



London Metro Division London and South East branch Newsletter: February 2025

railfuture

PROGRESS ON RAIL DEVOLUTION IN LONDON?

The Question and Answer session of the London Assembly held on 16 January 2025 seems to suggest that further devolution of London's metro rail system is a real possibility.

The Mayor is of course eager for all London metro services to be under the direction and control of TfL, an aim included in his mayoral election campaign. Railfuture supports the Mayor in that aim.

At the London Assembly meeting, Keith Prince AM asked the Mayor what progress on rail devolution should Londoners expect in 2025.

The Mayor's response was telling, repeated in part as follows: 'The natural time for devolution to occur is when the franchises with the current operators come to an end, therefore progress is to some extent contingent on these existing processes. Devolution of Great Northern and Southeastern services could be delivered most swiftly as these franchises end sooner and these are expected to have the strongest business case. Southern and Southwestern would be long-term possibilities. This new Government...is now working on the creation of Great British Railways to oversee national rail transport in the UK. This is, of course, a huge undertaking and the Government's rail devolution plans will be developed to complement this national system. I have had several important discussions with the new Government on transport delivery in London, while TfL continues to have positive conversations with officials. We have already started to see the fruits of this work with proposals for enhanced roles for mayors, including over transport being included in the recent English Devolution White Paper.'

The Mayor identified two main issues on timing, being when a franchise ends and the organisational time necessary between the devolution decision being made and the service actually coming over to TfL.

Of course Southeastern services are already in public hands. Great Northern services are within the GTR contract, which has a core term expiry date of 1 April 2025 and a final expiry date of 1 April 2028.

The Mayor confirmed conversations with Government were on-going, and that he was hopeful that metroisation of Great Northern and Southeastern services would happen within this mayoral term. Railfuture's view is that the Mayor should specify the train service and station facilities regardless of operator.

BAKERLOO LINE EXTENSION / INTERIM BAKERLOO LOOP

The extension of the Bakerloo Line from Elephant and Castle to Lewisham (and beyond) remains an aspiration of the Mayor. Experience with other London Underground extension schemes suggest this will happen at some point in the future, but that it could take a considerable number of years.

Recognising this, a long-term rail replacement bus service is now being proposed to run along the intended Bakerloo extension route. Like the new Superloop services, this is intended to be an express service, which will run between Waterloo, Elephant & Castle and Lewisham with stops also at Burgess Park, Old Kent Road and New Cross Gate.

There is no doubt that an improved bus service will be of benefit to residents along this corridor, although it is no substitute for the railway extension. That the extension is still the plan seems apparent from the intended colour scheme for the Bakerloo Loop buses, namely the same brown colour as the Bakerloo Line. A consultation on the Bakerloop service is now open and runs until 14 March 2025.

Railfuture is committed to the extension of the Bakerloo Line from Elephant & Castle to Lewisham, and encourages all those wishing to see this happen to join our bi-monthly Metro Division meetings in Farringdon.

SUCCESS OF THE ELIZABETH LINE - NOW TIME FOR CROSSRAIL 2

Passenger numbers on the Elizabeth are beating all expectations. New figures from Transport for London (TfL) show that over 500 million journeys have been made on the Elizabeth line since it opened in May 2022.

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That is substantially higher than TfL had expected before the line opened. During its busiest times, more than 800,000 journeys are being taken on the railway every day.

The Elizabeth Line is proof that London needs cross rail services, and that when they are provided, they are extensively used. Crossrail 2 will connect the South West Main Line to the West Anglia Main Line, via Victoria and King's Cross St Pancras. This will facilitate direct services from multiple stations in Surrey to multiple stations in Hertfordshire, providing a new north - south rail link across Greater London.

When first proposed construction was anticipated to start around 2023, with the new line opening from the early 2030s. The scheme was effectively shelved by the Conservative Government as part of the conditions for emergency Covid funding to TfL at a time of some crisis. That crisis is over, and a new government is now in power. Like the Elizabeth Line, Crossrail 2 makes good economic sense and will bring with it considerable social and economic benefits.

The Elizabeth Line proves the economic case for cross London rail services. Railfuture urges the Government and TfL to work together as a priority to get Crossrail 2 moving once again.

SOME GOOD NEWS ON THE UNDERGROUND

After some delay, Underground services have now been fully restored on Piccadilly line services between Rayners Lane and Uxbridge. The service was curtailed due to the need to repair damage to train wheels, caused by unusually heavy leaf fall in the Autumn. This reduced the number of trains available to run on the line. Good news also on the Central Line, as more trains are now running on it following a year of disruption caused by faulty motors on many of the Central Line trains. Reduced services inevitably resulted in crowded trains which had led to many complaints.

On the core route between White City and Leytonstone, 25 to 28 trains per hour will now run (up from the 21) at peak times. However, there are still trains out of service, and accordingly a full timetable is still not being run. Also reduced weekend services remain.

IMPROVING SUNDAY SERVICES

The Metro Division is campaigning for the improvement of Sunday train services including restoring some to pre-covid service levels. Many Sunday services in the Metro area served by national rail comprise just one train an hour such as the Tattenham Corner line, or journeys have to be made by changing as on the Hounslow loop. South London again bears the brunt of this situation, as it is metro services on national rail that are typically affected.

Some services were cut in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic and although some lines have since seen services restored, others have not. For example, the Government is still not funding the return of Sunday trains between Lewisham, Blackheath, Charlton and Woolwich Arsenal, a connection from the Woolwich line which assists cross London travel via Lewisham.

Members with concerns regarding Sunday services, please contact the Metro Division with details, as we ramp up our campaign to restore Sunday services.

MEETINGS DATES FOR 2025

Our next meeting will be on Thursday 20 March 2025 at the basement room of the Alan Baxter Gallery, 75 Cowcross Street, Farringdon, starting 7pm. David Wilby of South Western Railway will be attending and be available to answer questions attendees may have.

The dates for our following meetings are:

- Thursday 15 May 2025
- Thursday 10 July 2025
- Thursday 18 September 2025
- Thursday 20 November 2025

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