

From the Chief Executive

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Chris Bolt
Chairman
Office of Rail Regulation
1 Kemble Street
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Dear Chris,

South London Route Utilisation Strategy

The London TravelWatch board has received a presentation from Network Rail about the South London Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS).

Our members understand the context and the aims of the RUS, and very much welcome the improvements in line and train capacity which it recommends. We hope that the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) will approve the RUS as the established strategy for this part of the rail network.

However, unlike some previous RUSs, we are acutely aware that the complexities and constraints of the South London area mean that some of the passenger benefits which the RUS seeks to secure may only be achievable through trade-offs which will adversely affect some particular groups of passengers. We therefore think it important that in giving its approval to the RUS, ORR should make a statement which clearly signals to Network Rail, the Department for Transport and other industry parties that particular consideration must be given to the following points.

- a) The need for station capacity improvements at Waterloo (East) and Charing Cross. This matter is alluded to in the RUS, but unlike (for example) London Bridge, there are currently no worked-up schemes for these two stations.
- b) That before South London Line trains are withdrawn from London Bridge, it is essential that East London Line Extension phase two (the section from Surrey Quays to Clapham Jct.) is completed and in operation.
- c) That before a final decision is taken to withdraw South London Line trains from the section of line between Wandsworth Road and Battersea Park, the appropriate statutory closure procedures are applied so that any passenger hardship issues can be properly considered. It would not be acceptable for the statutory procedures to be avoided by operation of a single daily or weekly train as has occurred elsewhere.

- d) That further study (including consultation with London TravelWatch) is carried out to assess the need to operate all Greenwich line trains to Cannon Street instead of its present 50 / 50 split between Charing Cross and Cannon Street. This study should consider infrastructure alterations which might be necessary and affordable to enable the present arrangement to continue, should include a detailed analysis of the numbers of passengers affected and an examination of any consequential effects on service patterns on all other metro routes into Charing Cross and Cannon Street.
- e) That further study (including consultation with London TravelWatch) is carried out to assess the need to terminate all trains which currently run on the Tulse Hill – Thameslink route at Blackfriars, and to consider the overcrowding issues which may arise on this route as result of the new service frequency which the RUS adopts as its working assumption. This study should consider infrastructure alterations which might be necessary and affordable to enable the present arrangement to continue, should include a detailed analysis of the numbers of passengers affected and an examination of any consequential effects on service patterns on all other routes into and through Blackfriars.

I will be copying this letter to the Department for Transport, Network Rail and Transport for London, and will also place a copy on our website.

Yours sincerely,

Janet Cooke
Chief Executive