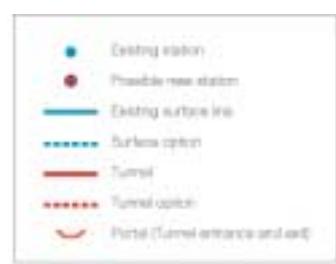


This is the official map of where Crossrail should go. But there are other choices



Crossrail for Woolwich?

By Keith Dyall

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It is not possible to see how the proposed Crossrail services can be superimposed on to existing service patterns painlessly.

If Crossrail takes over the North Kent line to Ebbsfleet as proposed, many people will have to travel by Crossrail to Liverpool Street, Farringdon or Tottenham Court Road and then complete their journey by Tube, rather than walking from London Bridge, Cannon Street, Blackfriars, Charing Cross or Victoria.

For anyone living near Ebbsfleet the quickest way into town would be by Channel Tunnel rail link domestic services to Stratford and King's Cross.

The main reason for going through the route proposed is to enhance land values in Docklands.

A far better idea would be to build a new Thames rail tunnel to connect Crossrail into the North London line towards Woolwich so that it serves City Airport.

The tunnel would also allow construction of a new low-level

terminal at Woolwich Arsenal which would create a new major transport interchange offering many new journey opportunities to people in North Kent to Central and North London without disrupting existing travel patterns.

It would enhance the area of Docklands between Woolwich and Stratford.

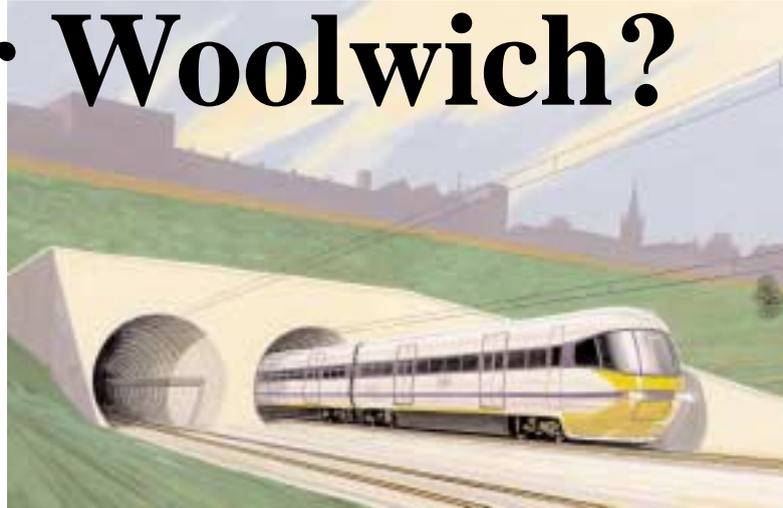
We would spend much less money and still achieve major benefits for the rail network and London area travellers.

In the east, existing Great Eastern services into Liverpool Street would become impossible if 12 Crossrail trains an hour during the peak terminated at Ilford or Shenfield.

In the west it seems folly to terminate Crossrail at Heathrow terminal five. Heathrow would become an operational nightmare if there were 12 trains an hour during the peak, terminating there, along with four Heathrow Expresses.

Crossrail should be continued to rejoin the Great Western main line in the West Drayton area.

The Crossrail team says this would cause congestion on the



An artist's impression of Crossrail. Will it ever become reality?

main line but I believe the extra traffic could be absorbed by a carefully planned service pattern.

This is how it could be done: An all-stations train would leave Paddington to terminate either at Slough or Maidenhead, travelling via Heathrow.

This would be followed by a Reading train, fast to Slough, and then stopping at stations to Reading.

This would overtake the all-stations train while it was going around the Heathrow loop.

The Reading train would be followed by a Heathrow Express which would turn off to the airport.

During the off-peak every other Heathrow service could be diverted on to the fast line to allow for two freights per hour from Old Oak, Acton, or the North London line.

There is a large potential market for rail travel to be won in the Thames valley if you look at traffic volumes on the M40, M4, and the A roads in the area.

Existing Thames Valley rail travellers also deserve a better service.

If the proposal to send a Crossrail branch to Kingston

and Twickenham goes ahead, the North London Line might have to be truncated. Nor could the District line any longer go to Richmond.

Without substantial widening and associated demolition between Richmond and Kingston, Crossrail services would play havoc with the existing services.

Crossrail was originally scheduled to go to Aylesbury, partly to relieve the Metropolitan Tube line which was bursting at the seams between Wembley Park and Finchley Road. London Transport was looking to transfer traffic away to a new route.

An alternative would be to send six Crossrail trains an hour to Moor Park with stops only at Wembley and Harrow where they would split with part going to Amersham and some going on to Aylesbury.

The second part of the train would go to Watford Junction via the Croxley link.

Metropolitan trains could call at all stations to Moor Park and terminate there off-peak with some going to Watford Junction in the peak.

I believe Crossrail service patterns need to be re-thought.

■ Crossrail has launched a campaign to tell the public more about the benefits of the cross-London rail link. In September leaflets were handed out to commuters and distributed to libraries and other public places. A major public consultation was also planned for "later in the autumn".

"We believe this is one of the most exciting railway developments for this new century serving the UK economy as well as the South East region," said Norman Haste, Cross London Rail Links chief executive. "We need the public to play their part."

The official application to Parliament is timetabled for November next year with construction starting in 2007. Trains should be running by 2013.

There is a 24-hour seven-day-a-week helpline on 0845 602 3813, an email address: helpdesk@crossrail.co.uk and a website: www.crossrail.co.uk