

London and South East Route Utilisation Strategy - Rail User Group Meeting

Saturday 11 July 2009

Chair- Ashwin Kumar, Passenger Director, Passenger Focus

Summary of questions and discussion

A - Comments, Questions and Discussion - Session 1

Mark Balaam: West London Line Group

- Passenger perspectives and convenience need to be considered in the RUS and the specification should look beyond Cost Benefit Analysis.
- The RUS needs to consider social and demographic change, modal shift, the passenger's work life balance and also look at off peak services. Noted encouragement of flexible working times and need to look at the growing leisure market.
- Danger of underestimating demand.
- RUGs should have a place on SMG.

Charles King: East Surrey Transport Committee

- Likes the overarching idea and joining up across routes.
- Stopping patterns can be inconsistent in different geographical areas, how will this be addressed?
- Connectivity and passenger needs and demand need to be considered.

Michael Abrahams: Forest Hill Society

- To what extent will the RUS consider improvements to the London Underground and the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) and improve integration?

Response- Alasdair Couper-Johnston, Network Rail: *If there is a gap which the London Underground/DLR can fill then this will be considered as an option.*

Mike Colvin: Southwark Rail Users' Group

- Gaps don't make a strategy and funding dictates provision.
- Who is going to think about the railway that passengers want rather than just the operation of it?
- Who is doing the blue sky thinking?

Response: Richard Eccles, Network Rail- *The 30 year timescale for the RUS is looking at the gaps and how to address these problems.*

Brian Charlton: Sevenoaks Rail Travellers Association

- Had the RUS strategies been in place for the development of areas such as the Docklands, would that have had an impact on the routes and/or terminals for the DLR and connections with Main Line services? In the future, how will Network Rail manage an unthought-of development like Docklands and plan effectively?

Response- Richard Eccles: *Strategies will be trying to pre-empt not just react to development by working to join up various policy agendas. Working with the DfT and Department of Communities and Local Government to manage response to growth.*

Peter Radford : Chelmsford RUG

- Main Line trains do stop at Docklands
- Passengers do not want to experience things going wrong- but when they do there is a need for a strategy to manage planned or unplanned disruption and give consideration to how to respond to meet passenger needs.

Response -Alasdair Couper-Johnston: *Network Rail is working towards a 7 day railway and the thoughts and strategies in place for planned disruption can also work and be used for unplanned disruption.*

Richard Pout: Barking and Gospel Oak Rail User Group

- There are concerns about capacity around London and aspirations for 15 minute frequencies but the recession is deepening and resources are pressured.
- Need to consider how to get synergies and a cohesive network e.g not diesel islands within mainly electrified areas.

Response- Alasdair Couper-Johnston: *The RUS will look at this and consider the options available.*

Isle Towler: Sydenham Society

- The overground needs to consider capacity on lines and at stations and consider the flexibility of light rail systems for linking across the gaps around the outskirts of the London area.

Response- Alasdair Couper-Johnston: *If Light Rail could fill a gap around the London area then it will be considered and reviewed.*

Nick Biskinis: Clapham Transport Users Group

- Clapham area is the most congested without Underground services
- Network Rail should rethink the axing of the South London line to tackle the overcrowding problem on the line and in the area.

Response: Richard Eccles: *The South London Line is not an issue the London and South East RUS will address. If there are concerns about this then the recommendation is to discuss it further with DfT and TfL.*

B - Break out sessions: Key points from Group feedback

Groups were asked to consider what gaps and issues the London and South East RUS needs to address, what potential solutions to the problems might be and suggest the top three priorities for action. (Flip chart notes from each group are recorded in Appendix 1).

Group 1:

- Orbital routes are important and with 4 trains per hour radial links can reduce pressure on central London termini, tube and bus services.
- Need to expand medium length journeys with High Speed growth
- Identify growing markets and new developments

Group 2:

- Delivering capacity by grade separating junctions and separating fast and slow trains
- Addressing freight services and impact
- Better off peak services (every 15 minutes) and incentives
- Role for new lines and extensions, particularly Bakerloo Line/DLR and central London loop.

Group 3:

- Brighton line needs to be looked at as a whole, including integration of the Gatwick Express.
- Peak/Off-peak continuity in timetable (including Sundays) and connectivity with adjoining services on other networks
- DfT influence is not in line with passenger needs

Group 4

- Need to take into account changing demographics and Regional Plans
- Hubs to link transport and connectivity
- Address gaps in electrification
- Freight network, a dedicated network for Freight.

Group 5

- Don't assume all travel is to London and within. Not everyone wants to travel to/from London or change there!
- Reinstate orbital routes
- Grade separated junctions and new/reinstated track to improve capacity
- Heathrow airport

Group 6

- Look at origin and destination of passengers
- Need regional orbital links
- Capacity to handle freight
- Using signalling and extra track to boost capacity
- Station design, layout and capacity at station car parks

C - Group Discussion

George Jasiemieck: West London Line Group

- Avoid passengers going through Central London, this is the issue! We need to avoid making passengers go through central London who do not want to go there.
- There needs to be closer working between Network Rail, TFL and DfT and aligning agendas

Michael Abrahams: Forest Hill Society

- The primary need is radial not orbital routes.
- Thameslink and Cross Rail important to get people fast through the core.
- Where do they build orbital routes? - It needs to be agreed how far/near central London these will be.

John Beeston: Ealing Passenger Transport Group

- Orbital tracks are already there
- Heathrow Airport- Hayes - Network Rail need to get hold of BAA owned track and put this in public hands
- Terminal 5 has 2 spare platforms which will mean there are enough links to provide orbital routes without changing in central London

Trevor Tupper: West Sussex Rail User Group

- Local links- West Sussex to Southampton airport and Basingstoke/Winchester - have been lost but these links are needed.

Peter Radford: Chelmsford Commuters and Rail Travellers

- Need orbital routes to get freight out of London

Mark Balaam: West London Line Group

- Key issue is freight flyover at Redhill
- Orbital lines under-used – Should have a half hourly Brighton/Birmingham service
- Fast line between Clapham and Croydon

Charles Martin: Sutton Rail Users

- Conflict between long and short distance services. The priority should be suburban services for workers.
- Extend Cross Rail
- Introducing Birmingham/Brighton services will undermine local services

Mark Balaam: West London Line Group

- Brighton to Birmingham is not an end-to-end journey

Charles King: East Surrey Transport Committee

- Good connectivity is key
- To encourage more people onto the train Network Rail need to look at frequency which attracts passengers.

- Engineering works; do not dig up parallel lines on the same day; someone should be at the station to look after the passenger on the day, not just left to the TOCs.

Keith Dyll: Rail Future London and South East Branch

- Through London services like Thameslink are important

Arthur Taylor: Bedford Commuters Association

- DfT (who are setting franchise terms) need to have more involvement in the RUS process

Nick Biskinis: Clapham Rail User Group

- Changing patterns at Heathrow/Gatwick Airport, DfT see long distance journeys as a compromise for flights

Richard Pout: Forrest Hill Society

- There are opportunities for orbital routes.

D - Network Rail Comments on debate

Alasdair Couper-Johnston:

- With regards to the West Sussex connectivity- this is being reviewed
- 6 platforms are terminal 5 in Heathrow- there are 2 “unused” platforms but these are designated for the air track scheme to Staines.
- Long distance versus short distance - Orbital Vs Radial is a clear issue.
- RUS process looks at evidence and aware that passenger counts should be treated with caution. Network Rail recognises that this is an issue.
- Network rail need evidence and reliable data, so if RUGs have access to information and data, please let us know.