publicly?

There was discussion between the Secretary of State and the Mayor. The Secretary of State made it a condition of his funding that TfL proposes the withdrawal of the South London line (including any future Bellingham service) and any service changes associated on the corridor between Peckham Rye and London Victoria.

4. Would you please now provide us with the full details of the agreement between TfL and DfT for the ELL2 go-ahead? Are there other features of this agreement which remain undisclosed?

The DfT set out a number of conditions to their funding:

- Acceptance of project cost risks
- Shoreditch High Street to be included within Zone 1
- TfL publically proposes the withdrawal of the Victoria to Bellingham service including informing key stakeholders on the route whilst also highlighting the impacts on current journey opportunities, especially at evenings and weekends
- TfL (or the concessionaire) should not operate East London Line services into London Victoria (except during periods of disruption or planned engineering works) for at least ten years
- TfL take over operation of Wandsworth Road and Clapham High Street stations only and that these costs are included within the settlement

TfL is also reviewing the value for money of Surrey Canal Road station. The funded scheme deferred the stations costs, so there are no savings as such against this. It will be a matter for the Secretary of State to decide his response to the results when available.

5. What are your plans for handling the closure process for the withdrawal of direct services between Clapham High St. / Wandsworth Road and Battersea Park / Victoria?

I am aware of the closure process for the section between Wandsworth Road and Battersea Park stations that may result from the Network Rail platform lengthening scheme at Battersea Park. However, I understand that such processes will not need to be enacted until 2012 and it is not clear whether a closure will in fact be required given the 2012 timetable and layout at Battersea Park station.

6. Would you please provide details of TfL's assessment of the impact of ELL2 on south London passengers both with and without the Bellingham service, to aid our consideration of how to react to the decision?

TfL's assessment of the impact of ELL2 on south London passengers both with and without the Bellingham service shows that:

- ELL2 services are well loaded with up to 990 passengers per hour eastbound (roughly twice seated capacity) and up to 880 passengers per hour westbound
- Bellingham services have lower loadings with up to 640 passengers per hour (roughly all seats taken on the busiest section between Peckham Rye and Denmark Hill)

The benefit cost ratio of the Bellingham service on its own is well below 2 to 1. As a comparison, the ELL2 benefit cost ratio is nearly 3 to 1. This shows that ELL2 is better value for money and its higher loadings show that it is more use for passengers.

I note that East London Line services to Clapham Junction will provide an increased service of four trains per hour via Denmark Hill and Peckham Rye to the City (Shoreditch High Street) and the Docklands (Canada Water). Denmark Hill and Peckham Rye will retain a service to Victoria operated by Southeastern. Other south London passengers will still be able to change at Clapham Junction for very frequent services to Victoria.

TfL have repeatedly suggested to the DfT that it could operate an ELL2 service pattern of two trains per hour to Victoria and another two to Clapham Junction during either some or all of the traffic day, could offer passenger benefits. DfT have requested a guarantee that we will not operate services into Victoria and have said that if we do then they will reduce their contribution towards the cost of ELL2.

I am sorry that we have needed to clarify our misunderstandings in this formal way and I would be very happy to meet to discuss this and other London Rail developments whenever you wish.

Yours sincerely,



Ian Brown
Managing Director, London Rail

Cc: Val Shawcross AM, Dr. Mike Mitchell, Caroline Pidgeon AM, Peter Hendy