

London's Forgotten Railway

The Transport Committee's review of the North London Railway
March 2006



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Greater London Authority
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The Transport Committee

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The Transport Committee's general terms of reference are to examine and report on transport matters of importance to Greater London and the transport strategies, policies and actions of the Mayor, Transport for London, and the other Functional Bodies where appropriate. In particular, the Transport Committee is also required to examine and report to the Assembly from time to time on the Mayor's Transport Strategy, in particular its implementation and revision.

The terms of reference as agreed by the Transport Committee on 20th October 2005 for this scrutiny were:

- To survey the current state of the North London Line and the Gospel Oak-Barking line in terms of service frequency, reliability, rolling stock, safety and amenity on stations and station approaches.
- To gather and consider the views of Boroughs, business communities, rail passengers, campaign groups and other stakeholders on how they would wish these rail lines to be upgraded and improved.
- To consider these rail lines as part of an integrated public transport system and whether efficient use is being made of connections and interchanges.
- To gather evidence from Network Rail, the Department for Transport and TfL London Rail about what improvements to these rail lines are practicable and affordable.
- To make recommendations on what the Mayor of London should seek to do by way of improving and upgrading these rail lines if and when he assumes responsibility for the Silverlink Metro franchise in the spring of 2007.

Please contact Danny Myers on either 020 7983 4394 or on e-mail via danny.myers@london.gov.uk if you have any comments on this report the Committee would welcome any feedback.

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Rapporteur's Foreword



Geoff Pope

Deputy Chair, Transport Committee

On the 14 February 2006 the Mayor of London was able to announce that from November 2007 he will assume responsibility for the North London Railway concession. This includes both the North London Line from Richmond to Stratford and the Gospel Oak-Barking line. TfL London Rail will be able to take the first step to make a reality of the current Mayor's publicly declared intention of assuming significant powers over all commuter rail within Greater London. This would make possible for the first time a truly integrated public transport system for the capital – rail, Tube, tram, bus and river.

This review therefore is a timely one. Before concession agreements are signed and work committed to, the Transport Committee of the London Assembly felt it appropriate for me to conduct a "rapporteur" scrutiny to assess the current state of the two rail lines; to listen to stakeholders and users of the lines; and to make recommendations to the Mayor of London and others about what Londoners would wish to see when the lines are improved and upgraded.

Passengers and stakeholders from Richmond, Ealing, Brent, Camden, Islington, Hackney, Newham, Waltham Forest and Barking at our recent conference, expressed real discontent about the reliability and frequency of the trains, unattractive stations with poor provision for passengers, grubby and ageing rolling stock, and unsatisfactory ticketing arrangements.

Despite this very poor provision, both lines are well used and are often overcrowded at peak hours. Moreover, because of their orbital routes, trains are full in both directions. It is very likely that when the service and stations are made more attractive, many more people will use these lines. Stakeholders believed that the level of suppressed passenger demand was high and they submitted a large number of positive proposals to improve passenger and freight services and interchanges.

The Mayor has a golden opportunity to make a step change in the quality of the North London Railway and to set an example to the rest of UK for a smart, clean, frequent and reliable rail service.

I am very grateful to the Chair of the Transport Committee, Roger Evans, and his researcher Gareth Knight for their interest and support, and to John Biggs, the Labour constituency Assembly member for City and East who has advised us on the Gospel Oak-Barking rail line. Warm thanks are due to all those from the London Boroughs, stakeholder groups and transport experts who attended our stakeholder meeting. My thanks in particular to Neil Anderson, Principal Transportation Planner of Hackney Borough Council, for guiding us around the North London Line, and to the officers of TfL London Rail, TravelWatch and Network Rail for their advice and guidance.

Above all I hope that a long term integrated plan for excellent passenger services, freight and infrastructure will ensure that optimum value for money is achieved.

Executive Summary

“Shabby, unreliable, unsafe, overcrowded”.

These are the words used to describe the North London Railway (NLR) by people who have spoken to the Committee during our review. From November 2007 responsibility for the railway will rest with the Mayor.

Despite some welcome service improvements made since late 2004 by its current operator Silverlink, the trains remain in poor condition and stations are often unstaffed, which makes many passengers feel unsafe. The NLR, which has the potential to be a strategic orbital route, is both overcrowded and neglected.

TfL London Rail is also working on the East London Line extensions, which will turn the existing Tube line into an “overground” railway. When Phase 2 of these extensions are completed, connecting with the North London Railway at Highbury and Islington in the north, and Surrey Quays with Clapham Junction in the south, a genuinely orbital suburban railway will have been created. Such routes are vitally important as they enable passengers to move between districts outside central London without having to travel through the centre.

On 14th February 2006 the Department for Transport handed over franchising responsibilities for the NLR to the Mayor and TfL London Rail. Such responsibilities were not part of the original GLA Act in 1999. But, following the Railways Act 2005, the Mayor is beginning to realise a long held aspiration, first laid down in his Transport Strategy in 2001, to have more direct control of London’s rail network.

The NLR will be seen as a test bed for futhering these ambitions across all London’s rail commuter routes. It represents a stern test indeed.

The opportunity is there for TfL to set new standards as a commissioner of rail services and to provide an alternative management model for rail – management characterised by buck passing and contractual quagmires since rail privatisation in the mid 1990s.

TfL London Rail’s plans for the North London Railway

TfL London Rail have laid down clear short, medium and long term plans to improve the service and the stations that serve them. They include track improvements, increased frequency of service to provide a ‘turn-up-and-go’ metro service, new rolling stock and a station upgrading programme.

These are ambitious plans and they are strongly supported by the Transport Committee.

Concerns of the Transport Committee

There are inevitably risks attached to the Mayor’s ambition. The NLR will play an important part in the Games’ Travel Plan of the 2012 Olympic Games and for the Paralympics. However the effective deadline for the NLR is late 2010 or early 2011. New rolling stock, signalling and track will have had to be commissioned, constructed, tested and operational to ensure that what was promised is delivered. The transport legacy must be effectively delivered well before the Games themselves.

This is a very tight schedule. Key to the development of a new viable timetable is the accommodation of the freight services that operate along two of the branches of the NLR. Until Network Rail has 'proved' the new timetable for the NLR, the Committee cannot assert whether the schedule for improvements will be deliverable.

The Committee supports the plans proposed by TfL London Rail but registers its concern over whether those elements that are needed to meet the 2010/11 deadline can be delivered in time. Tightly managed project planning will be required.

The Committee is seriously concerned that passenger projection figures for the line may have under-estimated the level of suppressed demand for services along the lines. **The Committee has therefore asked TfL and Network Rail to ensure that none of the track or station work planned between now and 2011 should prevent or prejudice the possibility of moving to six-car operation on the North London Line or three-car operation on the Gospel Oak-Barking line.**

Recommendations of the Transport Committee

The Transport Committee has made the following recommendations based on the evidence we have received on how TfL's current plans could be enhanced or modified:

- The Committee recommends that the freight industry, port authorities and the Mayor of London open discussions with Network Rail about the need to upgrade the Felixstowe to Nuneaton line to facilitate this necessary diversion of freight trains. The Department for Transport should secure additional funding for rail freight upgrades from the port developers at Shellhaven and Bathside Bay.
- Network Rail should give serious consideration to electrifying the Gospel Oak-Barking line.
- TfL London Rail should specify train carriages with three doors to allow for quicker boarding and alighting at stations.
- TfL London Rail needs to develop and publish a plan for constructing toilets for passengers at those stations on the North London Railway that provide interchange facilities.
- Customer service should be improved by the full roll-out of ticket gates; Oyster Pre-Pay and ticketing for all main line rail destinations should be made available; staff deployed on trains and platforms.
- TfL London Rail should deploy real time information systems along the NLR, similar to those used on the Tube and DLR and these information displays should also be installed at street level.
- TfL London Rail and Network Rail should work together to introduce step-free access at Highbury & Islington and Barking stations and produce a detailed timetable for making the rest of the NLR step-free.
- TfL London Rail and Network Rail should strive to ensure the most complete integration possible of NLR stations that are located close to Tube, rail and bus networks. These include Camden Road, Dalston Junction, West Hampstead and Leyton Midland Road.

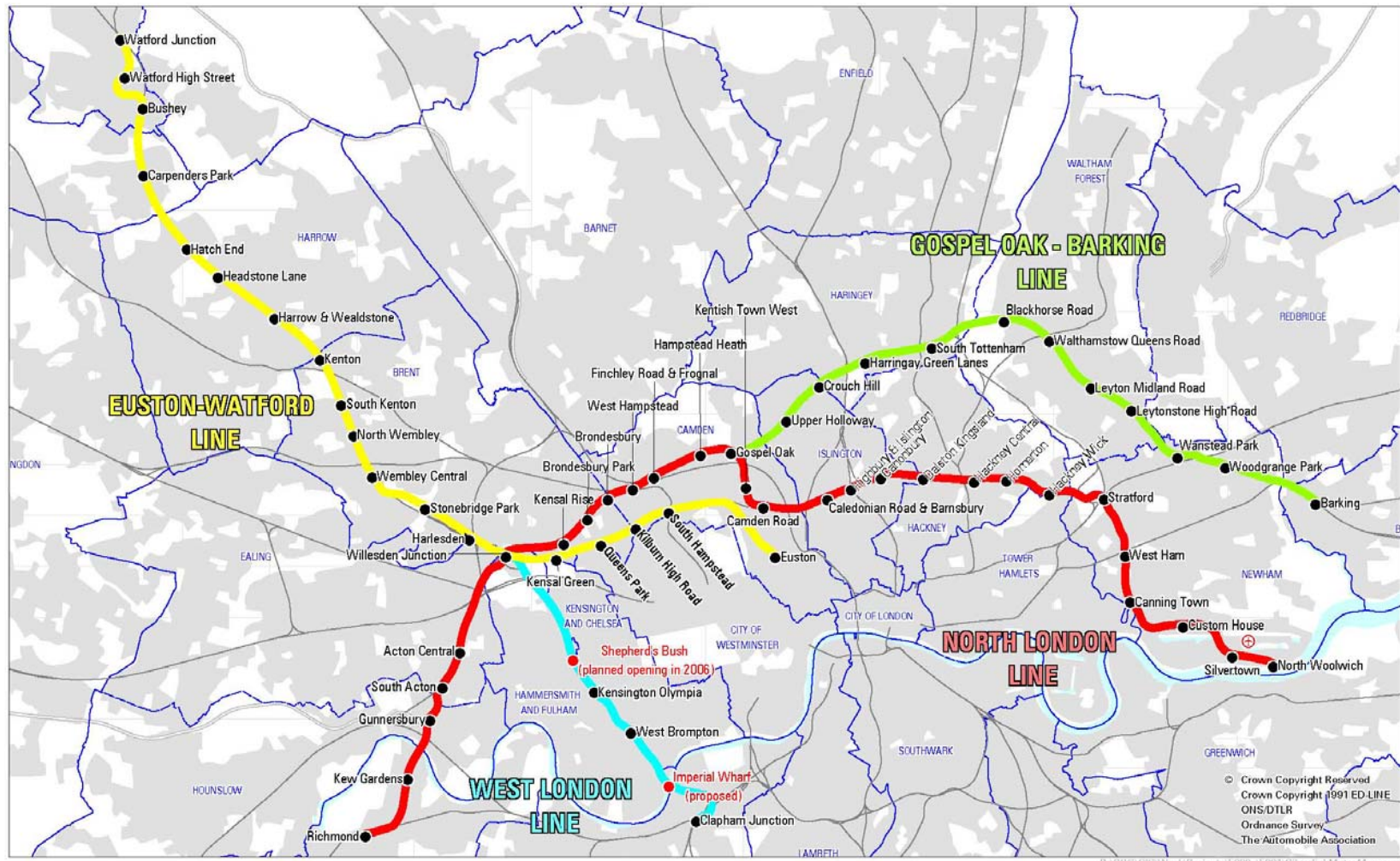
- TfL London Rail should ensure that nothing is done to prevent the potential reopening of stations which are currently disused along the NLR including Tufnell Park and Primrose Hill.
- TfL should make Hampstead Heath station a Zone 2, rather than Zone 3, station.
- The London Borough of Camden should prepare detailed proposals for a new NLR station at Maiden Lane.

The Committee also strongly supports the plans for Phase 2 of the East London Line extensions which will provide important interchange with the NLR and urges that funding should be confirmed at an early date. Signalling work on the NLR must accommodate and not prejudice the Phase 2 connection with the East London Line extension.

Introduction

- 1.1 The North London Railway comprises four different lines; the North London Line, the West London Line, the Gospel Oak-Barking Line and Euston-Watford DC Line. 63,000 passengers daily use the railway, which amounts to a total of 23 million passenger journeys every year¹.
- 1.2 The North London Line (NLL) arcs from Richmond in South West London to North Woolwich in East London. It links Kew Gardens, Hampstead Heath, Camden market and the 2012 Olympic site. It will also serve new business and financial centres being constructed at Stratford City and on the King's Cross railway lands. It is for many passengers along the route a vital and important link to the wider integrated transport network. However, it is generally perceived as an unreliable, overcrowded service with a shabby rolling stock served by stations blighted by vandalism, poor lighting, a lack of adequate signage and unsatisfactory ticketing arrangements.
- 1.3 The West London Line runs between Willesden and Clapham Junction. It has stops at West Brompton and Kensington Olympia, and will have two new stations at Imperial Wharf and Shepherd's Bush and covers six miles of track.
- 1.4 This review, led by Geoff Pope AM – the Deputy Chair of Transport Committee – has examined the strategic and local problems across the railway and has sought to make both short and long term recommendations to Transport for London, Network Rail and the Department for Transport as to how the railway could be improved. This report is not however considering the Euston-Watford Line, which is included in the map below.

¹ TfL Press Release, No. 039, 14th February 2006



Map provided courtesy of the **North Orbital Rail Partnership**

Background

- 1.5 The recent history of the railway has not been happy. Since 2004, the Silverlink franchise has been extended for 2 years after October 2004 by the Strategic Rail Authority, and will have to be extended again by DfT to November 2007 without accompanying funding for upgrades. Consequently, the North London Railway has a neglected appearance and poor customer image, with passengers reporting reliability problems.
- 1.6 However, the short-term crisis management of the line is soon to cease. In handing over the franchise responsibilities for the line to TfL, a move made possible by the 2005 Railways Act, the Department of Transport is seeking a long term solution to the problems encountered along the route. The DfT appears to be using the NLR as a 'pilot' to assess the long term viability of TfL taking on similar responsibilities across the wider London rail network.
- 1.7 It has been a long held ambition of the Mayor of London to secure more control in developing the rail network in London. This is now beginning to be realised. The Mayor's Transport Strategy, published in July 2001, set out his priorities regarding London's overground network, describing it as 'a crucial component of the city's public transport system'. The Strategy rightly argued that the future expansion and integration of the public transport system will require significant input from the overground railway in addition to what can be achieved through the Tube and bus networks alone. TfL London Rail have made it clear that they are not set up to run railway lines or own infrastructure, but would seek responsibility for securing powers to 'specify and fund' services, through gaining franchising rights. The handover of the NLR is the first step in this process.
- 1.8 Further momentum for the development of the line has been generated by Network Rail's Cross London Route Utilisation Strategy. Option 5 of this strategy for the expansion of the line matches closely with TfL's own plans for the line. TfL London Rail and Network Rail appear to be working together and cooperating closely.
- 1.9 The process of change is already underway. Funding has been allocated; rolling stock is on the verge of being commissioned and new concession agreements are being drawn up. The transfer to TfL of specification and funding responsibility for the railway provides a useful opportunity to review the development and enhancement of a previously neglected and often overlooked component of London's transport network.

Details of the Routes – the North London Line

- 1.10 The North London Line runs from Richmond in South West London to North Woolwich in East London. It goes through some of the deprived communities in North London connecting with Underground services at Richmond, Kew Gardens, Gunnersbury, Willesden Junction, West Hampstead, Highbury and Islington, Stratford, West Ham, and Canning Town. There are also National Rail interchanges at Richmond, Willesden Junction, West Hampstead and Hackney Central (with Hackney Downs), Stratford, West Ham and Barking. There is a total of 28 stations along the 22 mile route.
- 1.11 The service operates six 3-car trains an hour during peak time at certain stations– one of which is paid for by TfL. The line connects with the Dockland

Light Railway at Stratford, West Ham, Canning Town and Custom House stations.

- 1.12 The North London Line is to be terminated at Stratford and the DLR will be extended from Canning Town to Stratford International via Stratford Regional using North London Line tracks. DLR is working towards securing all the necessary approvals and consents for this new DLR route with a view to opening by the end of 2009.

The Gospel Oak-Barking Line

- 1.13 The Gospel Oak-Barking Line branches off the North London Line to the north and east, interchanging with the Underground service at Blackhorse Road on the Victoria Line and at Barking for the District and Hammersmith & City Line. The service operates 2-car trains twice hourly, with a third paid for by TfL during peak time. There are 12 stations along the line covering 13 ¾ miles of track.

The scope of the report

- 1.14 The Committee has gathered evidence from Silverlink – the current operator for both lines – from Transport for London and from Network Rail. It has also heard from representatives from across London from boroughs through which the line serves. Notes or transcripts from all these meetings are attached.
- 1.15 In the second chapter this report considers the potential for improving the lines' frequency, capacity and reliability and assesses Transport for London's initial plans for the line between now and 2011 – when a raft of measures are due to be implemented ahead of the 2012 Olympic Games.
- 1.16 The third chapter considers the technical requirements for delivering this extra capacity and frequency for the lines, seeking resolution also for accommodating the extensive freight usage, which to date has been a significant barrier for delivering a reliable timetable for passenger services.
- 1.17 The report's fourth chapter considers the two lines' stations – their design as well as where key interchanges could be established.
- 1.18 The review concludes with a consideration of the Committee's long-term aspirations for the two lines.

2. Improving Reliability and Increasing Frequency

- 2.1 The most persistent source of frustration for those boroughs and passenger groups who spoke to the Committee was the perceived unreliability of the service.
- 2.2 Silverlink, the Railway's operators, informed the Committee that reliability had improved since December 2004, and this improvement had been felt by some of the user groups who spoke to the Committee. The most accurate reliability measure is known as the Public Performance Measure. This measures reliability across all Monday-Friday services, by the number of trains that arrive at stations within five minutes of their scheduled time.
- 2.3 In early 2004, more than a quarter of trains were more than five minutes late. This figure was reduced to one in ten by the end of 2004. In 2005, 85 per cent of trains arrived within five minutes of the timetable. However, this overall dip in performance is attributed to specific problems, namely the impact of the 7/7 bombings and a hole in the track at Dalston.
- 2.4 This improvement is attributable to a number of factors, including the removal of speed restrictions along the line, improved maintenance of the track, and the readjustment of the timetable that meant that, from 2005, it more accurately reflected factors such as dwell time at stations.
- 2.5 The biggest barrier to a more reliable service identified by Silverlink was the state of the lines' signalling system and the difficulty in accommodating freight on the line. These issues are considered in more depth in the next chapter.

TfL's Plans for the North London Railway: Short-Term

- 2.6 On securing the franchise rights for the North London Railway, TfL immediately announced a raft of measures to improve the line radically between now and 2012. There will be three phases to this improvement. Immediately on assuming control in 2007, TfL plans to:
- Introduce additional station staff to provide improved customer service, security and revenue protection (similar to those employed on outer London Tube stations);
 - Install Oyster ticketing including the ability to use Pay-As-You-Go;
 - Add extra train services, running earlier in the morning and later in the evening on all North London Railway routes to align with Tube services and provide better integration with other modes.
- 2.7 We welcome these plans. We are pleased to note that similar service hours are being requested for other rail services in London when their franchises are renewed. For there to be a properly integrated transport network in London, it would appear simple common sense to adopt the same service hours across the Tube and rail network, with key interchanges between the two modes at so many points across the capital.
- 2.8 However, we do sound a cautionary note on prolonged service hours. As mentioned earlier and discussed further in Chapter 3, signalling and track

renewal is vital in securing an expanded service for the railway. Network Rail voiced their concern that longer service hours do restrict the engineering time allowed for such repair and renewal work. As we have seen with the engineering work being conducted through the PPP on the Tube, limited slots for engineering work pose significant, although not insurmountable, logistical problems.

TfL's Plans 2008-2012

- 2.9 In the mid-term, TfL plans to:
- Operate 4 trains per hour Stratford to Richmond and 4 trains per hour Stratford to Clapham Junction
 - Introduce new, higher capacity trains along the route
 - Roll out a £25m station enhancement programme to bring North London Railway stations up to TfL standards (see Chapter 4)
- 2.10 The ultimate aim of securing an 8 train per hour frequency on the North London Line between Camden Road and Stratford is targeted for completion in 2011, in good time to be ready and tested ahead of the 2012 Olympic Games. The aim of TfL is to provide a metro, 'turn-up-and-go' service. 8 trains an hour effectively delivers such a service. As four-car trains are being commissioned for the extended East London Line, TfL London Rail believes that in procurement terms it may be prudent to consider options for four-car trains on the North London Line also.
- 2.11 In the longer term, the North London Railway is planned to operate in the following manner.
- 4 trains per hour will operate Stratford and Richmond
 - 4 trains per hour will operate Stratford-Queens Park
 - 4 trains per hour will operate Barking-Clapham Junction
 - Extension of the Bakerloo Line to Watford Junction

This plan ensures that 8 trains an hour will be achieved between Camden and Stratford. The Gospel Oak-Barking Line has its service frequency doubled and extended to reach Clapham Junction. The two almost forgotten wings of the North London Railway – the Gospel Oak-Barking and West London Line – are therefore effectively connected.

- 2.12 There are a number of supporting developments that will assist in delivering the greater frequency, which the Committee also supports.
- Stratford Station will be radically altered to accommodate the termination of the NLL at Stratford, with the Dockland Light Railway taking over the Stratford-North Woolwich section of the current NLL.
 - The introduction of an integrated control centre enabling the operational staff of both the franchisee TOC and Network Rail to optimise train routes and minimise delay.

The Committee strongly supports the plans set out by TfL for the North London Railway, especially the extension of the Barking service to Clapham Junction. The plans will create a vital orbital route for London and more valuable interchanges to the Tube network.

- 2.13 However, we are concerned whether the plans for the North London Line can be delivered by the deadline of 2010/11 ahead of the Olympics in 2012 when East London hosts the bulk of the Games at Stratford.
- 2.14 The completion of the East London Line extensions to connect with the NLR are essential to the creation of a strategic orbital railway for the capital. A decision from central Government to fund Phase 2 of the extensions – providing the connection between Dalston Junction and Highbury and Islington stations – has still to be announced. The possibility of developing the East London Line north to Finsbury Park would create further very significant interchange connections. The resignalling of the NLR must also therefore accommodate and not prejudice the connection between Dalston Junction and Highbury and Islington planned for Phase 2 of the East London Line extensions.

The Committee regards the connection from Dalston Junction to Highbury and Islington as highly important and strongly urges that the funding should be put in place with the minimum of delay.

The Olympic Component

- 2.15 The improvements to the signalling, track and rolling stock will have to be in place by 2011 in order for them to be ready and thoroughly tested ahead of the Games. The service in place by 2011 will be the service employed before the Games and beyond. During the period of the Games themselves there are plans to allow for 10 trains per hour frequency on two identified peak days, and for the temporary diversion of freight trains.
- 2.16 New rolling stock is in the process of being commissioned and is well on course to be in place ahead of the 2011 deadline. Signalling and track improvements are altogether a more difficult challenge. The TfL Olympics budget has set aside £85m for assisting with the signalling and track upgrades required. TfL has also paid for Network Rail to test the viability of the proposed system - the results of which are key and are expected some time this year.
- 2.16 The Committee was struck by the scepticism elicited from borough transport representatives and passenger groups over how soon the improvements can be delivered. It is clear that the rapid delivery of a new signalling system – commissioning, construction, implementation and testing – and the remodelling of some stations in a little over five years represents an alarmingly short timetable.
- 2.17 The Paralympics will follow the Olympic Games and since Stratford is the main Paralympics site, it is essential that upgrades on the NLR take full account of the needs of disabled passengers.
- 2.18 TfL and Network Rail accept the target is challenging and were understandably unable to commit to the target until the modelling was complete. Network Rail informed the Committee that not all the improvement may be achieved by 2011 but enough would be to meet the Olympic specification.

The Committee registers its concern over whether the plans can be delivered before 2011 and awaits the results of the modelling with particular interest.

Potential Enhancements to TfL's plans

- 2.20 A number of potential enhancements to TfL's current proposals were suggested to the Committee. For example, spaces for bicycles, pushchairs and wheelchairs on the trains are not ideal on the current rolling stock. The Committee was therefore gratified to note that TfL plan to seek a more intelligent design that may facilitate provision for more appropriate space.
- 2.21 A significant problem with current operation is the long dwell time that the two door trains have at stations as passengers' board and alight. One solution to this would be to procure three door rolling stock².

The Committee recommends to TfL that any rolling stock that is either leased or purchased by TfL should have three doors per carriage to allow for quicker access from, and on to, platforms.

- 2.22 Another significant barrier to reliability is a particular local problem between Bollo Junction and Gunnersbury. A stretch of track equivalent to seven carriages is not electrified. This is a recurring cause of delay and has been a source of much frustration for the current operator, Silverlink. The Committee would therefore like to recommend to Network Rail that the seven-car stretch of track between Bollo Junction and Gunnersbury is electrified.
- 2.23 A more fundamental problem remains with the Gospel Oak-Barking stretch of track. The line is not electrified and is operated by two car diesel trains. TfL and local passenger groups are keen that this stretch of line is electrified so as to make the line faster, more reliable, and to reduce emissions. Network Rail do have plans to work on the line to allow it accommodate more modern freight operations. This includes some work on adjacent embankments for example. However, they have no plans as yet to electrify the line and Network Rail did not feel that the costs would justify the benefits.
- 2.24 **However, the Committee supports TfL in seeking the electrification of the Gospel Oak-Barking line.** As highlighted by evidence received from LB Barking and Dagenham, without electricification of the line, 'the weakest link could degrade the overall performance of the network as an integrated system'.³ Electric trains are more environmentally friendly and would also allow TfL to standardise rolling stock across the whole North London Railway. It was made clear to the Committee that passenger groups in West London⁴ would also be disappointed to have diesel trains operating on electric lines – as would be the case with the joining up of the West London Line and Gospel Oak-Barking line.

² John Lefley, stakeholder conference transcript pp29

³ David Higham, Group Manager, Strategic Transportation, LB Barking and Dagenham, January 2006

⁴ David Higham, stakeholder conference transcript pp28

3. Facilitating the development of the NLR

- 3.1 For the improvements in frequency and reliability to be realised, a significant amount of work and investment is required in improving the infrastructure along the line. Any new investment and re-modelling has to make provision not only for increased passenger services but also for freight services.

Accommodating freight

- 3.2 Rail freight has grown by 64% in the last 10 years⁵. With recent international demands to combat climate change there is a strong case to attract more freight from road haulage onto rail.
- 3.3 Silverlink, the current operator of the NLR, informed the Committee that the biggest barrier in delivering a good service to passengers was accommodating freight. Demand for freight traffic along the Gospel Oak Barking and North London Line branches of the NLR is heavy. Trains from Shellhaven and Felixstowe, as well as from the Ford plant in Dagenham, use the line to transport their freight to various destinations in London, but largely as a through route to access the East Coast and West Coast mainlines to the Midlands and the North of England.
- 3.4 The current system of signalling allows for six trains an hour to operate on the North London Line. Between the four hourly passenger trains, freight services are allocated two slots. Freight trains generally run slower than passenger services and are considerably longer in length. One problem encountered by current operations is the need to put freight trains into sidings to allow a passenger train to pass. There is a limited number of sidings where freight trains can be parked. As a result passenger services can be delayed.
- 3.5 Demand for freight services is high and increasing. Gerry Devine of the London Borough of Brent, who co-ordinates the North Orbital Rail Partnership (NORP) informed the Committee that he had been made aware that by 2014 there could be up to 154 freight trains a day seeking access along the North London Line alone – more than six trains an hour across 24 hours, or almost ten an hour during service hours.
- 3.6 TfL's plans are to run eight passenger trains an hour along the NLL by 2011. This leaves freight trains seven and a half minute slots between passenger services. Network Rail described the schedule as 'demanding' and also highlighted that freight trains would have to hit their slots – a pressure further exacerbated by the need for the freight trains to hit their allocated slots along the national mainlines. As Network Rail's Head of Route Planning Richard Eccles stressed, a change to rush-hour operations in London has a knock-on effect felt by services in Scotland.
- 3.7 The congestion is potentially eased by freight trains using out of service hour slots. However, some freight loads are time-sensitive and need to be delivered in the daytime. The risk for congestion is clear and the need for a particularly effective signalling and exact timetable modelling system is obvious. A timetable has yet to be "proved" to accommodate these competing priorities, but the

⁵ Looking Forward Contribution to Rail Strategy ATOC June 2005

modelling is currently being developed, and as mentioned previously, the results of this research are expected later this year.

- 3.8 Freight is a significant constraint on passenger services along the North London Railway. Work is due on the Gospel Oak to Barking branch to allow for the modern, larger freight wagons to be accommodated⁶. Network Rail will be the most significant funder of these improvements. However, the Committee have concluded that the Department for Transport missed an opportunity not to lever in funding from the developers of the new port on the Thames Estuary at Shellhaven. They must not repeat this with the developers of the Bathside Bay facility near Felixstowe.

The Committee recommends to the Department for Transport that they seek to lever in additional funding from the developments at Bathside Bay and Shellhaven to support the key signalling and track work, including the electrification of the Gospel Oak-Barking Line, required for the North London Railway.

- 3.9 The Committee was informed though that the freight industry and TfL were co-operating effectively to secure a mutually beneficial solution. The industry have indicated that they are willing to cooperate in temporarily diverting rail freight during the 2012 Olympic Games when the passenger service is increased to ten trains an hour the two peak days.
- 3.10 As much of the freight on the NLR does not stop at stations along the line, the Committee explored alternative freight routes that avoid the capital. The obvious route is the Felixstowe-Nuneaton Line avoiding London and thus allowing increased capacity on the North London Railway for passenger services.
- 3.11 However, the Felixstowe-Nuneaton Line is, in its current state, unable to transport the new generation of larger containers coming from the ports.⁷ The line needs to be upgraded and this requires funding. Again, the Committee finds it logical to request some of the funding for this upgrade should come from the freight and port industry which stand to benefit from this upgrade. Equally, so do London's train passengers. We welcome statements from the Mayor of London that he feels it would be appropriate for some of the funding to come from TfL.

The Committee concludes that for the North London Railway to operate a "turn-up-and-go" metro service, especially along the most popular stretch of the North London Line, some rail freight services should be diverted away from London.

The Committee recommends that the freight industry, port authorities and the Mayor of London open discussions with Network Rail about the need to upgrade the Felixstowe to Nuneaton line to facilitate this necessary diversion of freight trains.

⁶ The GOB line needs to be gauge-cleared to W10 standard to accommodate modern container sizes on freight trains.

⁷ A similar problem to the GOB line also prevents W10 standard on the Felixstowe-Nuneaton. There are also some bridges that need some work so as to allow for an adequate 'kinematic envelope' for freight passage – that is enough space width train to pass safely along the track.

4. Stations and interchanges

- 4.1 Stations on the North London Railway are amongst the most run down on London's rail network. The delays experienced by passengers week on week, with indeterminate waits at dirty, unsafe and poorly maintained stations must deter many. A smart, clean, reliable and frequent service may well turn out to trigger unprecedented levels of demand.
- 4.2 The Mayor and TfL have signalled that passenger safety and security is their first priority⁸ and have identified a number of 'quick hits' for station improvements in their Rail Corridor Plan, some of which are already being put in place. These include gating ten stations along the line and fast tracking NLR stations in TfL's station upgrading programme, such as the roll-out of monitored CCTV and passenger information systems.
- 4.3 While the level of maintenance that has been possible for Silverlink within the underfunded franchise contract has certainly been inadequate, many problems are historical. Some stations along the line date back to Victorian times, with stations being located on viaducts, often only accessible by backstreets. Many significant improvements would therefore involve considerable and expensive building programmes, or the total relocation of stations.
- 4.4 The Committee therefore commends the short-term improvements that have set out in the Rail Corridor Plan. The priority must be to improve the reliability and frequency of the service. This can only be done through upgrades to track and signalling – the responsibility of Network Rail, though it is likely that the necessary funding may come from TfL.
- 4.5 In the long term, the Committee expects that more structural improvements will be made to stations, particularly regarding step free access. It is important to be clear that TfL and the train operating company chosen to run the franchise will be responsible for the general upkeep of stations, but that the responsibility for structural improvements lies with Network Rail, the landlord. Network Rail support the view that increasing frequency and reliability are the key priorities, in particular financing the resignalling of the lines. Therefore, work such as lengthening platforms to increase capacity will be medium term aims.
- 4.6 TfL London Rail needs to develop and publish a plan for constructing toilets for passengers at those stations on the North London Railway that provide interchange facilities. It is accepted that toilets on trains are probably not appropriate on this metro railway where passenger capacity in carriages is paramount.
- 4.7 The Mayor's Transport Strategy sets out a number of aims for improving stations and infrastructure, in particular the need for much improved integration of the rail network with the rest of the public transport system. The London Metro service envisioned by TfL would be fully integrated with the bus and Tube networks in terms of signage, fares and ticketing, passenger information and

⁸ TfL press release, 14 February 2006, found at: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/press-centre/press-releases/press-releases-content.asp?prID=690>

safety standards. In TfL's Rail Corridor Plan, a number of generic actions are suggested to realise this aim.

Station improvement programme

- 4.8 The Transport Committee has already given its support to TfL's station improvement programme, which has invested £20 million thus far in London's National Rail network (for which it in fact has no statutory obligation)⁹. A further £25 million has been earmarked over the next five years for the North London Railway to be brought up to outer London Tube station standards¹⁰. The programme will include monitored CCTV cameras at all stations, passenger help points, improved waiting accommodation and up to date train information systems. Along with the additional staffing promised by the Mayor, these relatively short term and inexpensive measures should help passengers feel safer and more comfortable.

Revenue protection and fares

- 4.9 The North London Railway has built up a reputation as the 'free railway' in recent years¹¹. Very few gates exist at any stations along the NLR. Single journey passengers must buy tickets on the train from a conductor, if there is one. However, during peak hours, trains are so overcrowded that conductors cannot move along the trains. The Barking- Gospel Oak Line User Group noted that conductor guards could not move between carriages to carry out their ticketing duties because they also had to operate the trains doors at every station.
- 4.10 As part of a package of measures designed to improve revenue protection (including increased on-train ticket inspection), TfL has worked with Silverlink to introduce a penalty-fare system and plans to install ticket barriers at selected stations along the route. The Committee understands that ten stations have been so far been earmarked. As well as increasing revenue protection, gating stations is a major safety initiative. It ensures that only passengers are using stations (and trains), which should contribute to safety and security. After the initial roll-out of the gates, the Committee would expect to see a timetable produced to complete the project as soon as is practicable.
- 4.11 TfL have long pushed for ticketing and fare anomalies between the Underground and National Rail networks to be removed. While one day and period Travelcards may be used on overground trains, there is no facility for Oyster pre-pay. TfL have promised to roll out Oyster facilities throughout the North London Railway, which will complement the gating of stations and make ticket purchasing more comprehensible and streamlined. The Committee would also like TfL to ensure that bookings for any National Rail destinations can be made at any of the stations along the North London Railway.
- 4.12 Another anomaly that the Committee would like eradicating is the grading of Hampstead Heath station as a Zone 3 station. Therefore, passengers travelling through this station are required to buy a more expensive ticket; even though geographically the station would appear to lie in Zone 2 (there are stations immediately to the east, west and north of Hampstead Heath that are in Zone

⁹ 'Crime and safety at London's suburban stations', found at: http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/transport/safer_stations.pdf

¹⁰ TfL press release, 14 February 2006

¹¹ Mark Hutton, stakeholder conference transcript, pp19

2). There appears to be no reason for this to be so, although it was suggested at our seminar that it was implemented as a revenue generating measure.

The Transport Committee recommend that Hampstead Heath station is re-designated as a Zone 2 station.

Staffing

- 4.13 Over the recent months, the issue of staffing at stations has become a front-page story. The Evening Standard has been running a high profile campaign to coerce train-operating companies into providing staffing cover throughout opening hours. Staffing levels on the North London Railway are particularly poor, with all but one station along the Gospel Oak – Barking line unstaffed. Not only is this bad for revenue protection as there is nowhere to buy tickets at many stations, but also adds to passenger insecurity in run-down, isolated and dirty stations.
- 4.14 The Mayor has committed to staffing stations ‘adequately’¹², and stated that the successful franchise bidder will be held to this, although there is currently no indication of what the level of staffing would be. The Committee strongly welcomes this promise, and is keen to see staffing at every station throughout opening hours. It is necessary for gated stations to be staffed throughout opening hours to operate them manually in case of a technical failure.

The Transport Committee recommend that staff are deployed on platforms and trains, offering assistance and reassurance to passengers. As on the Tube, we would like to see ticket office staff moved to frontline roles once the introduction of Oyster Pre Pay has been completed.

Rebranding

- 4.15 TfL has proposed to rebrand the various components of the former Silverlink franchise (including the North London Line, the GOB and the West London Line) as the North London Railway. It is to be made more prominent on the Underground map and signage will use the TfL branding and logo.
- 4.16 The Committee is aware of the confusion that exists over many of the railway lines in London. There is a lack of consistent and clear signage in particular, with many interchange Tube and rail stations not even stating the names of the lines, merely the name of the train operating companies using the station. It has also been noted that the names of some stations cannot be clearly seen from trains. While frequent users of the lines would not be hugely inconvenienced by these failings, less frequent users and passengers coming into London from the rest of the country find the services very difficult to understand. **Therefore the Committee strongly welcomes TfL’s initiative to integrate the North London Railway with TfL’s other services in this way, which not only serves the purpose of making it more passenger-friendly, but also raises the profile of the line.**

¹² TfL press release, 14 February 2006

Passenger information systems

- 4.17 The current passenger announcement system is outdated and inflexible. An auto-announcer system owned by Network Rail is leased by Silverlink. As a train passes a 'reporting spot' the information at all stations is updated. However, if a train breaks down the information would not be relayed. For information to be updated, the driver has to contact the network rail signaller, who manually types in the delay, which is then sent on to stations. The driver cannot override the automated system so passengers sometimes receive conflicting messages. Furthermore, station staff cannot make announcements as they can only download pre-recorded messages, and it is not part of the role they are employed to carry out.
- 4.18 This complex system explains why passengers may be waiting for a train that is supposedly five minutes away, but actually turns up twenty minutes late. The system is designed for signalling purposes rather than for delivering passenger information.
- 4.19 **The Committee recommends that a move is made as soon as possible to upgrade the software of passenger information systems to provide real-time information as on the London Underground, and to enable manual overrides to be made by staff.** This will allow passengers to make a decision as to whether to wait for a train or use another mode of transport. Even with the proposed increased frequency and reliability of trains, passengers require accurate and up to date information.
- 4.20 **The Committee would also reemphasise its recommendation from its report on crime and safety at suburban stations for passenger information displays to be provided at street level to enable passengers to make an informed decision before entering the station.** Strong support for this idea was expressed at the Committee's stakeholder seminar on the North London Railway.

Step free access

- 4.21 National railway stations are notoriously poor in providing step-free access to stations. Barking, Highbury and Islington and Camden Road were flagged up as particularly problematic. As discussed earlier in this chapter, major infrastructure work would need to be done at many stations to make them accessible for all passengers. This would inevitably be a high cost operation, which the Committee feels would be more appropriate as part of the second phase of improvements, once frequency and reliability have been improved.

The Committee would however like to see TfL publish a timetabled plan for making all North London Railway stations fully accessible, and where step-free access can be achieved through the station improvement plan, this should be done as a short term priority.

- 4.22 London Underground have plans to introduce step-free access at Highbury and Islington Tube station before 2012 and the Committee would urge that this work be extended to include NLR and WAGN platforms. The Committee received evidence that even where lifts exist at stations – such Stratford and Richmond – these are not well suited to the needs of users. The main

Paralympics in 2012 will be held at Stratford so it is particularly important that the NLR is accessible to disabled passengers.

Interchanges

- 4.23 The North London Railway has a large number of interchanges with Tube stations that could be much better utilised. Interchanges are vital in ensuring that the maximum usage and efficiency of the line is achieved. A number of suggestions have been made concerning which stations along the line could be improved and remodelled at relatively low cost to facilitate both better running of services and an improved passenger experience.
- 4.24 Currently two trains per hour run from Barking to Gospel Oak, terminating at the latter station. To increase the frequency along this line, and the Willesden Junction to Clapham Junction branch, four trains per hour will run from Barking through to Clapham Junction. At the present time, it is not possible to travel directly from Barking to Clapham Junction and passengers travelling from Barking to Richmond on the line must change platforms at Gospel Oak to continue their journey. Gospel Oak station will therefore need to be remodelled to allow through trains. This will be an opportunity to improve passenger facilities.
- 4.25 TfL have proposed to build an interchange to combine Hackney Downs (ONE railway line) and Hackney Central (NLR), providing further connectivity between lines. Hackney Borough Council have suggested rebuilding Dalston Kingsland further east as part of a regeneration programme, as it currently would be very difficult to expand capacity at this station. Phase 1 of the East London Line extension will run as far as Dalston Junction. Once this is complete, the Committee would like to see good signage and security patrols introduced to facilitate passenger interchange between Dalston Junction and Dalston Kingsland stations.
- 4.26 The Committee also believes that serious consideration should be given to creating a new station at Maiden Lane, serving the King's Cross railway lands development, providing transport links for the commercial development being constructed there, as well as the relatively isolated housing estate, a view supported by Camden Borough Council¹³. The Council should be encouraged to submit detailed proposals to TfL.

¹³ Liz Halsey, stakeholder conference transcript, pp15

5. Beyond the Olympics: Future aspirations

5.1 The stakeholder seminar held by the Transport Committee produced a wealth of suggestions for long-term work. Many of these were desirable, but represent significant financial investment, yet to be secured, and would currently not present sound business cases in the short-term. However, the Committee is keen to see TfL continue their commitment to raising the standards on the overground rail network by keeping an open mind on further developments to the line.

5.2 While we recognise that the following proposals could not be delivered within Network Rail's Cross London Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS) period 2006-2016, we recommend that nothing is done in the meantime to prevent these possible developments.

Extension of the GOB

5.3 Barking and Dagenham Council have suggested the extension of the GOB to Rainham Grays, which would allow a large residential area in the east access to the Thames Gateway development and the job market that will be created there. Furthermore, many people using c2c services must change at Tilbury and rejoin services at Barking. Extending the line would provide a much easier journey for commuters. Barking and Dagenham should prepare a business case for submission to Network Rail.

Suppressed demand

5.4 The Committee believes there is significant suppressed demand on the North London Railway. The poor reputation of the line, severe overcrowding and the limited service offered currently all belie the significant role that such a strategically placed railway could have. There is evidence to suggest that TfL and Network Rail have severely underestimated this suppressed demand.

5.5 Transport surveys undertaken by Hackney Borough Council on the NLR revealed much greater passenger use than that included in TfL's London Area Transport Survey. London TravelWatch noted that they were not aware of a proper origin and destination study of the North London Railway, which would give a clearer indication of the sort of demand the railway may face in the future¹⁴. Barking and Dagenham Council observed that the improvement of an orbital line may induce car users to switch modes, particularly with the number of interchanges with radial routes that the NLR provides. The West London Line Group pointed out that demand was significantly under-estimated on the Brighton Mainline service, a project which has now stalled.

5.6 The Committee was concerned to hear these findings, and recommends that plans are laid to move to a 6-car operation as soon as funding for the necessary infrastructure upgrades are in place. As the line is improved, and the East London Line is extended to meet it, the Committee believes that demand will grow exponentially, and that it may become necessary to introduce 6-car operation well before 2016.

¹⁴ Libby Kemp, stakeholder conference transcript, pp17

Future interchange improvements

5.7 The following are all works that need to be undertaken at various stations and interchanges along the NLR, which would represent significant improvements to users of the stations, as well as facilitating more effective movement of passengers through interchange points. The Committee recommends that borough councils looking for significant infrastructure improvements should draw up clear and financially modelled investment plans to present to TfL and Network Rail, exploring the potential use of section 106 agreements.

1. Highbury and Islington station has a bizarre layout, where changing platforms entails a very circuitous route, going up and down several escalators. This station would need to be reconstructed in a more rational manner to improve the interchanging and accessibility, particularly with the potential of the East London Line being extended to the station. In the short term signage could be much improved.
2. West Hampstead currently has three different stations – one for the NLR, one for the Jubilee Line and another for Thameslink services. A coherent and convenient interchange needs to be developed.
3. Camden Road (NLR) and Camden Town (Northern Line tube) are currently separate stations approximately 400 metres apart. Furthermore, there are two unused platforms at Camden Road which could be utilised¹⁵. An interchange could be developed here with new station access in Kentish Town Road.
4. Primrose Hill station could be reopened to offer better transport service to this area. This could be developed to link with Chalk Farm (Northern Line Tube) which is a mere 200 metres away.
5. The re-opening of a station at Tufnell Park on the GOB line, although this would represent significant rebuilding. Passengers could easily reach Tufnell Park (Northern Line Tube) from such a station. This is a long-standing aspiration of the Islington Borough Council.
6. The relocation of Leyton Midland station to the Baker's Arms to facilitate more extensive link ups with bus services.
7. The extension of the NLR from Richmond through Twickenham and Teddington to Kingston to enable tow trains an hour to run via Kingston loop line. Any such proposal would not include a Crossrail style dive-under at Richmond as it is completely unfeasible on both environmental and economic grounds.
8. The Airtrack proposal envisages some trains on the Waterloo-Richmond-Staines line being routed from Staines to Heathrow Terminal 5 – thus would provide a connection for NLR passengers.

¹⁵ Roger Blake, stakeholder conference transcript, pp13

Appendix A - Evidence received by the Committee

The rapporteur has held a number of meetings in gathering evidence for this review. Two of these meetings were transcribed:

- Stakeholders seminar on 25 January 2006, with boroughs through which the NLR runs and local community groups.
- TfL London Rail, 28 February 2006 including Managing Director Ian Brown.

The transcriptions for this meeting are available on request, via Danny Myers on 020 7983 4394 or danny.myers@london.gov.uk.

The Committee has also received a number of written submissions that they have considered as part of their evidence. The following organisations have submitted evidence and these too are available on request from the above contact details.

- London Borough of Hackney
- London Borough of Barking & Dagenham
- Camden Liberal Democrats
- North Orbital Rail Partnership (c/o of the London Borough of Brent)

Appendix B – Notes of meeting with London Lines

6th February 2006

Present

Geoff Pope, Deputy Chair of the Transport Committee and rapporteur for North London Line

Denys Robinson, Research Officer for Geoff Pope

Gareth Knight, Research Officer for Roger Evans (Chair of the Transport Committee)

Bonnie Jones, Assistant Scrutiny Manger

Danny Myers Scrutiny Manager

Katy Shaw Committee Co-ordinator

Mike Lamport – Head of Communications, LondonLines

Mark Steward – Route Director – Silver Link Metro.

Geoff Pope explained that the purpose of the review of the North London Line was to make recommendations to Transport for London (TfL)¹⁶.

It was noted that a meeting had taken place with the Boroughs and further meetings would be held with Network Rail and TfL. Informal discussions had taken place with London Rail, Freightliner, East London line group, local authority planners, Hugh Sumner & the Olympics team and London TravelWatch. Site visits had also been undertaken.

Charter and PPM Measurements

Mark Steward explained the two performance measure, Charter and PPM, by which train operating companies (TOCS) were measured by.

The Charter measurement was part of the passenger charter designed to protect annual season ticket holders. The passenger's charter was measured on punctuality and reliability, if punctuality or reliability fell below a certain trigger point then a 5% discount was given, if both measures fell below the trigger point then a 10% discount would be granted. Punctuality was measured between 07.00-10.00 and 16.00-19.00, Monday to Friday, for arrival at destination and leaving London termini. Most TOCS were measured on a target of having to arrive within 4 minutes and 59 seconds of their scheduled time. Longer distance trains (i.e. Virgin) had to arrive within 9 minutes and 59 minutes of scheduled time. Weather related incidents or serious incidents such as fatalities were excluded from the charter figures.

The PPM performance figure was measured 7 days a week (with a daily cut off point of 22.00 hours) for 52 weeks of the year. There one exclusions were signal failures which would cause delays for over 48 hours so that the advertised replacement services could be measured. If work maintenance work was included in the "plan of the day" ie scheduled work for which alternative services could be advertised in advance then it was not counted against the PPM.

¹⁶ At the time of this meeting the final announcement that TfL would manage North London Lines had not been made.

There was however an anomaly for Silverlink. Its performance against the Charter was measured for the whole day, not just during the rush hour peak, as its trains did not run into major London termini. This meant that small scale work which other TOCs could accommodate outside of the 6 hour charter monitoring time could not be undertaken. In addition, under the Charter system for Silverlink if a delay was caused by a freight movement it was not excluded as Silverlink was expected to manage its customers.

Network Rail controlled and owned the operation system. Any train which was delayed for more than three minutes had to have a reason for the delay attributed by Network Rail by means of the Truss system. The minutes lost by both direct (the initial failure) and indirect (consequential) delays were charted. The indirect minutes lost on the North London Lines were 1.5 times than those lost by direct delay.

There was a dispute resolution service between Network Rail and Silverlink in order to attribute the cause of lost minutes eg if a maintenance train damaged an overhead wire it could be the fault of the train and therefore the responsibility of Network Rail or maintenance of the overhead line and therefore the responsibility of Silverlink. Occasionally an independent expert was asked to attribute the cause or if the cause could not be allocated then they were split 50/50.

Under the PPM, arrivals over 4 minute 59 seconds after the scheduled time, cancellations or part cancellations were judged as failures. A problem with this system was that if a train left its departure station and arrived at its destination station on time but was unable to call at a station on the route due to a security alert or other incident on the station, then that journey would be marked as a PPM failure. A recent strike which had closed Highbury and Islington station to Wagn trains meant that all services which we unable to stop there were marked as failures for the whole route.

However there was not a move to amend the PPM so that it conformed with the Charter as the industry view was that PPM was a fairer measure for the customers. Silverlink believed that they could live with PPM as it applied equally to all TOCs but the anomaly was annoying.

Performance Figures.

The performance figures showed an upward trend from December 2004 and the MMA figure was at its highest for three years. The improvement in performance was due to amendments to the timetable and also the way in which speed restrictions were managed. Silverlink had analysed the running times and showed that on a normal day 78% of PPM was achieved. Improved performance was being prevented as fourteen speed restrictions were in place. As the freight trains were up to half a mile in length any speed restriction would lead to delays. Silverlink had plotted the timetable against reality which had led to an acceptance by Network Rail that speed restrictions were having a detrimental impacts. Following negotiations with Network Rail a joint approach had been agreed to the management of speed restrictions. Work was scheduled in order to avoid the use of speed restrictions and the track maintenance, which included the use of an ultrasonic test train to find minor cracks, had been improved. At the time of the meeting no speed restrictions were in place. The two dips in performance had been caused by the London bombings and a hole in the track at Dalston.

All TOCS did have to take decisions between juggling reliability to get punctuality. For example a late running train could either be allowed to continue to run late therefore impacting on other service or turned around early to the inconvenience of passengers on that train. Decisions were based on the need to reduce overall delay. There was not the flexibility to catch up speed as there might be on a longer line as trains left every ten minutes so a late train would probably run 20 minutes late as it would be caught behind freight trains.

Could any capacity be built at the terminus?

Silverlink was very short on units so although there were enough units to run the timetable there were not enough units for dwell time. There would be an extra platform at Stratford from December 2006 with the timetable to take account of this being drawn up in February 2006.

Passengers without tickets

An exercise had shown that 13% of customers had not brought a ticket. In January 2006 a penalty fare of £20 had been introduced following approval from the Department for Transport and Revenue Protection Inspectors (RPIs) had been used on the Line. A recent exercise found that ticketless travel had fallen to 6%. The introduction of penalty fares had also stopped some people from coming onto the stations.

Ticket barriers were expensive and did have to be manned at peak times. If the barriers were not manned then they would have to be in sight of a manned ticket office. TfL had said that it wanted them introduced, following permission from Network Rail, at 11 stations (13 entrances) over 18 months. Only the work at Gospel Oak Station had been funded in 2005/6. The payback from installation would take longer than the remaining Silverlink franchise period. The introduction of Penalty Fares however had been a cheap but effective way of dealing with ticketless travel.

Oyster pre-pay was not valid on the Line with the exceptions of interchange stations so people were unknowingly travelling without paying if they use Oyster prepay. IT was thought that this would change after TFL took over control of the Line. The RPIs did carry Oyster card readers.

Maintenance

If trains run all day maintenance had to be done at nights but there was not much time once the last passenger services had been moved to the depots. Following the timetable changes, train maintenance had been moved from the Silverlink depots at Bletchley to the Willesden depots operated by Alstom.

Bollo Lane

There was a seven car gap in the third rail at Bollo Lane in order to accommodate District Line Trains. Silverlink trains therefore needed to coast over this gap without a power supply. If the train ran out of momentum then there was no power to get the train moving again and it therefore had to be pushed by another train. There were about three incidents of this type a year and they caused major delays. Network Rail

had given assurance that the gap would be closed to less than 1 car length following work in April 2006.

Information at Stations

An auto-announcer system, which was owned by Network Rail and leased by SilverLink, was used. When the train passed a reporting spot the information on all the stations was updated, however if a train broke down once it had passed a reporting spot the information would not be updated. Updates were made after the train driver had contacted the network rail signaller. In addition the system was geared towards signalling and not towards the customer. The system was centralised so it could not be turned off and local announcements had to be typed in or pre-recorded announcements downloaded. This was not the role of station staff however who were employed to be in control of the ticket office and not to deal with announcements. On-board passengers had to rely on conductors to give on-board announcements. Conductors therefore needed pagers and mobiles.

Network Rail would only replace like with like so a new system would need investment by a third party such as TfL. The fix to allow for manual over-rides by local operators would cost £50,000.

Geoff Pope pointed out that at Richmond a digital system did show both SilverLink and Underground information enabling passengers to make informed choices but there was still a problem at Gunnersbury. A GPS system would pick up the train position and not rely on the triggering of signal points.

The white paper had specified the integration of announcement controllers and Silverlink had moved into Anglia House at Liverpool Street in order to work with other networks to get more informed information.

Passenger Numbers

Passenger numbers were high and any disruption on the London Underground was immediately noticeable in terms of passenger displacement. If more trains were put onto the line, freight trains could not be run. If longer trains were introduced then longer platforms would be needed. There was scope in the timetable for further improvements – i.e. increased dwell time.

Trains were full to capacity and with the assistance of the Strategic Rail Authority, Silverlink had put on extra trains in May 2004. In January 2004 TfL had funded additional evening services. In December 2005 additional trains had been put on the WLL. Trains in rush hour were 150% loaded.

It was thought that additional trains could be added to the system in time for the Olympics but that a prompt decision on the signals would be needed. Decisions were also required about the number of units and platforms to feed into the service.

An increase in trains would need additional drivers with continuing cost associated with their salaries and training for a year needed. Costs would be contained if trains were driver only. Silverlink as an operator supported longer trains as although they were a long term investment they did not rely on the ongoing cost of wages for additional

drivers. . The morning peak of trains every seven minutes was not sustainable throughout the day.

Driver only trains could be used on the route but only if modernised communications equipment, the GMSR radio which had been trialled was purchased. If driver only trains were used on the route but the trains were not updated, equipment such as mirrors and monitors would have to be placed on the stations and they would be subject to vandalism. The updated train based equipment for driver only trains consisted of a folding camera. The specification for driver only trains was written into the contract of drivers but if its introduction was planned it would probably be the subject of a large campaign by the Unions. Conductors only worked on trains which carried passengers so that there were three-quarters of the number of conductors as drivers. There was not a capacity for driverless trains as on the Docklands Light Railway as the line was older had shared junctions.

Silverlink supported the electrification of Gospel Oak to Barking if it was carried out as part of a wider strategy but not if it was done in isolation.

Appendix C – Notes of meeting with Network Rail

20th February 2006

Present

Geoff Pope, Deputy Chair of the Transport Committee and rapporteur for North London Line

Elizabeth Howlett – Member of the Transport Committee

Denys Robinson, Research Officer Geoff Pope

Gareth Knight, Research Officer for Roger Evans (Chair of the Transport Committee)

Bonnie Jones, Assistant Scrutiny Manger

Danny Myers Scrutiny Manager

Katy Shaw Committee Co-ordinator

Richard Eccles – Head of Route Planning

Chris Rumfitt

It was noted that the rapporteurs report would also form the basis of the Transport Committee's response to the London Rail Utilisation Strategy.

Background to the Development of the RUS

Richard Eccles outlined the procedure for the production of the RUS, the process for which had started about a year previously. The RUS was presently being consulted upon and the final strategy would be published once the responses to the consultation had been analysed. It would then be sent to the Office of the Rail Regulator who had 30 days in which to respond or it would be formally adopted. A feature of the production of the RUS was consultation. A stakeholder management group which included Transport for London (TfL), the lead Trains Operating Company (TOC), the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) and the freight operators had been set up.

The North London Line was a pilot RUS as it would be used as the specification for the Silverlink franchise. The RUS included expectations from TfL which had been included in the planning

Future Relationship with TfL

Option 5 (TfL option 12) of the RUS, proposed to run additional passenger services on the line to achieve the Mayor's target of 4 per hour. TfL's proposal to take over the Watford DC service and use Bakerloo Line Trains was supported by Network Rail. There was a need to link Queens Park and the Watford DC so that passenger could move from the Bakerloo Line. The North London Line could carry an addition 2,500 people at each peak hour.

Location and operation of the proposed control centre

The Silverlink control centre was being relocated to the combined centre at Liverpool Street. Network Rail will be based in the same room as the operators so that they could work together during a crisis. This gives a hierarchy in control and speeded up the decision making process. TOCS do know they are buying into a command and control structure. There were models of good practice in Waterloo. The use of the combined control centre should help to reduce secondary delays to trains.

Communications at track/station level

The Combined centre would not help improve the station announcements. New equipment was needed. The core system had never been changed but just added to by improvement (such as new monitors) which had largely been funded by TfL. The chief frustration with the Communications system was that it was hard to get information to the passengers, as pre-recorded messages needed to be downloaded and broadcast.

Updates to the communications system were not covered in the RUS which was a strategy. The CIS was about the daily running of the line. The communications system should be addressed in the franchise procurement.

The Watford DC Line had a communications system which had the same look as that used on the underground. A recommendation of the report could be to standardise the system which would have the benefit of efficiency in terms of acquisition and would be helpful to passengers.

The potential removal of the buffers at Gospel Oak to securing access to Clapham Junction

Gospel Oak Trains could not run through to Clapham Junction. Some schemes had been developed in order to deal with this, for example the realignment of platforms. It was not hugely expensive compared to other project and it was not thought that cost would delay the extension to Clapham Junction. Signalling work would be involved so specification needed to be developed for it.

Some redesign work was needed to Stratford Station as there was no interchange for the new service although at the moment the number of people transferring trains was relatively small.

Feasibility of adapting to Tube rail times

It was an aspiration to run the line as the same hours as the Underground but there was a trade off between the hours allowed for engineering access and the freight use of the line. TfL had suggested that if the running hours were extended then 2 trains an hour could be run. However engineering could not take place as large plant needed to be used which could not be removed between trains so the frequency of whole line blockades would be the same whether 2 or 4 trains were run.

Feasibility of meeting the 2010/11 Olympic deadline re: signalling

TfL had an aspiration to achieve Option 5 (four trains an hour, 7 days a week) by 2011. Richard Eccles said that many issues needed to be considered when looking at whether this could be achieved. The RUS had to look at the mix of traffic on the line. Two freight trains were run in the gaps between the passenger services (ie 4 hour). Option 5 would mean that the line would have to carry 8 trains / hour at gaps of 7.5 minutes. This was a demanding schedule and it would mean that freight trains would have to ensure that they hit their slots. Due to the freight trains the timetable had to tie into those of other train lines such as the West Coast line and Great Eastern. A change to

rush hour running in London would have a knock on effect in Scotland. There was not yet a timetable which deals with all of this. RE confirmed that the freight operators were happy with the way in which TfL were approaching its management of the line.

There needed to be a specification for the Olympics and this requirement needed to be addressed with some urgency. It was likely that not all the improvement could be done in time for the Olympics, but probably could do enough to deliver the possible specification. In terms of the works deliverability rather than value for money was a more important criteria than most projects. It was thought that it would be six months before the specification was produced. Network Rail would like it to be an output specification which would set guidelines for how many people would travel each day. Network Rail was confident that it would be able to meet the specification.

Freight

The nature of the North London Line as a freight carry line meant that there were restrictions on the line. Smaller containers of 8ft 6 inches had previously required an envelope of W8. Shipping lines were now carrying containers measuring 9ft 6 inches which required a bigger W10 envelope or a pocket wagon where the container sat between the bogies. The trains currently carried 60 (1 x 40 foot and 1 x 20ft)so the freight carrying capacity is reduced. The tunnels can be cleared for a W10 envelope but there would be a cost implication. The increase would be based on the willingness of the TOC to pay for the enhancements which might not be on their doorsteps. The Railways Act did give Network Rail a longer term planning role.

If there was not money to cover the cost of extending the platforms to accommodate six car trains, Richard Eccles did not believe that extending the trains to four cars would meet the suppressed demand. It would be met by increasing the frequency of trains. Network Rail could look at the type of signalling that would be required for six car trains but it was not seen as obtainable. Anything more than four cars on the East London Line would be challenging.

The cost of electrifying the Gospel Oak-Barking (GOB) line

Richard Eccles thought that it was hard to prove a business case for electrification. A further cost would also be the re-gauge of the line in order to allow for faster freight speeds. The Line was presently restricted in the loads it could take (no W10s) and speeds due to its embankments. The freight service would like an enhancement to the line. Only the North London Line was W10 cleared so there was no route that trains could be diverted on to. If the GOB line could take W10 it would help with diverting trains.

Practicalities around getting the GOB line to Rainham and the North London Line (NLL) to Kingston

Network Rail managers had recently looked at the business case for enhancement to the line weighing up the economic benefits against value for money and affordability. Network Rail did have a discretionary fund of £50 million/ year and was talking to TOCs and the Freight operating companies about enhancements. Borough Councils could approach Network Rail and make suggestions for enhancements. The enhancements would have to demonstrate value for money for example show social/regeneration

benefits and follow standard DfT criteria. Transport for London was already talking to Network Rail about its proposals. TfL would have a funder role akin to the DfT.

Passenger Figures

It was noted that the Network Rail had commissioned passenger counts, which would take place in February/March, and would be used in the finalised RUS. Re agreed that it would be useful to compare areas where there had been an increase in service due to the use of PIX C busters with other parts of the line such as Richmond.

Appendix D - Orders and Translations

How To Order

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