



***Campaigning by the
Railway Development Society Ltd***

Surrey Rail Strategy
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please reply to:

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For the attention of Lee McQuade

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Consultation on Surrey Rail Strategy

Dear Lee,

I am pleased to submit this response on behalf of ***Railfuture*** and the local Rail User and Community groups listed below. We have worked together to prepare the response, based on contributions from individual members. We have also consulted other local groups who have made their own submissions.

Railfuture is an independent national voluntary organisation which campaigns for better rail services.

We strongly support the concept of a County Rail Strategy and the engagement of local authorities in promoting rail development projects.

If you require any more detail or clarification please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

Chris Page

Chris Page
Railfuture Surrey

Contributors:

Guildford Society Transport Group
Reigate, Redhill and District Rail User's Association

www.railfuture.org.uk www.railfuturescotland.org.uk www.railfuturewales.org.uk
www.railwatch.org.uk

Response to Consultation on Surrey Rail Strategy

Railfuture strongly support the concept of a County Rail Strategy and the engagement of local authorities in promoting rail development projects.

Study methodology

We consider the rail user groups to be key stakeholders, but it appears from the strategy document that ARUP did not consult any of them in the preparation of the draft.

Some of the data used to justify the proposals is out of date. For example much of the planned development cited in paragraph 3.2.1 is retail; since the recession in 2008 retail development has stopped and there is a considerable overhang of vacant retail property, so this development may not happen for a very long time.

Whilst the result of scoring each option is given, the score against each criteria is not shown so it is not possible to challenge whether the option has been scored fairly.

The rail usage data given, for example in paragraph 3.2.2, is heavily SWT-centric – there is very little data for Southern, First Great Western or Cross-Country, which also serve Surrey.

The Sutton and Mole Valley line to Dorking does not appear to be covered in the strategy. Low line speeds between Sutton and Herne Hill, and limited capacity at Herne Hill, have a significant impact on journey times between Dorking, Epsom and London termini. Improvements to these journey times are needed.

South West Main Line

The option of 28 trains per hour on the fast tracks of South West Main Line would have a significant adverse impact on reliability. Railfuture consider that progressing the regional option of Crossrail 2 more urgently would be a more fruitful approach.

Railfuture strongly supports the regional option for Crossrail 2. Widening to five or six tracks between Hampton Court Junction and Wimbledon, and grade separation at Woking Junction, will also be necessary to provide additional capacity for the main line services from beyond Hampton Court and Surbiton.

It might be possible to extend services which currently terminate at Woking via a reinstated Sturt Lane chord to Camberley and Ascot, but these trains already make many stops so the time saving from Camberley would be relatively small. Running faster services via the Sturt Lane chord would require increased South West Main Line capacity as described in the paragraphs above. Consideration would also have to be given to the effect on the viability of the existing Ascot to Guildford service. A simpler short-term solution should be pursued, for example tighter connections at Ash Vale.

Windsor Lines

The Network Rail London and South East Passenger Market Study shows how improvements in journey time can increase economic growth and improve the quality of life for commuters. It includes case studies of Potters Bar and Staines, which are the same distance from London; whilst the journey time from Potters Bar is only 35 minutes, from Staines it is 50 minutes. Improvements to these journey times are needed.

Brighton Main Line

There appears to be an error in the figure of 5300 or 5% for the capacity shortfall on the Brighton Main Line given in paragraph 3.2.3. This figure does not match those given in the NR Rail Utilisation Strategy or the Market Study. In addition, given 28 trains currently running south of East Croydon on the Brighton Main Line in the peak hour, 5% of capacity would equate to 1400 passengers.

The county should express a view on the destinations to be chosen for Thameslink services. Destinations should be chosen to maximise the use of the services for journeys against the peak flow, and so maximise the return on investment, whilst avoiding the use of the Thameslink metro-style trains on long journeys for which they will not be suitable. The recent decision to retain the Sutton loop as a destination will adversely affect the reliability of Thameslink services; Railfuture consider that services from one side of the Sutton/Wimbledon loop should terminate at Blackfriars. There is also a need to retain the through services which currently rely on splitting and joining after fixed-formation Thameslink stock is introduced.

The county should include longer-term options to increase capacity on the Brighton Main Line, and provide direct journey opportunities to Docklands, by for example tunnelling from Stoats Nest and linking in to a potential future Crossrail 3 route.

North Downs Line

The option of electrifying the North Downs line scores a good pass but is not included in the recommended options in paragraph 4.4. This should be taken forward as a high priority to reduce journey times between the regional centres of Redhill, Guildford and Reading, which the Network Rail Market Study notes will promote economic growth, and to improve access to Gatwick.

Access to airports

The Network Rail Market Study recommends a target of 4 journeys per hour from towns other than London, eg Guildford, to hub airports eg Heathrow and Gatwick.

Service frequency on the North Downs line should be increased to improve access to Gatwick.

Wandsworth Council are currently working on an updated proposal for Southern Access to Heathrow to replace their original Airtrack Lite proposal which is shown as an option for the Surrey strategy. Crossrail 2 and grade separation at Woking are the

potential game-changers here – Crossrail 2 will free up paths for access from Waterloo to Heathrow via Twickenham and Staines by breaking the Kingston loop at Twickenham. The majority of passengers on the current Weybridge to Waterloo service do not travel through at Staines, so this service could be run as separate Waterloo-Hounslow -Heathrow and Guildford-Heathrow services as proposed in Airtrack Lite, but without the splitting and joining of trains, and without additional trains through the level crossings around Egham. The southern access route proposed by the Windsor Link Railway, which avoids the SSSI at Staines Moor, should be considered. These changes should enable an option for Southern Access to Heathrow to be scored as a ‘Good Pass’ rather than just the ‘Pass’ achieved by Airtrack Lite. In the medium term Railfuture propose an extension of existing Heathrow services to Staines.

There is no obvious centre in Surrey to be served by an extension of an HS2 spur via Heathrow to Gatwick, so this option would incur significant environmental damage in Surrey with no benefit to Surrey. A better long-term approach would be to link domestic HS2 high speed services through a ‘Euston Cross’ station to a Crossrail 3 route leading to Gatwick via the Brighton Main Line. In the medium term, Southern access to Heathrow would enable Heathrow – Gatwick services via Clapham Junction and Tulse Hill.

Access to Guildford

We note that reopening to Cranleigh was rejected on the basis that there has been no change which would improve the business case. However it is not clear whether the proposal for 2600 houses and other developments to be built at Dunsfold, which could be served by extending beyond Cranleigh to Dunsfold, and which could provide significant developer contributions, has been taken into account.

Additionally we believe there is a strong business case for new stations at Park Barn and Merrow.

Network wide and stations

It is clear from the Network Rail Market Study that reducing journey times results in increased demand, economic growth and improved quality of life. Service frequency has a significant effect on both journey time and capacity. However the strategy focuses on capacity; quicker journeys and service frequency should be considered just as important.

Network connectivity also has an effect on journey times and journey opportunities. Scheduling services to minimise waiting time between connecting services will reduce journey times. Providing interchange stations or better access between stations at points where lines cross will provide new journey opportunities.

Other passenger satisfaction criteria which do not feature strongly in the strategy, but which should be considered, are value for money and reliability. As an example, one set of points at Redhill is used by all northbound trains so failure here can disrupt the entire Brighton Main Line service – work is required to reduce the probability or the effects of a failure here.

The strategy covers one aspect of modal integration, namely provision of additional car parking, but neglects to consider integration with bus services: routing of bus services via rail stations, ensuring that schedules enable effective connections, and providing real-time and planning information all need to be considered. Further, it is imperative that development, such as that planned by Solum at Guildford, take into account the Surrey Rail Strategy.

Priority options

The document is too focussed on major schemes, with not enough consideration for the 'ordinary' things which impact passenger satisfaction on a day to day basis – punctuality, reliability, getting a seat, value for money, frequent services, quicker journeys, simple fares, clear accurate information, helpful customer service, safe clean trains and stations, easy bus connections, empty car and cycle spaces.

The highest priority major schemes should be the North Downs line, Southern Access to Heathrow and Crossrail2.

Action plan

The objectives should contain some indication of the timeframe in which they should be achieved. There should also an indication of how Surrey will execute the strategy – will a dedicated rail officer be appointed?

The following actions should also be included in the plan:

- Work with Wandsworth Council to create a proposal for Southern Access to Heathrow which meets the needs of both parties, and with Network Rail through their Long Term Planning Process to include the proposal in scope for Control Period 6.
- Work with Network Rail through their Long Term Planning Process to lobby for inclusion of North Downs Line electrification in Control Period 6
- Work with Train Operating Companies and Network Rail to develop and manage a programme for continuous improvement of passenger satisfaction criteria.

We strongly support the concept of an annual rail summit to engage key stakeholders such as local rail user groups and Railfuture.