



BEDFORD COMMUTERS ASSOCIATION

July 2007

50p (free to members)

WELCOME to the July 2007 Newsletter of the Bedford Commuters Association.

1. Committee Members.

As we reported over the last few newsletters we are in need of new committee members. If you feel that you have something to contribute and would like to help us improve the travelling environment then please contact the Chairman on 01525 715454.

2. 2007 AGM.

The BCA held its AGM on Wednesday 16th May at Dom Polski adjacent to the railway station. The meeting was attended by senior members of both FCC and MML, including Andy Cope Deputy Managing Director FCC and Garry Raven MD of MML. It was disappointing to only see 15 members, including the Committee, turn up. If anyone has any ideas how to encourage more members to attend please let the Chairman know. However, despite the low turnout, both FCC & MML gave presentations, summaries of which follow:

Andy Cope Deputy Managing Director and Larry Heyman Integration and Partnership Manager gave a presentation for FCC.

From Bedford FCC carried 2,300 travellers and MML 2,800 travellers during the peak. Growth on average is running at 5% p.a.

Performance - good first 8 periods, poor Autumn/Winter, now recovering. PPM worst than last year, TOC on self delays 12.8% improvement, but Network Rail delays worse by 10% Key Network Rail actions include continuing temporary speed restriction (tsr) removal at Carlton Road Junction (Kentish Town), tree felling/bank clearance, lightening protection measures, national 'bridge strike' initiative, embankment work, and improvements to (water) pumping in Ampthill Tunnel.

Key FCC actions include, a heavy maintenance facility at Hornsey for Class 319s (from July), refresh of Class 319s (at Wolverton) over 3 years costing £27m, a timetable review to remove problems such as trains that can never run to time, preparations for the opening of St Pancras International (platforms 14 & 15) on December 9th, managing disruption, and improving the control room at West Hampstead signalling centre.

Stations - new ticket vending machines (now operational at both Flitwick and Bedford), launch of a station announcing guide for staff.

Stations "Next Steps" - Bedford refurbished toilets, repaint of station (7/08), Help point, 17 new CCTV cameras, new CIS screens (11/07), automatic doors, cycle parking improvements and Car Park replacement of pay and display machines (7/07).

At Flitwick 9 new CCTV cameras, new CIS screens (11/07), repainting (2/08), new waiting shelter on platform 1, new canopies, upgrade of cycle parking, Car Park replacement of pay and display machines (7/07), evaluation of expansion of car park.

Revenue Protection/Security - additional Revenue Protection Officers, 24 PSCOs and 5 Police Officers (BTP), Gateline plan for Blackfriars, City Thameslink (ticket gates now both operational at these central London stations).

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Additional capacity : 2 x Class 317s (transferred from GN/FCC) from May 2007, 4 x Class 319s from December 2007 and 8 x Class 319s from December 2008 (both of these Class 319 transfers from Southern TOC).

Thameslink Programme - awaiting funding decision by Government in July 2007 (probably as part of DfT "HLOS"). If favourable, Moorgate branch and Blackfriars bay platforms to close December 2008, amended timetable from December 2008 and increased engineering disruption. FCC will hold another meeting with BCA members later this year to provide further detailed information if funding decision is agreed (see also item 7).

Visit to Bedford Cauldwell Walk depot - FCC to arrange a further visit. Any members interested please let the Chairman know.

Garry Raven gave a brief update on issues concerning Midland Mainline:

Reconfiguration of 9 car Meridians, to provide 8 and 5 car units.

Growth still continuing, which despite reconfiguration of units, has led to overcrowding on some services.

St Pancras International Station : MML are working with Eurostar in preparation for the opening in November 2007.

Performance up to 95% on time arrivals and improving.

New timetable from May - no change for Bedford.

New Franchise from November 2007. Announcement of winner by DfT on 22nd June, which is Stagecoach (see below).

3. East Midlands Franchise.

On 22nd June the Government announced the winner of the East Midlands Franchise -Stagecoach. TOC is likely to be called Stagecoach Midland Rail The BCA has some major concerns with their non-regulated fares policy which Stagecoach operate on South West Trains (SWT) and we would not want this operated on Midland Mainline services.

Passengers can expect :

- An additional hourly service between Kettering & London, hopefully calling at Bedford
- A 9% increase in peak capacity into and out of London St. Pancras by 2010
- A new East Midlands Parkway station (north of Loughborough) to open in December 2008
- Improved performance, with a forecast 90.4% of trains on time by the end of the franchise
- More investment including over £5m on improvements to stations, at least 1,250 extra car parking spaces and the introduction of smart card technology by 2010

The government will continue to limit annual rises of regulated fares in line with national policy, which is currently RPI plus 1%. However, unregulated fares will be the responsibility of Stagecoach, which has indicated it may wish to raise them annually by an average of 3.4% above inflation.

There is conflicting information on whether Corby will be returned to the passenger network with the construction of a new station in operation from December 2008. The DfT's statement on June 22nd confirms this; Stagecoach says just maybe!

Stagecoach has said it is discussing its traction requirements regarding the East Midlands franchise win, but says there will be no dramatic changes.

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4. St Pancras International Station.

The following table gives the projected walking times to LUL platforms from the new FCC sub-surface platforms 14 and 15 (underneath the main station, in what was known as the "Thameslink Box"):

St Pancras platforms 14 & 15	LUL (Mid Platform)	Projected walking time (seconds)	Current walking time from Kings Cross TL	Difference (seconds)
Gateline	Northern Line Platform 7	382	335	47
Gateline	Northern Line Platform 8	382	335	47
Gateline	Piccadilly Line Platform 5	351	242	109
Gateline	Piccadilly Line Platform 6	353	246	107
Gateline	Victoria Line Platform 3	345	164	181
Gateline	Victoria Line Platform 4	347	155	192
Gateline	H&C, Circle Metropolitan Platforms 1&2	321	442	-121

When the new LUL Northern Ticket Hall opens in 2010 there will be considerable improvements to these walking times.

5. Visit to Bedford Cauldwell Walk Train Care Depot.

On Saturday June 9th FCC arranged a visit to their Bedford Depot. Some of the members who attended the AGM, came on the trip. They were given a tour of the depot and shown some of the work done on the electric trains. All agreed that they found it both interesting and useful in understanding what goes on to provide the train service. FCC are keen to repeat this visit later in the year and if any one is interested in attending could you please let the Chairman know.

6. Wixams Station.

Network Rail have advised that the target date for the opening of the new station at Elstow/Wixams is December 2010. It will have four platforms, will be fully DDA compliant and have parking for around 600 cars. Wixams is three miles south of Bedford and is a development by Gallaghers on a brownfield site of 4,500 homes, plus schools and office space. The station will be located close to the B530 near 2Chimney Corner". The Wixams may be one of the sustainable new "Eco-towns" suggested by Gordon Brown.

7. M1 Widening.

The Highways Agency is currently undertaking consultation on the M1 widening proposals between Junction 10 at Luton to Junction 13 at Ridgmont, approximately 15 miles (25km) of motorway. This will upgrade the motorway from 3 to 4 lanes at a cost of approximately £30m per mile. There will also be improvements to Junctions 11, 12 and 13.

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Further information

Should you require additional information, please use the following contacts:
Highways Agency Information Line:

08457 50 40 30

HIGHWAYS AGENCY

5 Broadway

Broad Street

Birmingham

B15 1BL

Email: M1J10-13Widening@highways.gsi.gov.uk

Website: [www. highways.gov.uk](http://www.highways.gov.uk)

Department for Transport

Great Minster House

76 Marsham Street

London, SW1P 4DR

It is important that Members respond to the Highways Agency/DfT, impressing upon them the urgency of funding approval for the “**Thameslink Programme**” given the sums likely to be expended by the Highways Agency!

8. London Overground.

MTR/Laing have won the new London Overground concession (formerly Silverlink Metro operations). This commences operation in November. In the statements about Laing/MTR winning the new London Overground concession, there was an interesting comment in The London Mayor's "Press Briefing". Ken Livingstone stated that he was seeking similar contracts (under the GLA Act) for control over all surface trains in Greater London. He said : "We hope it's the first of a series of transfers of franchises over the next decade, so gradually all of the suburban rail services in London can be brought up to the standard of London Overground".

It is understood that the Director Rail at TfL, Ian Brown may be targeting FCC over its shortage of rolling stock (on FCC/Thameslink services). Indeed TfL may wish to see both GN & Thameslink "inners" have better service frequencies in the future. If indeed this is the case, then FCC may not continue to operate these services for much longer.

9. Marston Vale Line.

The BBRUA have informed the BCA that from November the service on this line between Bedford & Bletchley will become part of the West Midlands franchise and will be provided by Go-Via, part of the Go Ahead Group (the previous Thameslink operator!). The new franchise is to be known as “London Midland”. Disappointingly there is no mention of extension of Bedford line services to/from Milton Keynes Central or Oxford and BBRUA will be pressing Go-Via to support this much-needed rail development. BCA members are urged to support this initiative. A through service to/from Milton Keynes Central should improve connections into/out of West Coast main line services.

For more information you can access our website - www.bedfordcommuters.org.uk
If there's something you want to tell us about, e-mail - admin@bedfordcommuters.org.uk

This newsletter is published by Bedford Commuters Association.

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