

## **Proposed SL11 express bus route between North Greenwich and Abbey Wood: London TravelWatch's response**

London TravelWatch is London's independent transport watchdog, using evidence to campaign to improve journeys, and advocate for all people travelling in London. It is in this role that we are responding to TfL's consultation about proposed route SL11.

We make the following comments:

### **The benefits of limited stop, orbital bus routes**

We support TfL's proposal to introduce the SL11. London TravelWatch has been calling for more orbital and limited stop bus routes for many years because we know that people value being able to travel across boroughs for work, healthcare appointments, schools and shopping trips. We support too that the SL11 will connect with other bus routes, Elizabeth line, DLR and National Rail services. By doing so, it will help connectivity and bring new, speedier connections in the boroughs of Bexley and Greenwich.

### **Making Superloop an enduring success**

We are pleased that for passengers Superloop has quickly become a widely recognised and valued addition to London's bus network. However, Superloop services operate in the wider bus network where average bus speeds in London continue to fall year on year, with an average network speed of just 9.2 mph in 2024/25. And so, whilst London TravelWatch supports Superloop, we are concerned that for passengers a limited stop bus stuck in traffic is still just a bus stuck in traffic.

To make the Superloop network an enduring success, we call for TfL to redouble their efforts to give the bus the priority it needs on the road, both their own roads and in working productively with London's boroughs on their roads. It is, therefore, welcome that in this proposal TfL have made the SL11 integral to their plans for a future bus transit scheme in the Thamesmead area.

### **Quicker journeys or the need to change buses**

We are pleased that under this proposal 31% of passengers currently using route 472 will benefit from quicker journey times by using the SL11 from the same bus stops as currently.

However, we also note that 2% of passengers would not be within a walkable or wheelable distance to a proposed SL11 stop and would need to change bus to complete their journey. We know that passengers don't like changing buses. Time spent doing this is involuntary because having to change will always be second best to using a direct service, so the more convenient the change the better. It adds extra time to a journey and an uncertainty of timing of the journey. Interchange can also be inconvenient and stressful, especially for some passengers such as older and

Disabled passengers or those with children or luggage, who choose the bus because it is easier for them to use. Changing buses can also potentially mean an additional cost for passengers if they go outside of the 60-minute Hopper fare window while waiting for their second bus, particularly at night when buses are less frequent.

### **The SL11's stops**

To enable passengers to make the easiest connections between the SL11 and the other bus services which run alongside it, we hope that TfL will, wherever possible, ensure same stop interchange.

However, we are concerned that TfL propose that the SL11 will only serve a single stop in each direction in Woolwich town centre. TfL justify this decision as simplifying the route and to standardise the routeing in both directions. We do not think that these are adequate justifications and argue that a single stop in each direction is insufficient especially when compared, for example, to the proposed six stops for the BL1 in Lewisham town centre.

TfL's other justification - to reduce journey times - is an admirable one which London TravelWatch supports in general across the bus network. But we also believe that Superloop services should serve key locations where people want to go; Woolwich town centre is one such location. We also note that even the end to end off peak run time of the 472 is only approximately 50 minutes, which will make the SL11 one of the shorter routes in the Superloop network. Presuming that most passengers will only be travelling on part of the SL11, they should not experience particularly long journey times.

We therefore call for better access in Woolwich including allowing eastbound passengers to avoid having to cross the busy Plumstead Road to access the town centre and Woolwich Arsenal Rail and DLR stations. We ask that eastbound journeys on the SL11 also call at **one** of stops N, T or Y in the town centre, which are currently served by the 472. For westbound journeys, the SL11 should additionally call at stop A on Woolwich High Street, also currently served by the 472, to enable same stop interchange with the other services heading towards Charlton and easier access to the western part of Woolwich town centre.

Given the distance without a proposed SL11 stop between Woolwich and Charlton, we think that TfL should consider adding one stop in each direction over this section. The new housing developments at the western end of Woolwich Church Street may make it ideal for the SL11 to call at the Warspite Road stops in each direction.

### **The impacts on other local bus routes**

We are pleased that TfL are not proposing changes to other bus routes in the area as part of this consultation including any reduction to their frequency. This will be needed as the removal of the 472 will put pressure on the routes not served by the SL11, such as all the stops in the section between Woolwich and Charlton. We urge TfL to keep the loading levels for these routes under review and to increase service frequencies, if required.

## Advertising the consultation

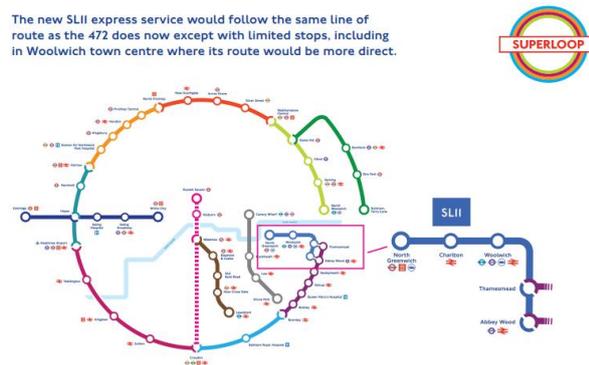
It is very disappointing that the style of bus stop posters and leaflet for the BL1 consultation, which showed clear locations of the proposed stops, has not been continued for this consultation. We ask why this is the case. Instead, TfL have regressed to the lesser quality of information seen in the first phase of Superloop consultations, which, as we said at the time, did not make the best use of the space available on the promotional material.

## Comparison of consultation leaflets for the BL1 and SL11

The BL1 Bakerloop would be part of the Superloop express bus network and would provide quicker journeys between Waterloo, Elephant & Castle and Lewisham town centre.

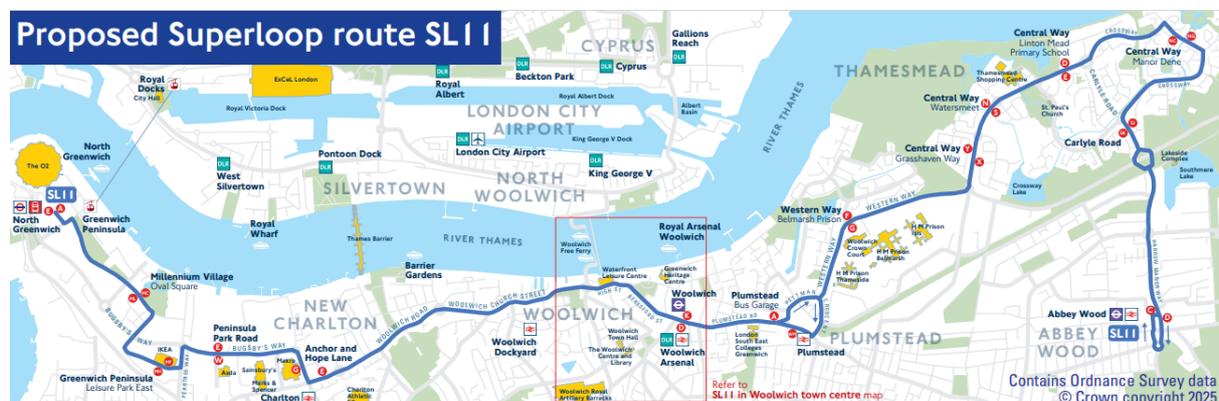


The new SL11 express service would follow the same line of route as the 472 does now except with limited stops, including in Woolwich town centre where its route would be more direct.



In the case of the leaflet for the SL11 (above right), the expanded section only shows one more stop than on the image with the route in the full Superloop network. We say again that it would be better to include all the SL11's proposed stops because the poster needs to show how the proposal will affect passengers. The leaflet also teases the reader by saying that the SL11 'would follow the same line of route as the 472 does now except with limited stops, including in Woolwich town centre where its route would be more direct.' And yet not all the proposed stops are shown.

We ask why TfL did not use their geographic map (below) in the leaflet instead. This map is much clearer, more relevant and a better use of space than the image of the whole Superloop network. We ask if a passenger in Thamesmead affected by this consultation would find it more useful to see that Superloop services operate in distant Hayes or Hendon, or to see the proposed stops for the SL11.

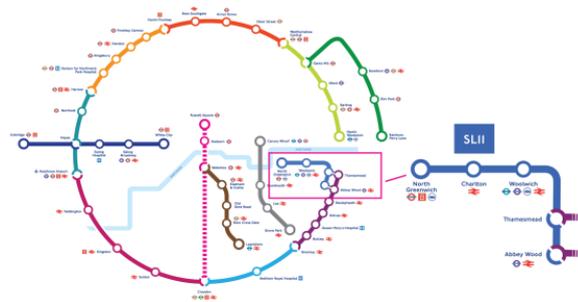


The issues with the consultation leaflets apply similarly to the bus stop posters (below).

**Your Bakerloop. Your Say.**  
A new Superloop express bus service.



**Your Superloop. Your Say.**  
A new Superloop express bus service.



We are consulting on proposals to expand the Superloop network with a new express bus route BLI (the Bakerloop), between Waterloo, Elephant & Castle and Lewisham.

For more details and to have your say, please scan the QR code, or:

- Visit: [haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/BLI-superloop](https://haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/BLI-superloop)
- Email: [haveyoursay@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@tfl.gov.uk)
- Telephone: 020 3054 6037 (call back service)
- Write to: FREEPOST TFL HAVE YOUR SAY (BLI)

The closing date for comments is Friday 14 March 2025.



We are proposing to expand the Superloop network by renumbering bus route 472 as route SLII, operating as a limited-stop express service between North Greenwich and Abbey Wood.

For more details and to have your say, please scan the QR code, or:

- Visit: [haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/SLII-superloop](https://haveyoursay.tfl.gov.uk/SLII-superloop)
- Email: [haveyoursay@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@tfl.gov.uk)
- Telephone: 020 3054 6037 (call back service)
- Write to: FREEPOST TFL HAVE YOUR SAY (SLII)

The closing date for comments is Sunday 13 April 2025.



We were pleased, though, to see that TfL are continuing to use the distinctive 'Toblerone' style wraps at bus stops to advertise this consultation.