

## East Midlands

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### ■ ■ Signalling renewal

The Parliamentary all-party Midland main line group met recently to discuss developments on the Midland main line arising from the Office of Rail Regulation's draft determination of the Network Rail Strategic Business Plan.

They very much welcomed the approval of the £55million for the scheme to raise the line speeds and so cut journey times, but there is concern that approval has not yet been given to the enhancement of phase three of the East Midlands Signalling Renewal for the Nottingham area, which is needed to resolve current and future causes of delays outside Nottingham station. The ORR has been asked to reconsider this enhancement and to approve the necessary £19million in their final determination. The MPs note that it is the duty of the ORR to regulate the rail industry so as to avoid delays and to ensure reliable train performance. It would therefore seem incumbent on ORR to address the most congested location in the East Midlands and so prevent unreliability and delays to trains on the Midland main line.

LANRAC, the local authority members' group campaigning for improvements on the MML, is also pressing the ORR to allow the scheme to go ahead.

### ■ ■ Loughborough station

Plans to extend platform one at Loughborough have been put on hold, because Network Rail has insufficient funds. So, at the fourth busiest station in the East Midlands, we remain stuck with four-car platforms trying to accommodate eight-car trains. Loughborough MP Andy Reed has had a meeting with East Midlands Trains and Network Rail to discuss the lack of progress on this and other much-needed improvements to the station.

Although he was reassured that the disabled access has now been redesigned with platform lengthening in mind, no progress on the actual lengthening was reported. In less than four years, international athletes will be travelling to Loughborough to train for the 2012 Olympics in the town's world-class sports facilities. Let's hope that they travel in the correct portion of the train!

More positive news is that Charnwood Borough Council has finally approved the "Eastern Gateway" scheme, which will regenerate the large area of derelict land in front of the station. Shortly afterwards, Loughborough was announced as one of the 24 pilots for station travel plans. Put together, these developments are an opportunity for major improvements to the access to the station, such as a better bus interchange and cycle parking.

### ■ ■ Liverpool to Norwich service

A survey for Passenger Focus seeking passenger views to support a campaign for improvements on the Liverpool to Norwich route, which also includes Manchester, Sheffield, Nottingham and Peterborough was undertaken by Travelwatch East Midlands, Railfuture and Campaign for Better Transport on 18-22 August.

The trains on this service are usually overcrowded two-coach class 158s that are in need of major overhaul inside and out.

It is common for many people to have to stand between Liverpool and Sheffield and the campaign is looking to provide longer and better quality trains on a route that links so many key cities in four English regions.

# Track record of successes

By Dave Wetzel  
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Even during the days of Ken Livingstone's Greater London Council administration in the 1980s there was always a problem with the relationship between London's elected Government and what was then British Rail, which was under the control of Mrs Thatcher's Conservative Government.

The 1981 "Fares Fare" policy was introduced on buses and the Underground but the Government prevented BR from accepting a GLC fares subsidy, so passengers on the suburban rail network could not benefit from reduced fares.

Similarly BR was excluded by the Conservative Government from the 1983 introduction of the hugely successful Travelcard integrated ticket on buses and Underground.

These disparities were not just an administrative inconvenience but a real hindrance to travellers wishing to make efficient travel arrangements.

It meant many BR passengers travelled much longer distances to Tube stations and took less efficient journeys in order to avail themselves of the cheaper fares.

In 1981 it was this unjust disparity, where Bromley in south London, had no Underground services but their residents and businesses contributed local property taxes to the overall London-wide cost of the scheme, that led to the borough council's legal challenge which, despite the transport successes (modal shift from cars, fewer road crashes, less pollution) the Law Lords eventually destroyed the initiative after only five months of operation.

Despite these political and legislative hurdles, the GLC still managed to invest in the infrastructure of suburban railways, by improving stations, introducing or reopening toilets, experimenting with refrigerated goods wagons and conducting studies that led to the reopening of the Snow Hill Tunnel to provide for Thameslink trains to run from north of the Thames to the Southern Region and a similar Thames crossing for passengers on the West London Line from Willesden Junction to Clapham Junction.

We faced similar problems when Transport for London was created in 2000.

However, this time not only was the suburban railway under government financial and policy control but the management was divided between several private train operating companies, Railtrack and the

Strategic Rail Authority. It is to the credit of Susan Kramer and Paul Moore, who were the board members chairing the TfL Rail Panel during TfL's first eight years, and Rail Panel members like Tony West, who were always pushing the rail issues, together with Ian Brown and his team in London Rail, that despite these administrative and policy barriers, TfL has had considerable success with its suburban rail policy.

Under Ken Livingstone's leadership, TfL invested in CCTV and other measures to improve the security of stations, financed the upgrade of some suburban service levels and persuaded the Labour Government to allow the extension of the East London Line up to Hackney and down from New Cross to West Croydon.

The historic creation of The London Overground on 11 November 2007 incorporated four suburban lines, the North London line, Watford-Euston, the West London line and Barking to Gospel Oak, into one recognised system with Underground levels of staffing, fares and ticketing integrated around the touch-card Oyster system, brighter stations and new Electrostar 378 rolling stock being built in Derby and to be delivered next year.

Arrangements are being made to accommodate both freight trains and higher-frequency passenger trains. The East London Line will join the Overground when it is completed.

Eventually the East London line extension to Clapham Junction will create London's first outer orbital rail service.

It is a credit to Railfuture that members have planned, developed and solicited support over many years for an orbital railway as a part of the solution to London's transport problems.

What is needed now is more interchange opportunities. When London's suburban and main lines were first built in the 19th Century private operators did not want to lose customers by making it easy to swap on to competitors' lines.

Now, if the commonwealth of public transport, walking and cycling are to compete effectively against car use, then we need not only efficient cycle and pedestrian routes to local facilities (including bus stops and rail stations), but we also need to try to create convenient interchanges, so that for example passengers can change from Tube lines like the Piccadilly Line on to the North London line where

at relatively modest cost, rail journey options would be greatly improved.

It would also give those seeking employment a much wider choice of job opportunities and those currently using cars greater freedom to choose an efficient rail alternative.

One of the things we all now understand is that a well-used railway will add to the desirability of a location close to a station and that land owners in these places will charge tenants or purchasers more for access to their land, even though these same land owners have not contributed to the railway that has enriched them so handsomely.

For example, the Jubilee Line Extension from Green Park to Stratford, with 11 new stations, cost £3.5 billion to build but increased land values by over £13bn. One of Ken Livingstone's major successes was persuading a reluctant Treasury to agree to the construction of CrossRail linking Shenfield and Abbey Wood in the East of London to Heathrow and Maidenhead in the West.

Hopefully, eventually this railway will continue to Ebbsfleet in north Kent and to Reading in the west.

Just imagine the wealth this railway will create for land owners. Not only should they be contributing to the construction cost - but they should also be contributing annually towards the operating costs so that such a huge investment can have frequent services and reasonable fares in order to maximise its patronage and ensure that the investment is thus fully utilised.

It makes no sense to build a railway at great cost and then deter passengers with infrequent services and high fares.

The Government did not buy-in to the idea of an annual land value tax but they have agreed that £5 billion of CrossRail's £15.9 billion cost should be recouped from property owners by a supplementary rate on the more valuable commercial and industrial buildings.

Unfortunately this contribution will come from business ratepayers only in the London area and it will not contribute to annual revenue costs. An annual land value

tax would have been preferable because not only could it meet all the construction costs and provide a continuing income stream for the railway but it would avoid the anomaly that property owners who improve their building have to pay higher rates, offer a bigger rate base and encourage owners to put their land to better use instead of many sites lying idle for speculative reasons.

Nevertheless, with the new King's Cross Thameslink station, the new Stratford station and the Docklands Light Railway improvements such as new train carriages with longer trains, the Stratford shuttle, the City Airport service and the new Woolwich link under the Thames, London is well placed to serve the athletes, spectators and officials for the 2012 Olympics.

And don't forget that the DLR to City Airport service has helped to see the value of this airport rise from £25million to over £800million in about 12 years!

Of course, a rail policy for London cannot be implemented in isolation. It has to be introduced as part of a wider transport strategy.

The present London Mayor, Boris Johnson, is consulting people on the withdrawal of the West London extension to the congestion charge zone.

To defend the role of public transport in London, all members of Railfuture should respond to this consultation by expressing their desire that the western congestion charge boundary be kept intact.

Ken Livingstone's many achievements include a 53% growth in bus patronage, big reductions in road crashes, almost doubling cycling in London, improved pedestrian facilities, the registration of minicabs, better transport policing and congestion charging.

Taken together, this shows that Ken Livingstone has begun to create a transport system that is fit for a 21st century global capital city.

The success of his transport policies, not least on rail, has meant he has left a commendable legacy for London and the UK.

His transport policies are a huge feather in his political cap!

■ Dave Wetzel was vice-chair of Transport for London 2000-08 and chair of the GLC transport committee 1981-86



Railwatch 1986: Dave Wetzel, right, wields super scissors to mark the completion of an improvement scheme, partly funded by the GLC, at Rectory Road station in Hackney

## Severnside

By Nigel Bray  
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### ■ ■ More trains

Railfuture's campaign for more trains to call at Bridgwater (Railwatch 113) has borne fruit. Since 19 May, the 06.46 Saturdays excepted Bristol Temple Meads-Penzance has been calling at Highbridge and Bridgwater, which will encourage long-distance travel westwards from those stations. We will use the Regional Spatial Study consultation process to press for further improvements.

### ■ ■ Railhead

The branch campaign to develop Keynsham as a railhead for South Bristol and North East Somerset has made progress with more of South West Trains' Bristol-Waterloo services calling there. It is now possible to travel direct from Keynsham to Waterloo at 08.57, returning at 19.20. While Keynsham enjoys stops by FGW services between Worcester-Gloucester and Brighton-Weymouth, there are still long gaps in its evening peak services from Bristol.

### ■ ■ West Somerset proposals

John Walker and Nigel Bray attended the West Somerset Railway's AGM in Minehead on 28 June. We argued for daily, all-year train services between Minehead and Taunton, running outside the hours of WSR heritage operation. The Harzer Schmalspurbahnen in Germany was suggested as a model for coexistence of steam and commuter diesel services. In reply, WSR Chairman Chris Austin said that commuter services would require subsidy and the company intended to remain a commercial operation.

On a brighter note, we detected a realisation that higher motoring costs were creating a demand for easier access to WSR by public transport, including the possibility of rail shuttles between Taunton and Bishops Lydeard. On 11 July the West Somerset Free Press summarised Railfuture's case for commuter services, accompanied by feedback from WSR which claimed these would require "massive subsidy" and that most winter residents of the area had bus passes anyway. This generated some well-argued letters which were very supportive of Railfuture's position. To its credit WSR has invited comments on its Five Year Company Plan and we shall certainly respond.

### ■ ■ Line doubling

In our response to the Rail Regulator's consultation on Kemble-Swindon redoubling, the branch has emphasised the strategic importance of the route, notably when the Severn Tunnel or the routes leading to it are closed.

We pointed out that population growth in Gloucestershire and Swindon justified more frequent trains, adding that the proposed Swindon North station, on the present single line, needed an attractive level of service to justify the costs of construction.

## Confusion over renamed tickets

Changes to the national train ticketing system have caused confusion among rail passengers, with cheap fares no longer available on certain services. East Midlands Trains, which is based in Derby, used to offer a discounted fare on the 09.04 Derby to London service but that is not available any more and people travelling from Birmingham to Derby on Cross Country Trains can no longer use a cheap day-return ticket during afternoon rush-hour.

Andrew Dyson, director of railway publishers Platform Five, said: "None of the fares has actually gone up but some restrictions on cheap tickets are tighter, so fares have risen by the back door." But there were also reports that East Midlands Trains, part of the Stagecoach group, was copying South West Trains by creating two new categories of off-peak tickets.