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**Secretariat memorandum**

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PC066

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Heathrow Airport surface access – proposed southern rail access public consultation by London Borough of Hounslow

**1 Purpose of report**

- 1.1. To inform members about the public consultation by London Borough of Hounslow for a proposed southern rail access route to Heathrow Airport (Terminal 5).

**2 Recommendation**

- 2.1. That London TravelWatch submits a supportive response to this consultation, but with the proviso that the issue of train services toward Staines, Weybridge and Woking needs to be addressed.

**3 Background**

- 3.1 Members will be aware through our report 'improving public transport access to London's airports' [http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get\\_lob?id=3894&field=file](http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/documents/get_lob?id=3894&field=file) that there has been a long standing requirement and need for a southern rail access route to Heathrow Airport. Our recommendation was that such a link should be provided regardless of any decision to increase the number of runways at Heathrow.
- 3.2. A number of schemes to provide this link have been proposed in the past, but have not yet come to fruition.
- 3.3 The Airports Commission in its interim report agreed that work to provide rail access to Heathrow from the South was an essential prerequisite to any proposal to add additional air capacity at Heathrow.
- 3.4 The London Borough of Hounslow has independently of Network Rail and the Department for Transport (DfT) commissioned a feasibility study for such a link. It is now consulting on its proposal which would be for a railway linking the line between Feltham and Ashford (Middlesex) with Heathrow Terminal 5, and includes an intermediate station at Bedfont. This consultation can be found at [http://www.hounslow.gov.uk/index/council\\_and\\_democracy/consultations/heathrow\\_southern\\_rail\\_consult.htm](http://www.hounslow.gov.uk/index/council_and_democracy/consultations/heathrow_southern_rail_consult.htm) . The closing date for comments is 9

November 2015. A copy of the proposed route is attached to this report for information.

- 3.5 The consultants for this study acknowledge that Network Rail and the DfT have also commissioned feasibility studies (not yet published), but that they declined to contribute to or assist the work for London Borough of Hounslow. This is regrettable but nevertheless the Hounslow work is of considerable value and opens up further issues to debate on how an effective rail link could be created.

## **4 Commentary**

- 4.1. The route that the consultants propose is relatively straightforward using a mixture of viaduct and tunnelling, and the passively provided platforms at Terminal 5 that were intended for the previous 'Airtrack' scheme.
- 4.2. The additional station at Bedfont would be located next to a business park, which at present is poorly served by public transport. The businesses there rely on a shuttle bus service to Feltham station that is provided by the business park owners. This is extremely well used at peak times. There is also a TfL bus H26 that serves the area and links it to Feltham and Hatton Cross stations.
- 4.3. The train service proposal is for a service integrated with the other suburban rail services on the Richmond / Feltham / Hounslow routes of South West Trains. It is envisaged that four trains per hour would link Terminal 5 to Waterloo. These would be created by the diversion of the existing Waterloo – Hounslow – Staines – Weybridge service (all day) and an existing Waterloo – Richmond – Staines – Ascot – Aldershot – Guildford (peak hour only) services.
- 4.4. The sections of route not covered by the Heathrow services would be covered by local shuttle services between Staines and Weybridge, and Ascot and Guildford. Additional stops would be added in existing other services at Ashford (Middlesex). The report notes that severing some of these existing links would be a problem for some local journeys, but not to those to Clapham Junction and Waterloo from the affected stations, because at the moment these through journeys are long and circuitous, and that quicker alternatives by changing trains elsewhere en route are already available.
- 4.5. The consultants propose that in addition to a railway tracks giving access to and from Waterloo, there should also be tracks giving access towards Ashford (Middlesex) and Staines, but do not specify what services might use these tracks.
- 4.6. The consultants' use of existing timetable slots addresses the concern which was raised previously under the Airtrack scheme, promoted by Surrey County Council and BAA plc, which was that the increased train movements it induced had a significant impact on the numbers of level crossing closures at locations in Richmond and Egham and consequent delays to road traffic.
- 4.7. The deficiency of the proposal is the lack of a suggested train service westward, and the longer journey time that would be needed over the previous

Airtrack proposal. However, this is not insurmountable and a solution might be to extend the proposed Weybridge – Staines shuttle service to Terminal 5. This might be more operationally robust than a shuttle service because it would require the occupation of the two main tracks at Staines whilst the train is reversing. Illumination of this move was a principle reason for South West Trains to abandon this mode of operation in favour of a through service to Waterloo via Hounslow. If these trains were to continue to Ashford (Middlesex) and then on to Terminal 5 this would eliminate this problem, and would use the proposed grade separated junction at Bedfont that the consultants propose.

- 4.8. In addition as these trains would serve the area of Surrey which has the most dependency on Heathrow Airport for jobs and use of air transport, but the poorest public transport access to the airport, this would suggest that the proposal would be worthwhile.
- 4.9. There is also a problem with providing a service to Woking to provide a replacement for the current rail-air coach link from this station. The consultants do not currently propose this as this would require an addition two trains per hour (off-peak) to operate over the previously contentious road level crossings on the Staines – Virginia Water section of route. However, in the peaks the paths of the current trains to Aldershot could be used and an increase in off-peak train services would not necessarily be as detrimental to road users in this area. Therefore it would seem not unreasonable to propose that an additional two trains per hour should operate Terminal 5 – Staines – Addlestone – Byfleet – Woking.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1. This scheme meets London TravelWatch's aspirations for a southern rail access to Heathrow Terminal 5, but has deficiencies in the provision of services between North West Surrey and Heathrow. These however could be addressed in the manner set out above.

## **6 London TravelWatch priority**

- 6.1 This issue is relevant to the remit of London TravelWatch and the impact of such is substantial amongst a large proportion of London's transport users on a variety of modes and in the wider London and South East area

## **7 Equalities and inclusion implications**

- 7.1 None – report is for information only.

## **8 Legal powers**

- 8.1 Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider - and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the

Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight). Section 252A of the same Act (as amended by Schedule 6 of the Railways Act 2005) places a similar duty upon the Committee to keep under review matters affecting the interests of the public in relation to railway passenger and station services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area, and to make representations about them to such persons as it thinks appropriate.

## **9 Financial implications**

9.1 None – report is for information only.