



London Metro Division London and South East branch Newsletter: October 2024

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HS2, EUSTON AND OLD OAK COMMON

Along with the many lessons to be learnt from the planning and construction of HS2, there are lessons to be learnt as to how such a project may be curtailed or amended.

In October 2023 Rishi Sunak cancelled those aspects of the project that had not substantially commenced, without proper consideration of whether the remaining parts made any sense in transportation terms.

Terminating HS2 in West London (i.e., Old Oak Common) makes little commercial or operational sense, and creates a host of issues. Old Oak Common does serve a purpose as an intermediate stop, but not as the end London destination.

At the date of this newsletter we are awaiting the 30th October budget, when it is believed a decision will be made whether or not to extend HS2 to Euston. There are soundings to the effect that HS2 will be extended to Euston, and we can only hope the rumours are true.

Only once that decision has been made will it be possible to finalise plans as to Old Oak Common station, and the services out of Paddington and the Elizabeth line that will serve it. It will also enable decisions to be made about Euston, the current overcrowding issues being difficult to address until the decision as to the extension is made.

Even if HS2 does go to Euston, issues concerning Old Oak Common will remain, in particular in respect of level boarding. Clearly a brand new inter-change station as important as Old Oak Common should have level boarding between HS2, the Elizabeth line, Heathrow Express and the Great Western lines.

However although HS2 will have level boarding at its own dedicated HS2 platforms, that will not be the case for other services at the station under current plans. The Elizabeth line only has level boarding in its Central London tunnel sections, stations west of Paddington (other than at Heathrow itself) having platforms set according to very dated Network Rail criteria.

The answer to the situation is not easy, due to different trains and services operating over a complex route, but not insurmountable either. For level boarding you either need higher platforms, lower track or lower train floors. What you cannot do is mix these aspects on the same piece of railway. That is what the Elizabeth line has done.

Why are we here? Historically level boarding was not a major consideration of the railways, and only in very recent times has accessibility been regarded as a right, and so only recently has level boarding been regarded as important.

The sad truth is that level boarding is still not regarded as an absolute necessity, with some new stations being built which do not provide it. London is littered with stations that do not have level boarding, and Harrington ramps (which lift only a section of platform) are only a temporary fix, not the answer. The picture below is taken at London Bridge, one of our busiest stations, the first door shown being at usual platform level, and the second on a Harrington ramp. There are stations on our network with much larger gaps, Ealing Broadway and Hanwell being particularly bad, both of which have caused passenger injury in recent times.



The solution may well be to lower railway carriage doors, but as carriages can be in service for decades, it will be decades before the issue is fully addressed. As with any complex issue, what is needed is careful and determined planning. Piecemeal fixes will not resolve the issue. This needs to happen now.

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MEETING NEWS

Presentation Meeting from Southeastern

On 19 September we welcomed George Paterson, Senior Stakeholder Engagement Manager at Southeastern, who gave a presentation on Southeastern's recent performance and future plans.

As is well known, the South Eastern franchise was terminated by the DfT in October 2021 when the operator of last resort took over operations formerly under the Southeastern brand. George had straddled that period giving him interesting insights.

George explained that Southeastern (SE) had made considerable efforts to make it a 'better railway' which had included amongst other matters, a recruitment drive in most positions, including trainee drivers, on-board personnel, ticket office and station staff. Indeed, SE hoped to have about 100 more staff at its stations than it had around one year ago.

Efforts to improve the timetable had also been made, with all metro routes now operating at 4 trains per hour, with better spread of timing gaps, and the Sidcup loop trains now reaching Abbey Wood at peak times. Reliability had also improved, with SE cancellations now being amongst the lowest of the rail operators.

The Metro fleet procurement was underway, with SE requiring improved accessibility, more spacious interiors, improved air conditioning and customer information. Trains will also be fitted with an element of battery technology. The networker fleet was also being replaced, and the last two Class 707 units having been transferred across from SWR.

However, like other operators, SE still has a significant revenue gap (about 80%), and the passenger loadings, although up on last year, remained well below pre-covid levels. Timed gate-line entries and exits showed that peak time travel was well below pre-covid levels, but off-peak had largely recovered. Revenue was hurt by increased power costs, and there had been a significant loss of traffic to the Elizabeth line.

Looking forward to 2025, SE intends to look at mainline service frequency some of which need increasing. In common with other operators, SE is under pressure to reduce its level of subsidy but it was refreshing to hear SE's stance that this could be achieved by adding services where there is demand, rather than focussing on costs only and reducing services.

George's presentation is available [here](#); after the meeting, we asked some supplementary questions: these and George's answers are available as an appendix to this newsletter.

CLOSURE AND TRAFFIC NEWS

For up-to-date details, go to TfL website.

Our brief summary of main closure events

London Underground

Bakerloo Line:

Sat 16 Nov: No service from Queen's Park to Harrow & Wealdstone

Circle Line:

Sat 2 and Sun 3 Nov: Edgware Road to Aldgate, via Victoria closed

District Line:

Sat 2 and Sun 3 Nov: Embankment and Edgware Road to Ealing Broadway, Kensington (Olympia), Richmond and Wimbledon closed

Hammersmith & City:

Sat 2 and Sun 3 Nov: Whitechapel to Barking closed

Jubilee Line:

Sat 26 and Sun 27 Oct: West Hampstead to Stanmore closed including Friday and Saturday Night Tube

Northern Line:

Kentish Town station remains closed.

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Colindale station will remain closed to December 2024 for station improvements.

Piccadilly Line:

Fri 22 to Sat 23 Nov: Hammersmith to Cockfosters closed until 02:30 during Friday Night Tube

Sat 23 and Sun 24 Nov: Hammersmith to King's Cross St Pancras closed including after 02:30 Friday Night Tube and throughout Saturday Night Tube

London Overground:

October

Sat 26 to Tues 29 Oct: Sydenham to Crystal Palace closed

Sat 26 Oct to Fri 1 Nov: Surrey Quays to Clapham Junction closed

Sun 27 Oct: Willesden Junction to Richmond, and Surrey Quays to Clapham Junction closed

Sun 3 Nov: Woodgrange Park to Barking Riverside closed

Sat 9 and Sun 10 Nov: New Cross Gate to Crystal Palace and West Croydon closed

November

Sun 10 Nov: Willesden Junction to Clapham Junction closed

Sat 16 Nov: Euston to Watford Junction closed

Sun 17 Nov: Harrow & Wealdstone to Watford Junction closed

Sat 23 Nov: Wandsworth Road to Clapham Junction closed

Sun 24 Nov: Surrey Quays to Clapham Junction and Woodgrange Park to Barking Riverside closed

Elizabeth Line:

October

Sun 3 Nov: Trains not stopping at Acton Main Line, Hanwell and West Ealing

Sun 27 Oct and Sun 3, 10 and 24 Nov: Reduced services from West Drayton to Maidenhead and Heathrow T4

November

Sat 16 to Sun 17 Nov: Paddington to Abbey Wood, Whitechapel to Stratford, and Hayes & Harlington to Heathrow closed

Sun 17 Nov: Paddington to Ealing Broadway closed

Docklands Light Railway:

Weds 30 Oct to Sun 3 Nov: Reduced service on the entire network

Sat 16 and Sun 17 Nov: Stratford to Canning town closed

Sat 23 and Sun 24 Nov: Prince Regent to Beckton closed

Meetings Dates for 2025

Our last meeting for 2024 will be on Thursday 21 November at the basement room of the Alan Baxter Gallery, 75 Cowcross Street, Farringdon.

The Alan Baxter Gallery has served us well over 2024, and for 2025 we will be staying at the same venue.

The 3rd Thursday of the odd month is available to us, except July, which will therefore be held on the 2nd Thursday of that month. The dates are therefore:

- Thursday 16 January 2025
- Thursday 20 March 2025
- Thursday 15 May 2025
- Thursday 10 July 2025
- Thursday 18 September 2025
- Thursday 20 November 2025

Come along and tell us your thoughts.

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Appendix: Post Meeting update from Southeastern

Step free access

Q: [We] welcome more stations with step free access, but can something be done to improve access from the platform to the train? ♦ When lifts are installed can the train stop signs be placed so that trains stop near the lift?

A: We will always try to site lifts as close to the train as possible. This is not always possible due to existing structures, ground conditions, curvature of platforms

Stop boards are located based on signal sighting and the ability for drivers to see them clearly when approaching the station or dispatching the train. All TOC's have a signal sighting committee who review signals and stop boards following comments from drivers or new projects where they are always consulted.

Ticketing

Q: Will the extension of bankcard ticketing (although suspended due to the TfL hacking problem) include the technology and not just paper tickets? ♦ ATMs: Other London TOC's ATMs have boundary zone tickets can these be added to SE Trains ATMs? ♦ Could the train ticket to Calais via the Port of Dover be reinstated? ♦ Could connections to TfL Superloop be a through ticket?

A: The acceptance of contactless payment as a ticketing option for travel on National Rail will be extended to six Southeastern stations in the near future. The technology will be the same as for existing contactless ticketing inside the London Travelcard area, i.e. consumers will tap their payment-enabled device on a reader (usually on the automatic ticket barriers, but some are freestanding) at the start and end of their journey. The amount that consumers pay will be capped in the same way that is currently in place inside the London Travelcard area.

Southeastern Ticket Vending Machines already offer boundary zone fares on the "A-Z Destination Finder" screen.

Southeastern has no plans to reinstate the cross-channel Dover-Calais product at this time.

With regards to the Superloop, consumers wanting to make a journey that combines National Rail services inside London with TfL services (including bus) are advised to use contactless payments for their travel – the journeys they make on contactless are aggregated at the end of the day and a price cap applied where applicable. If their journey starts outside the London Travelcard area, then a National Rail Travelcard ticket will cover their train journey as well as and TfL bus/tube/tram journeys.

Services

Q: When the Hastings service is diverted via Redhill could it call at Redhill and East Croydon as it has done in the past?

A: At East Croydon, there is a different method of train dispatch compared with SE, which our Hastings & Tonbridge conductors are no longer fully competent with. We also would incur charges per vehicle for any Class 375 unit calling there.

At Redhill, it always depends on which combination of engineering work is taking place and whether or not there is time in the schedule to do so. We have avoided it since the December 2022 timetable change because we need to be mindful a large majority of trains are full and standing departing Tonbridge and passengers also greatly appreciate faster journey times.

Feedback has been noted by our train planners.

Rolling stock

Will we be able to comment on the interior of the next order of new rolling stock? ♦ We would like to see : (a) Only 2 X 2 seating and (b) the right mix of 4 bay and airline seating to reflect group and family leisure travel.

A: Awaited.

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