



BEDFORD COMMUTERS ASSOCIATION

September 2007

WELCOME to the September Newsletter of the Bedford Commuters' Association.

1. Committee Members

We are pleased to welcome Eva Cullerton-Oltay, a resident of Flitwick, as our new Secretary. Prior to her current job in the Royal Society of Engineering, Eva worked at WAGN so is familiar with the inner machinations of the Train Operating Companies. However, as we have reported in our last few newsletters, the BCA is still 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. Both FCC & MML users are welcome.

2. Thameslink Programme

The Thameslink route has experienced the highest level of growth of all London TOC's between 1993 and 2007, resulting in serious overcrowding. The Thameslink Programme (formerly called "Thameslink 2000") has been around for many years as its former name testifies. However, on July 24th the Secretary of State for Transport Ruth Kelly finally announced the approval of funding for this programme. **A total of £5.5bn will be spent on infrastructure and brand new rolling stock.**

The Thameslink Programme will be one of the biggest rail projects ever in the UK. Its objectives are:

- 1) To provide the basis for a major expansion of services using the route. Passengers on the Thameslink route will benefit from longer trains and new direct services (e.g. Cambridge to Gatwick);
- 2) To reduce overcrowding on the Thameslink route, other London commuter services and the London Underground. The scheme will reduce overcrowding on the Underground, with three times as many trains travelling through London every hour (an increase from 8 to 24);
- 3) To reduce the need for interchange between main-line and London Underground services;
- 4) To provide for the introduction of new cross-London services to offer improved public transport accessibility in the South East, South Midlands & East of England;
- 5) To improve access to areas of expected growth such as the London Bridge area, Docklands, the lands adjacent to Kings Cross/ St Pancras International stations and London's airports; and
- 6) To facilitate the flow of passengers and better dispersal to/from St Pancras International station.

Capacity will be improved by increasing the length and frequency of trains, and to support these alterations there will be substantial infrastructure changes including:

1) Remodelling of key Central London stations to remove bottlenecks:

Blackfriars : a new station will be built spanning the Thames, capable of handling 12 coach trains. A roof will cover all the platforms and an entrance/exit provided on the South Bank. The London Underground station will also be improved. Completion is due at the end of 2011.

Farringdon : The platforms will be extended to take 12 coach trains - however, this will require the permanent closure of the Moorgate branch. A new entrance and footbridge will be constructed. Completion by the end of 2011.

London Bridge: The effective rebuilding of the station with more through platforms and improved passenger facilities. Completion by 2015.

2) Remodelling Borough Market Junction, west of London Bridge. Construction of a new viaduct parallel to the existing one to increase the tracks from 2 to 4. Completion by 2011.

3) Extension of platforms to allow 12 car trains. It is hoped to start this October at Luton Airport Parkway station. Platform extensions will eventually be carried out at 50 stations outside of central London.

4) New stations will be built – two on the Thameslink route are likely to be at The Wixams and Brent Cross. Interchange will also be improved at West Hampstead between the respective stations (FCC/Thameslink, London Overground/NLL, Jubilee Line & eventually Chiltern Railways).

To facilitate the remodelling of Blackfriars and Farringdon stations it will be necessary to close the terminating bay platforms at Blackfriars and the Moorgate line from Farringdon from the December 2008 timetable.

The Thameslink Programme will be delivered in two stages:

Key Output 1 - provides for the improved train service of 16 train paths per hour between St Pancras International and Blackfriars - to be delivered December 2011.

Key Output 2 - provides for the improved train service of 24 train paths per hour between St Pancras International and Blackfriars, including 12 car trains in operation - to be delivered December 2015.

The BCA will work closely with FCC to ensure the best possible service is provided and that you are kept up to date with information on how the project is progressing.

As a consequence the BCA has arranged for FCC to give a presentation of the Thameslink Programme and how it will affect you. The presentation will take place on Thursday September 20th at Dom Polski, next to Bedford Station commencing at 7.15pm. DO NOT FORGET. Please attend to ensure you understand how it will affect you and ask questions of the people who will be present from the rail industry.

Useful links to obtain information about the Thameslink Programme are :

www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/thameslinkprogramme

www.networkrail.co.uk/asp/1326.aspx

3. **December 2007 Timetable**

As announced earlier in the year the remaining 12 Class 319 units from Southern will be transferred to FCC, with four units by December 2007 and the remaining eight in December 2008. This will allow the following four car trains to become eight from December 2007:

Morning Peak	Evening Peak
07.44 St Albans - Wimbledon	16.23 Wimbledon - Bedford
08.02 Luton - Moorgate	17.48 Luton - Sutton
08.22 St Albans - Sutton	17.44 St Albans - Wimbledon
08.40 Bedford - Brighton	15.07 Brighton - Bedford

There has been recent speculation ("Modern Railways", September 2007) from industry sources, that the additional 12 x 4-car Class 377 Electrostars announced (April 2007) for delivery to Southern TOC, may now be allocated to FCC for use from December 2008. The new trains would support the Thameslink upgrade programme and enable Class 317s sets to be released to FCC/GN & "ONE" Railway.

TfL has also gained new rail powers. It will be able to propose and pay for extra train services and improvements to stations on a number of inner-suburban rail services terminating just outside the Greater London (GLA) area. This is under a provision in the 2005 Railways Act. On FCC this includes services to St. Albans City (on the Thameslink route) and to Welwyn Garden City & Hertford North (on the GN route).

4. East Midlands Franchise



New train company unveiled

(10 August 2007)

A new train company for the East Midlands and South Yorkshire area has unveiled its name, logo and the look of its train livery – and plans for millions of pounds of improvements to trains and stations. East Midlands Trains, run by Stagecoach Group, starts its seven-year-and-four-month franchise on Sunday November 11th at 2am.

A meeting between the BCA and Stagecoach, the winner of the East Midlands Franchise is scheduled for Thursday 30th August. At this meeting we intend to ask for clarification about how the new franchise will affect passengers from Bedford. Issues include more peak trains to and from London, maintaining the present half hourly off peak service frequency, the new Corby service, fares, and bus/rail integration at Bedford Station. A report of this meeting will be in the next Newsletter.

Stagecoach have announced that they have appointed Tim Shoveller as their Managing Director for the new East Midlands franchise. He will be joining Stagecoach from Virgin Trains where he has been Business Development Director.

The East Midlands Franchise comprises:

- the former Midland Mainline (MML) franchise that operated high speed long distance services from London St. Pancras to Sheffield, Derby and Nottingham
- the regional services formerly operated by Central Trains between Nottingham and Derby/Lincoln/Cleethorpes/Skegness, between Derby and Crewe/Matlock/ and Norwich and Liverpool.

The franchise will run until 31 March 2015, the last year and 4 months of which will be conditional upon achieving pre-set performance targets.

Highlights of improvements and investment include:

- Faster journeys to Sheffield (2h 08m) and Leicester (1hr 07m) from London as part of a new timetable in December 2008 with potential further infrastructure-based improvements
- Additional early morning train from Derby to London St Pancras to cater for high levels of morning peak demand
- Performance plans to improve the public performance measure (PPM) to 90.4%
- Significant increase in capacity, with more than 850 extra mainline peak seats into and out of London and an increase of nearly 10,000 off-peak seats per weekday
- A £26.5m fleet interior and performance improvement programme, including décor, seats, on-train CCTV and technical modifications
- Significant investment at Derby train maintenance depot (Etches Park), to provide better facilities for train maintenance operations
- A centralised Information and Security Centre to respond to Help Point requests and monitor CCTV cameras
- Additional CCTV cameras at 12 stations and mobile security staff coverage for stations and trains and more than 60 new or upgraded Help Points at 35 stations
- Investment in Smartcard technology to make ticket purchasing much easier
- Installation of around 70 new self-service ticket vending machines to reduce ticket office queues and provide ticket retailing at locations such as Syston and Sutton Parkway for the first time
- £5m station investment programme
- New East Midlands Parkway station 5 minutes by car from junction 24 of the M1
- New passenger charter with clear targets and compensation structure based on the 'Delay Repay' model supported by Passenger Focus
- An additional 750 car parking spaces
- A competitive option has been offered to the Department for Transport for the provision of rail services to a potential new rail station at Corby

5. The Wixams and NIRAH

In mid August developers signed an agreement to provide a railway station to serve the new town. The Wixams project could get an operational railway station by 2010 after developers Gallagher and Network Rail came to an agreement to develop plans. Network Rail has agreed to review a number of options, which have been considered previously, and work to select and help deliver a final scheme. The new station is proposed to form the end of Wixams' High Street and would be sited close to Chimney Corner and the B530 Bedford to Ampthill road.

The three local authorities, Bedfordshire County Council, Bedford Borough Council and Mid Beds District Council, released a joint statement saying : "We all welcome this news and support proposals to build a new railway station at The Wixams".

Also located in close proximity to the new station serving The Wixams, is the NIRAH proposal. This is for an international visitor destination and Science Research Park that would include a tropical biotope, a Water Adventure Park, spa, three hotels, a conference and exhibition centre, 50-seat cinema, and associated ancillary retail and food uses. The Science Research Park would include laboratories and offices for employment uses. It is essential that The Wixams station is capable of serving NIRAH as well as the new town.

Should members wish to respond to the NIRAH proposal, they can do so via :
NIRAH Team, Development Planning & Control Manager, Bedfordshire County Council (Ref. BC/CM/2006/32/NT), County Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford, MK42 9AP. Tel. 01234 276556.

6. Car Parking

Bedfordshire County Council have published proposals this summer for “Waiting Restrictions” in various roads around Flitwick Railway Station. They state that this is in order to reduce parking congestion by commuters in certain residential areas of Flitwick. Should members be affected by these proposals, they should respond to :
Chris Heard, (Ref. CJH/1017/3), Orders & Commons Registration Officer, Access & Partnerships Section, Bedfordshire County Council, County Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford, MK42 9AP. Tel. 01234 228830. They may also care to contact their respective County Councillor.

7. Membership Renewal

As always, the falling leaves of September will see BCA committee members take to Bedford and Flitwick stations in an attempt to persuade existing members to renew and new members to join the Rail User Group. The membership fee will remain at £5.

Please remember that the BCA regularly represents the views of its members in both local newspapers and broadcast media, as well as our meetings with the Train Operating Companies, Passenger Focus, Local Authorities, MPs, etc.

If you think you have had good value from the BCA in the past year, why not suggest to a fellow traveller that they sign up too! The more members we have, the better able we are to influence the policies of the railway companies as the only officially recognised rail user group for people travelling from this part of the line on MML and FCC services. You will find a membership renewal form with this newsletter. It will save BCA volunteers a great deal of work if you can bring it to the station with your payment (cheques made payable to Bedford Commuters Association) on one of the following days:

Tuesday 25th September (AM &PM)
Wednesday 26th September (PM only)
Thursday 27th September (AM & PM)

Bedford Station
Bedford Station
Flitwick Station

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 edited by Andrew Long, FCILT and published by Bedford Commuters Association.