

London TravelWatch Response to the West Coast Main Line Route Utilisation Strategy Draft for Consultation

March 2011



London TravelWatch is the official body set up by Parliament to provide a voice for London's travelling public.

Our role is to:

- Speak up for transport users in discussions with policy-makers and the media.
- Consult with the transport industry, its regulators and funders on matters affecting users.
- Investigate complaints users have been unable to resolve with service providers, and
- Monitor trends in service quality.

Our aim is to press in all that we do for a better travel experience all those living, working or visiting London and its surrounding region.

Published by:

London TravelWatch
6 Middle Street
London EC1A 7JA

Phone: 020 7505 9000

Fax: 020 7505 9003

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Executive Summary

We welcome

This draft Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) looks ahead to 2024, and the information it provides about likely overcrowding. This is a matter of great importance for passengers and it is right that it takes a high priority in future planning services.

We are also pleased that it looks at the issue of inter-city services from Watford, as this has been a considerable concern for London TravelWatch since the December 2008 timetable was introduced.

We recommend

While we support the broad approach outlined in the consultation, we consider that there are key areas where additional safeguards are required for passengers:

Northampton - Milton Keynes – London commuter services

- 125 mph trains must be introduced for fast commuter trains from Northampton, Milton Keynes and Leighton Buzzard to Euston, so that two extra trains can be operated each hour. This is necessary to avoid overcrowding from these stations. Failure to address this will result in displacement and unacceptable overcrowding on the trains which serve London TravelWatch stations between Tring and Euston.

West London Line

- Infrastructure works to enable 2 trains per hour to operate on the Milton Keynes to West London Line route (including in the peaks) should be identified, recommended in the final RUS document and actioned as soon as possible.
- Milton Keynes to West London Line trains should be lengthened to eight cars as soon as possible.
- Progressive implementation of the service strategy agreed between London TravelWatch and local authorities.

London Overground Watford DC line

- The RUS should examine the practicality of increasing the Watford DC service from 3 trains per hour to 4 trains per hour, and report whether or not any signalling adjustments would be needed.
- Examine more closely the projected 2024 passenger loadings, to confirm the statement in the draft RUS that there will be no crowding problem on the Watford DC line.

High Speed 2 and the Watford DC line

- Should consider how displaced passengers would be affected if HS2 requires removal of the Watford DC service from Euston, and how else they could make their journeys.

Improved connectivity with orbital routes and Crossrail

- Platforms should be provided on the West Coast Main Line slow lines at Willesden Junction to improve orbital connectivity for journeys across north London. An alternative to this would be to link West Coast Main Line services into Crossrail with an interchange station at Old Oak Common. This should be evaluated, with orbital interchange maximised by also providing platforms on the North and West London Lines.

Inter-city calls at Watford Junction

- Further review the issue of a day-long inter-city service from Watford Junction to the north, offering fast direct or 'one change' journeys to major destinations in north Wales, the north-west and Scotland.

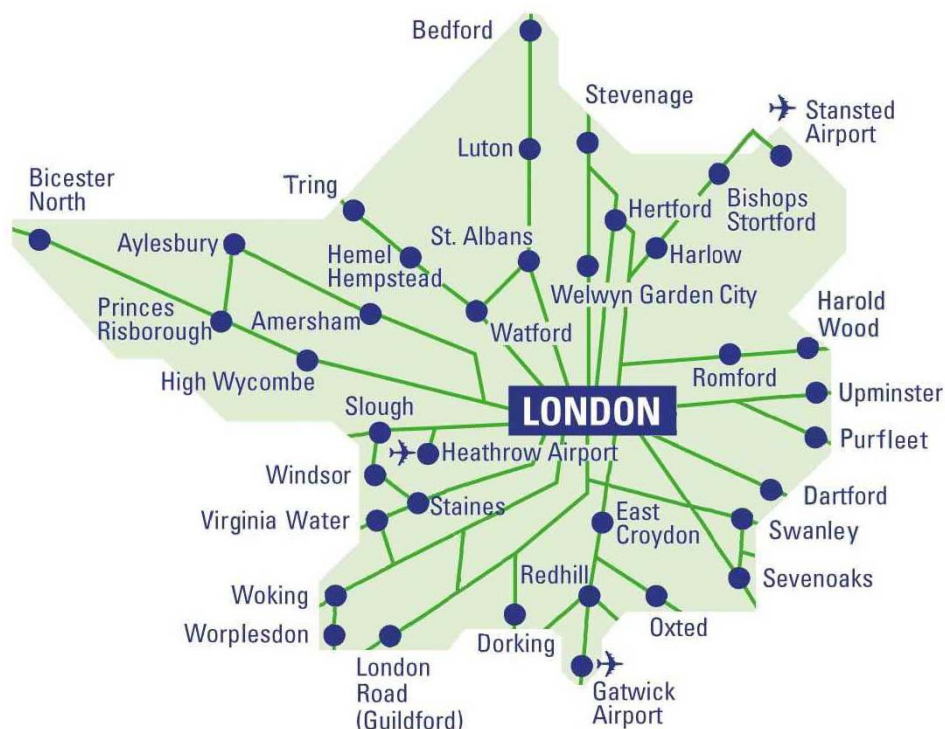
Freight trains

- In order to improve capacity, electric haulage should be mandatory for freight trains on the southern end of the West Coast Main Line. To achieve this, it will be necessary to electrify the Barking – Gospel Oak line and the Kew – Acton – Dudding Hill route.

1 Introduction

London TravelWatch provides this written submission to the West Coast Main Line Route Utilisation Strategy Draft for Consultation as the independent statutory watchdog representing transport users of all modes in London and rail users in its surrounding area. The map below shows London TravelWatch's areas of National Rail responsibility.

Diagram 1 – London TravelWatch Rail Remit



London TravelWatch's remit for this West Coast Main Line Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) extends from London Euston to Tring, the West London Line, and the St. Albans Abbey branch and includes consideration of links between this area and the rest of the rail network.

London TravelWatch is disappointed that, so far as passenger services are concerned, the work described in the draft RUS does not extend far beyond overcrowding and connectivity. These are very important matters for passengers, but there are a range of other issues which need to be examined over the 13 year time span of this RUS.

London TravelWatch is also disappointed that a majority of the recommendations contained in the document are for no more than further analysis between this consultation draft and the publication of the final RUS. It is right that a consultation document should provide flexibility, but it should contain sufficient firm information to enable respondents to make informed and realistic comments on different options. We consider that this draft RUS falls short on this.

The main issues London TravelWatch wishes to consider are:

- Peak period overcrowding for commuters
- Overcrowding on long distance services from London
- Improving the service to the West London Line
- Service frequencies on the London Overground Watford DC line
- High Speed 2 and the Watford DC line
- Improved connectivity with orbital routes
- Linking West Coast Main Line services into Crossrail
- Inter-city services from Watford
- The effects of freight trains on passenger services
- Ensuring fares are affordable

London TravelWatch's main focus is to look at the wider scene of what passengers want from the railway.

2 Train Service Requirements of London's Passengers

This consultation response, like the RUS itself, will substantially focus on issues related to the physical operation of the railway. However it is important to remember that passengers do not buy a train, or even a seat on a train, passengers buy a service.

Table 1: The table below shows passenger's priorities on train service improvements as derived from Passenger Focus's research on 'Passenger Priorities for Improvement' (London, 2007).

Priority	Key Improvement
1	Gets them where they want to go at a price that represents value for money for them.
2	Gives them sufficient trains at the time they want to travel.
3	Is reliable and punctual.
4	Provides them with sufficient seating capacity on the train at the times they want to travel.
5	Keeps them informed of delays and alterations to services, which gives them the opportunity to reorganise their activities or allows them to choose an alternative means of reaching their destination.
6	Has simple, easy to use and understands ticketing systems.
7	Provides personal security to them when they travel and is free from crime and the fear of crime (and disorder).
8	Provides them with comfortable seating appropriate to the journey they are making.
9	Has a good connection with other forms of public transport allowing them to make seamless journeys from one place to another.
10	Has good pedestrian and cycle access / storage at its stations.
11	Has a commitment to reducing overall journey times.
12	Has clear and easy to understand information.

3 Peak Period Overcrowding for Commuters

We note that the main burden of overcrowding on the West Coast London commuter route will occur because of the large scale plans for expansion of Northampton and Milton Keynes. Given the long distances to London (66 miles and 50 miles) respectively, commuters from these towns naturally prefer to use the fast trains which London Midland operate specifically for their benefit. These run non-stop from Leighton Buzzard to Euston, so do not directly affect the London TravelWatch area.

However increased overcrowding is also expected from stations nearer to London, so the draft RUS recommends that extra carriages be acquired to deal with the total problem. This would allow all peak commuter trains on the route (fast, semi-fast and slow) to be made up of twelve carriages.

Ordinarily, these extra carriages would be expected to be of similar design to the existing modern trains on the route. However the draft RUS explains that these trains are limited to 100 mph, so when they run on the fast lines between Leighton Buzzard and Euston they are a mismatch with the 125 mph Virgin inter-city trains and waste line capacity.

The draft RUS suggests that the new carriages be designed for 125 mph which would free up fast line paths and allow two more trains to be operated during each peak hour. Regrettably, the draft RUS then pulls back from making this a recommendation, largely for fear that “performance issues” could be created, and merely recommends that the idea be considered further.

London TravelWatch cannot support such a weak conclusion. If sufficient capacity is not provided on the fast trains from Northampton, Milton Keynes and Leighton Buzzard, then some passengers who should be using these will switch to the semi-fast trains. These typically call at the busier London TravelWatch area stations (Tring, Berkhamsted, Hemel Hempstead and Watford Junction), and the draft RUS makes it clear that even after all trains are lengthened to twelve cars some of these will be overcrowded from Watford (a situation only allowable because this is just within twenty minutes from Euston).

It would not be acceptable to add to this problem by making these trains carry passengers displaced from overcrowded fast trains. Given the long lead time for acquiring new trains (particularly as these might have to be a new design) and for making any necessary infrastructure changes to accommodate them.

We believe that 125 mph trains must be introduced on fast commuter services from Northampton, Milton Keynes and Leighton Buzzard to Euston so that two

extra such trains can be operated in each peak hour. The RUS must address any issues to which this decision gives rise.

Other overcrowding questions regarding the West London Line and the London Overground Watford DC line are dealt with below.

3.1 Reducing overcrowding on long distance services

Except for short journeys of less than twenty minutes, most passengers expect a seat to be provided. At peak times, passengers will tolerate some standing, but expect the rail industry to consider how this could be addressed. London TravelWatch supports the efforts of the industry (as expressed in the RUS process) to try and deal with overcrowding.

Some passengers are prepared to pay additionally for the guarantee of a seat, which is why there is a demand for first class on some commuter routes. However, others have complained that the provision of first class reduces the total capacity of the trains and thus contributes to overcrowding.

To better understand these competing demands, London TravelWatch commissioned an online survey of 600 rail users in London and the south east¹. This showed that the level of passenger expectation for first class travel services varies according to the length of journey time.

For journeys of less than an hour, the majority of users believe that the provision of first class is unnecessary and effectively reduces the capacity of train services. This means for local services within the TfL fare zones, first class accommodation should be reclassified as standard class and where new or refurbished trains are envisaged, only standard class should be provided. This is broadly in line with present practice, with only First Great Western still providing first class on all its London area trains. However some operators are negligent when using trains with first class sections on services advertised as standard class only, but fail to make it clear that seats can be used by all passengers.

For journeys between one and two hours, the majority of users believe that some 'core' facilities should be provided. These include a guaranteed seat, a more comfortable seat than standard and additional space and leg room. This does not necessarily need to be called first class but could be branded as something else, such as business or comfort class. This length of journey covers the majority of commuter journeys into London.

¹ London TravelWatch Passenger Attitudes to First Class Travel – July 2010
<http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/4222>

For journeys over two hours, the majority of users believe that a far wider range of facilities should be provided above and beyond a guaranteed seat, a more comfortable seat than standard and additional space and leg room. These include full restaurant services, complimentary soft and hot drinks as a minimum, a member of staff present at all times, a guaranteed table, complimentary alcoholic drinks, sandwiches, snacks and newspapers, free internet access and a place to plug in a laptop. This reflects the nature of the journeys being made, which are either a one-off leisure activity or business where the train effectively becomes an extension of the work environment. This length of journey covers long distance journeys within the UK and international travel.

Figure 1 – Evidential examples from London TravelWatch Casework

Case 1: On the 31st December 2010, Virgin Trains did not offer a meal and newspaper to first class passengers. These services were advertised to passengers but on the day of travel, passengers were being told by staff that due to the holiday season, these services were cancelled due to the holiday season. Passengers paid £106 for a first class service; if these passengers were advised with the correct information additional services were cancelled, they would have purchased a standard ticket costing £28.

We therefore welcome the recent initiatives by Virgin Trains to implement changes to its fare structures and ticket availability in First Class in line with the recommendations of this research as a means of trying to address overcrowding issues. We recommend that this approach is maintained by Virgin Trains and also embraced by other operators, as a means of managing available capacity.

On the specific crowding issue (OC3) in relation to London Euston to North Wales services, we are perplexed by the suggestion that in order to reduce overcrowding on a short section of route (Crewe to Chester 21 miles), it is suggested that extra trains should run into London – an additional 158 miles - consuming capacity which is needed for more local journeys. Chester (population 118,000 in the 2001 Census) is quite rightly a destination which people from London would expect good access to given its economic activity and tourist potential and so we support the provision of direct services to London and also the electrification of the line between Crewe and Chester. However, we would suggest that it would be better use of resources and capacity if an improved local service between Crewe and Chester were provided – say a train every 15 or 20 minutes, rather than the present 40/20 minute interval pattern. This would have the advantage of not using up scarce capacity between Crewe and London, but also improving the number of journey opportunities (and therefore spreading passenger's loadings) by connection from Chester to London (and also Manchester Airport, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Stoke on Trent, the East and West Midlands).

4 West London Line Service Improvements

Introduced little more than ten years ago, the hourly service between the West Coast Main Line and the West London Line has been an outstanding success. Despite frequent changes to the route – at the northern end alone its terminus has varied from Rugby, then to Watford Junction and now to Milton Keynes – the trains are busy all day and in the peaks they are seriously overcrowded.

One of the principal reasons for the success of this service is that connectional opportunities at Clapham Junction, this service is able to offer a competitive rail alternative (in terms of journey time, journey opportunities and cost) for journeys which would normally only be considered to be undertaken by car using the M25 motorway. Examples of such journeys include from Hampshire to Milton Keynes or Northampton to Gatwick Airport / Sussex. This competitiveness has been accentuated by the increase in road fuel prices in recent years, and this trend is likely to continue. In addition significant new retail development and employment has been provided at locations such as Westfield in Shepherds Bush. There is therefore likely to be continued above average growth on the route, if it remains and improves its competitiveness in terms of journey time and overall cost when compared to the car.

At present limited to four carriages, we therefore support the draft RUS recommendation that:

- Milton Keynes to West London Line trains are lengthened to eight cars (with more planned) as soon as possible.

There is also a specific problem with the southbound service, which only provides three trains in the morning peak (compared with four prior to December 2008), and has a 73 minute gap at the busiest period. The draft RUS confirms not only that this causes acute overcrowding, but that it is so severe that demand is suppressed. It therefore – rightly – advocates introduction of 2 trains per hour (trains per hour) in the peaks.

This is something which London TravelWatch, the West London Line Local Authorities Group, and other stakeholders have long sought. We therefore regret greatly that the draft RUS does no more than recommend further work during the consultation period to identify a way of achieving this.

Given that this problem has been known about since the moment the first draft of the December 2008 timetable was published, and that the RUS work has been under way for over two years, we find this unacceptable. The industry should have dealt this long ago, and if 2 trains per hour cannot be achieved with the

present infrastructure then the draft RUS should have identified what works are required to enable it to happen.

We therefore conclude that:

- Infrastructure works to enable 2 trains per hour to operate on the Milton Keynes – West London Line route including in the peaks should be identified, recommended in the final RUS document and actioned as soon as possible.

This review should also look at how the very slow timings for these trains between Wembley and the traction voltage changeover point just south of Willesden could be reduced. We consider that passengers would further benefit if the voltage change procedure could be made without requiring the trains to stop. We are aware that the trains were designed to allow this.

Looking more widely, we must draw attention to the fundamental inadequacy of the present daylong services on the West London Line, even after the London Overground service is increased to 4 trains per hour in May 2011. This matter has been discussed between London TravelWatch and interested local authorities, leading to the following agreed aspirations.

Priority	Type of service	Service Detail	Ideal frequency (trains per hour)	Minimum Frequency (trains per hour)
1	Metro, turn up and go	Stratford to Clapham Junction serving Inner London and connecting with the East London Line Phase 2 to make an orbital service	6	4
2	Sub-regional, link main centres and interchange with West Coast Main Line	Core Watford-Gatwick Airport, preferably to Milton Keynes and Brighton	4 2 to Milton Keynes & Brighton	2 1 to Milton Keynes & Brighton
3	Long-distance, Cross country	Brighton - Gatwick Airport – Birmingham and / or Manchester	Every 2 hours	Twice a day

Preferred stopping pattern for the sub-regional service

The following is the preferred stopping pattern:

- Gatwick Airport
- [Redhill if possible]
- East Croydon
- Balham
- Clapham Junction
- Imperial Wharf (minimum of 1 train per hour)
- West Brompton
- Kensington Olympia
- Shepherd's Bush
- Willesden Junction – new platforms required (might be replaced by Old Oak Common now that this is under consideration for HS2)
- Wembley Central
- Harrow and Wealdstone
- Watford Junction
- Hemel Hempstead
- Berkhamsted
- Tring
- Leighton Buzzard
- Milton Keynes

Stations

Consideration should be given to the construction of three new stations (not in any order of priority):

- Mitre Bridge
- North Pole
- North Battersea

Prioritised List of Aspirations

- 1) 4 trains per hour on Metro service and 2 trains per hour on North/ South service;
- 2) Extension to Gatwick Airport from Milton Keynes (although Watford Junction would be acceptable);
- 3) 6 trains per hour on Metro service and 4 trains per hour on North/ South service
- 4) Reintroduction of long distance service
- 5) Secure more interchange stations
- 6) Provision of new stations

London TravelWatch looks to the rail industry for progressive implementation of a service strategy based on these agreed aspirations.

5 Service Frequencies on the London Overground

Watford DC Line

London TravelWatch has long-standing aspirations for train service frequencies and times of first and last trains². On the West Coast Main Line we are pleased to say that these have now largely been met.

However the Watford DC line – the all-stations service between Euston and Watford Junction – is a major exception. Our requirements is for a turn up and go service of 6 trains per hour as far as Harrow and Wealdstone and 4 trains per hour to Watford Junction. However, the present London Overground service on this route provides only 3 trains per hour. TfL currently have no plans to increase this, despite the fact that it falls below their own standard of 4 trains per hour throughout the London rail network.

We acknowledge that the shortfall is only a problem between Euston and Queens Park and between Harrow & Wealdstone and Watford, because London Underground's Bakerloo line provides 6 trains per hour between Queens Park and Harrow & Wealdstone and a more frequent service between Queens Park and Stonebridge Park.

Nevertheless the situation is unsatisfactory, particularly in terms of the links between Euston, Kilburn and the Willesden Junction interchange, and between the large Oxhey estate at Carpenders Park and its town centre at Watford.

London TravelWatch has long pressed TfL to run 4 trains per hour on this line but it has refused to consider any increase above 3 trains per hour. The strength of the case has never been challenged but declined on grounds of line capacity. Their position has been that it is impractical to interwork more than 3 trains per hour with the Bakerloo line north of Queens Park, and that the signalling headway (a sentence here explaining what headway is?) north of Harrow & Wealdstone is 17 minutes, thus precluding more than 3 trains per hour there as well.

We consider that the Harrow & Wealdstone claim was never believable, but recognised that the Queens Park claim might have been correct. We were therefore very pleased to see that the draft RUS gives summary headway

² London TravelWatch Requirements for Train Services – Principles - June 2010
<http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/4156/get>

information for the DC line - 3 minutes south of Willesden Junction and varying between 4 and 6 minutes north of Willesden Junction.

The data supplied was not quite sufficient to ascertain headway for information in relation to interworking with the Bakerloo, particularly as far as Stonebridge Park. We have therefore researched this aspect and find that:

a) The planning headways for the DC line are specified as follows:

**Network Rail Route: London North Western
Timetable Planning Rules 2012: Final Proposal for Principal Change
Timetable 2012
Version: 2.0
Date: 4th February 2011**

MD 120 CAMDEN JN TO WATFORD JN DC LINES			
TIMING POINT	DOWN	UP	NOTES
Euston Station to Camden Jn	4 (a)	4 (a)	
Camden Jn to Queens Park Jn	4	4	
Queens Park Jn to Stonebridge Park	3 (b)	3	
Stonebridge Park to Wembley Central DC	4	4	
Wembley Central DC to Harrow & Wealdstone DC	4½	4½	
Harrow and Wealdstone to Watford High Street	6	6	
Watford High Street to Watford Junction	4	4	
(a) Can be reduced to 3 minutes (b) At Queens Park Jn in the Down direction, when a DC line train follows an LUL train from 21 lines, a headway of 3½ minutes applies. An LUL train can be 2½ minutes behind a DC at Queens Park Jn.			

Source: Network Rail, Rules of the Route

b) In the busiest hour (0730 – 0829 southbound) there are 14 trains between Stonebridge Park and Queens Park (11 Bakerloo, 3 London Overground), giving an average headway of slightly more than four and a quarter minutes. Increasing the London Overground service to 4 trains per hour (total 15 trains) would give an average headway of four minutes. This would leave a one minute margin over the planning headway of three minutes on this section – a figure which we understand includes a performance margin for divergences between the timetable and actual train running.

On the basis of this evidence, we consider that TfL's case against providing Euston – Watford DC passengers with a 4 trains per hour turn up and go service is unproven.

We therefore ask that the RUS should:

- Examine the practicability of increasing the Watford DC service from 3 trains per hour to 4 trains per hour, and report whether or not any signalling adjustments would be needed to achieve it.

As well as being necessary to meet basic turn up and go standards for metro type services in London, we infer from the draft RUS that this might at some stage be needed in the peaks to deal with overcrowding.

The draft RUS demand forecasts for 2024 show that three trains into Euston in the morning peak would have passenger loads 40 per cent greater than the seating capacity: one from Wembley Central, one from North Wembley and two from Harrow and Wealdstone.

The commentary on this data observes that these trains are designed with a high standing capacity and that a high proportion of standing passengers is acceptable. We understand this point. However we are not persuaded that the commentary's claim that "given the nature of this service, which has a considerable number of shorter journeys, this does not represent serious overcrowding by 2024" is accurate.

We could accept this statement if it were made about an orbital line (e.g. the North London Line), where there are a large number of short journeys and anyone standing on a longer journey has a good chance of getting a seat when other passengers alight. However the DC line is radial, so we would expect it to act more like a normal suburban railway, becoming increasingly crowded as it approaches central London and with relatively few passengers alighting en route.

As peak journeys from stations as close to Euston as Harlesden exceed the 20 minutes threshold for tolerance of standing, we would consider that more evidence is required about the travel patterns on this line before we would be able to accept that the draft RUS forecasts do not indicate a problem.

We therefore ask that the RUS should:

- Examine more closely the projected passenger loadings to confirm the statement in the draft RUS that there will be no crowding problem on the Watford DC line.

6 High Speed 1 and the Watford DC Line

To accommodate HS2 at an enlarged Euston station, it has been suggested that it might be necessary to remove the Watford DC service – either through complete closure south of Queens Park or by diversion to Camden Road - onto the North London Line. If this were necessary, it would be likely to occur in the early stages of HS2 construction and thus well within the RUS period up to 2024.

The idea of diversion to Camden Road has been put forward before, it is regular practice when engineering works close the section into Euston, and there have been requests for this arrangement to be made permanent.

However the draft RUS loading data indicates that, although the number of passengers using this service into Euston may be relatively small, in absolute terms it still amounts to several thousand per day.

It has been suggested that West Coast Main Line outer suburban services might call at Queens Park in partial compensation, but this of course would not be possible if these trains were diverted onto Crossrail.

This is not a matter to be treated lightly, so we consider it would be helpful for the RUS to:

- Consider how, if HS2 required removal of the Watford DC service from Euston, displaced passengers would be affected and how else these passengers could make their journeys.

7 Improved Connectivity with Orbital Routes

An important London feature in recent years, and one which is encouraged by the Mayor's Transport Strategy, is the development of orbital routes enabling people to use public transport for a wide range of journeys more quickly and cheaply than travelling through the central area. This is important in terms of encouraging modal shift, and in promoting the Mayor's objective of maximizing the number of jobs which can be reached within 45 minutes of home. As noted above, the success of the Milton Keynes to West London Line service in recent years is testament to the attractiveness of orbital routes for journeys which would have previously been considered unattractive to rail because of poor connectivity, lack of journey opportunities and cost.

A major contributor to this policy is the improvement of the London Overground network, the train service elements of which come to fruition in May 2011. However, a missing link in the chain of connectivity is the failure of West Coast outer suburban trains to call at Willesden Junction.

London TravelWatch has long sought for this to be remedied, and recent London Overground developments can only strengthen the case for doing so.

We therefore call for:

- Provision of platforms on the West Coast Main Line slow lines at Willesden Junction to improve orbital connectivity for journeys across north London.
-
- An alternative to this would be to link West Coast Main Line services into Crossrail with an interchange station at Old Oak Common.

8 Linking West Coast Main Line Services into Crossrail

Work on the development of HS2, together with the realisation that Crossrail will see many trains rather wastefully terminating at Paddington from the east, has led to suggestions that West Coast Main Line outer suburban trains should be diverted to the proposed new Old Oak Common station and thence become part of the Crossrail network. This would have the merit of taking passengers direct to the West End, the City and Docklands. It would also provide direct interchange for Heathrow.

If such a scheme came to fruition, we would expect platforms to be provided on both the North and West London Lines as part of the Old Oak complex, although as the interchange distances would be relatively long, we consider that the provision of travolators would be necessary. If adopted, this scheme would replace our proposal to provide West Coast Main Line slow line platforms at Willesden Junction.

We recommend that:

- The idea of linking West Coast Main Line outer suburban trains to Crossrail via Old Oak Common should be evaluated, with orbital interchange maximised by also providing platforms on the North and West London Lines.

9 Inter-City Services from Watford Junction

The December 2008 West Coast timetable resulted in a massive downgrade in the status of Watford Junction as an outer London railhead for inter-city services. For 30 years Watford had good services to most West Coast destinations. Almost all inter-city trains stopped there in the business peaks, and Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool had trains at least every two hours throughout the day. There were also morning and afternoon trains to Glasgow. Watford was a model for one of the aspirations in our “Requirements for Train Services”³, namely that

“As a minimum, sufficient longer-distance services should call at key interchange stations in the London TravelWatch area in order to provide the following:

Out and back day return journey opportunities.

Out and back longer-stay journeys using discount tickets on both weekdays and for ‘Friday out - Sunday return’ journeys, with travel times suitable for leisure travellers, e.g. departures between 1000 & 1400.

Avoiding the need to double-back via London terminals.”

Since December 2008 Watford’s good inter-city service has been downgraded to little more than an hourly service to Birmingham and Wolverhampton. The only other trains are one each to Liverpool, Glasgow and Manchester departing between 0545 and 0650. For the rest of the day, passengers must go via Euston (increasing additional cost), go to Birmingham and change there (and transfer onto a slower service), or use the much slower London Midland non-inter-city service to Crewe and change there. All three stations, by their definition, provide a much slower service for Watford passengers.

During the consultation stage for this timetable, and subsequently, prolonged representations by London TravelWatch and others have yielded no movement on this issue.

We are therefore very pleased to note that the draft RUS has addressed this issue considered as an option to introduce an hourly inter-city train to Preston calling alternately at Watford Junction and Milton Keynes. This would provide Watford with a regular inter-city train every two hours, with significant improved ‘one change’ connections at Crewe for North Wales, Liverpool and Manchester, and at Preston for Lancaster, Carlisle, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

³ London TravelWatch Requirements for Train Services – Principles - June 2010
<http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/4156/get>

Regrettably, the draft RUS rejects this proposal because its benefit / cost ratio is unsatisfactory. Instead it recommends an alternative but similar configuration, but with the key difference that Milton Keynes is served every hour and Watford Junction is provided with no stops. There is no explanation for this difference, and as Milton Keynes already has an hourly train to Crewe and Chester, its case for an additional service every hour (rather than every two hours) is not obvious.

The draft RUS also proposes an acceleration of the London Midland service to Crewe. However this would still be very slow and still not an inter-city service, so we do not consider that this provides Watford with a suitable alternative.

There is also a recommendation for a fourth London – Manchester train every hour and the draft RUS states that this would require the timetable to be re-cast. We wonder if this would provide other possible ways of addressing the Watford issue.

We ask that the RUS should:

- Further review the issue of a day-long inter-city service from Watford Junction to the north, offering fast direct or 'one change' journeys to major destinations in North Wales, the north-west and Scotland.

We would add that Watford Junction is located close to the M1 and the M25 making it accessible to a significant area of north London and south Hertfordshire. The planned improved service on the St. Albans Abbey branch when it is converted to light rail by Hertfordshire County Council will improve Watford Junction's effective catchment area future. The Croxley Link with through connections at Watford from the Metropolitan line (which we hope will include trains from the Aylesbury direction) will do the same. These should improve the business case for good inter-city services at Watford.

10 The Effects of Freight Trains on Passenger Services

The draft RUS looks at the question of conflicts between demand for passenger trains paths and for freight train paths on the West Coast Main Line. It points out that this conflict can be eased if freight trains are electrically hauled, as this enables heavier loads and thus fewer trains to carry any given tonnage. However the draft RUS shies away from recommending that electric haulage on this route – which of course is electrified throughout – be made mandatory.

London TravelWatch regrets this lack of commitment. The West Coast Main Line is one of the few London main lines on which freight is allowed to run in the passenger peak hours, and this places constraints on the timetabling of passenger trains. We recognise that there is no realistic prospect of this arrangement being changed, and as it is expected that freight demand is going to increase, we feel it essential that tonnage per train is maximised in order to minimise competition for line capacity.

We consider that electric traction has the reserves of power to ensure that heavy freight trains can accelerate quickly across junctions and from signal stops. The intensity of service on the West Coast Main Line makes it essential to minimise delays from these causes.

We therefore believe that:

- Electric haulage should be mandatory for freight trains on the southern end of the West Coast Main Line. To achieve this, it will be necessary to electrify the Barking – Gospel Oak line and the Kew – Acton – Dudding Hill route, and its' connections to the Midland and Great Western main lines.

11 Fares

Although this draft RUS does not discuss the use of fares increases to restrain the growth in traffic on routes where capacity cannot be increased, other RUSs have done so. It would not be acceptable to London TravelWatch if such a proposal was introduced after this consultation stage.

