

## North West

By Trevor Bishop

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### Metrolink

The first of Metrolink's new trams arrived in Manchester after a marathon journey by road from the Bombardier factory in Vienna. The new M5000 yellow and silver vehicle is the first of a new generation of tram for the expanding Metrolink network, which is being transformed by a multimillion pound investment programme.

It was welcomed at the depot by Councillor Keith Whitmore who said: "This is a fantastic day for Metrolink and its thousands of passengers. Our trams have become an icon of Manchester – and this new generation will ensure that legacy continues – but this new tram is also a symbol of a very bright future for Metrolink. People already make around 20 million journeys on our trams each year but we're currently building four new lines that will double the size of the network by 2012."

Metrolink director Phil Purdy said: "The tram will now undergo extensive operational and safety tests. I hope to see it up and running towards the end of the year and I am certain people will be delighted with it when it does."

A total of 40 new trams has been ordered to provide more room on existing services and to cater for passengers on the new Metrolink routes to Oldham and Rochdale, Droylsden in Tameside, Chorlton in south Manchester and MediaCityUK in Salford.

### Oldham passenger fears

With the withdrawal of Oldham line trains planned for October 2009 pending Metrolink conversion, Rochdale rail passengers are complaining that they will lose several early morning departures making life difficult for shop workers and people wanting to connect with long-distance trains at Piccadilly.

### Row over trains

Manchester Central MP Tony Lloyd and other MPs were planning to meet Transport Secretary Lord Adonis to appeal for more trains for the region to tackle serious overcrowding.

The MPs believe the Department for Transport has reneged on a promise to send 182 new carriages – starting next year – to relieve Greater Manchester's "sardine specials" and is planning to cut the order to 102.

Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority chairman Councillor Keith Whitmore said: "Our figures are way out of skew with the figures the DfT are working on."

The two sides are also arguing about five Pacer trains which will no longer be needed on the Oldham loop line when it closes for conversion to Metrolink in October.

There are fears that the entire new diesel multiple unit programme could be cancelled following the electrification plans for Liverpool-Manchester and Great Western.

Now the DfT believes that Thameslink class 319 electrics can be redeployed to Liverpool-Manchester, with some extra new Siemens class 350s working Manchester-Scotland trains, because the Liverpool electrification will open up an electric Manchester-Scotland route via Parkside and Golborne Junctions. That would release Northern class 156s and TransPennine 185s for use elsewhere. However, new trains should have started arriving next year, while passengers may have to wait until 2013 for the redeployment of old trains.

### Better information needed

The Goyt Valley Rail Users Association has called on Northern to improve train running information, following the cancellation of trains at New Mills Central.



## Advantage bus

We should not be arguing whether or not trains are better than buses. Each has its merits in an integrated transport system. Better use of the rail network for leisure activities would be welcome. For example, I often go away for a break by coach for an all-in price covering travel, hotel accommodation, meals and visits to places of interest, all at a very reasonable cost – an option not open to me by rail.

Roger A Smith, *The Street, Little Waltham, Chelmsford CM3 3NT*

## South saved by East

The basic principles of effective campaigning are that the issue is clearly understood and that the objective is realistically achievable, even if only in the longer term. The Local Action report about the South London Line in *Railwatch* 120 suggests that these requirements have not been fully met.

The London Bridge-Victoria service will actually cease by 2012 because of Thameslink programme works at London Bridge – not because of the East London line extension to Clapham Junction as perhaps implied in the report.

Any campaign group formed to 'Save the South London Line' service between those two terminals is therefore doomed to fail before it starts, and suggests that some of its supporters have not been properly following the twists and turns of the Thameslink and East London line projects over the past decade and more.

The energies of such a campaign could be better directed to engaging with Transport for London and the long-established independent East London Line Group to develop a mature understanding of the underlying issues and explore ways to resolve them.

Yes, the TfL/Department for Transport agreement not to go ahead and implement the proposed Victoria-Bellingham service appears to have removed one option for maintaining Victoria-South London Line links. No, the timetables for 2011 and 2012 have not been written yet. There is time for alternative options to be explored over the coming months.

It must not be forgotten that the South London rail utilisation study which canvassed a Victoria-Bellingham service also sang the praises of the East London line extension to Clapham Junction for providing additional capacity and being a key part of the package of alternative services to mitigate the loss of Victoria-London Bridge

# Your letters extra

services. The new East London Railway extension to Clapham Junction will create access to four times as many jobs and be used by twice as many people as a Victoria-Bellingham service. In that context the TfL/DfT agreement, in effect to prioritise ELL to Clapham Junction over Victoria-Bellingham, might be better understood.

Roger Blake, *Principal Transportation Planner, London Borough of Hackney [a founder member of the East London Line Group], London E8 3HT*  
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## More electric

So the Great Western Main Line is to be electrified. Or is it? I regret to think that the recession will provide the excuse for it to be deferred in deference to the votes in the motoring lobby.

Railfuture must do all it can to persuade MPs and would-be MPs that short-sighted deference to the motoring vote would be disastrous to the environment but, in the long term, to the economy too.

But once it is electrified to Oxford, I suggest an extension to Leamington and Coventry.

There should also be a spur from Reading to Basingstoke.

With dual voltage locos this would provide an electric freight route between Southampton and the North West.

With dual voltage trains, it would allow the current CrossCountry services to Bournemouth to be electrically operated.

Imagine a dual-voltage Pendolino. With electrification between Coventry and Nuneaton it would allow congestion at Birmingham New Street to be relieved by a change for Birmingham rather than a change at Birmingham policy.

Chiltern's Clubman 168s are not immortal. They must eventually be due for cascading. Then there will be a case to extend the wires through Solihull to strengthen the case for Snow Hill lines electrification.

Liverpool-Manchester to be electrified! Good idea! Especially if extended eastwards over the Pennines to meet the East Coast main line. But if Liverpool-Manchester is to remain in isolation, do not the Manchester-Bolton-Euxton Junction and the Blackpool and Windermere spurs off the West Coast main line present just as good a case for electrification?

Peter A. Moore  
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## Bitter taste

Seven years ago, Kay Middleton invested £10,000 to establish a refreshment facility called Coffee Charisma at Farncombe railway station in Surrey in a newspaper and confectionery kiosk which had

been empty and almost derelict for some time.

She redecorated and refitted the kiosk and provided a first class service of refreshments – coffee, smoothies, soft drinks, teas, cakes, sandwiches, not to mention my favourite, bacon butties.

After all this work, South West Trains wants to increase the rental for traders at Godalming, Farncombe and Haslemere rail stations by up to 40%.

In the current economic climate, even a small increase in price could drive people elsewhere for their refreshments, and the end result could be that these traders will be forced to close.

Travel Point Trading wants to increase Kay Middleton's rent by 140% and backdate this by six months.

Rises of this proportion would have a disastrous effect on any trader.

South West Trains should remember that traders like Kay Middleton are working hard to provide the sort of service which attracts passengers to the railways and therefore deserve special consideration, especially in the amount of rent demanded for their premises.

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## Shop for Railwatch

What does one need to do to hasten the appearance of *Railwatch* on the shelves of one's local bookseller/newsagent?

With advertisements, classified small ads and a few more articles and features (e.g. an illustrated Then and Now) it would appeal to many a rail enthusiast at £2.95 or so per quarterly or bimonthly issue.

Peter Yates  
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**Editors' note:** *Railwatch* is already on sale at some shops but we need Railfuture members to make contact with potential outlets in their area. Pass on the details and we will follow up the leads.

## Past or future?

G P Brown's letter in the July issue of *Railwatch* bemoans how some of us dwell on the past. Please understand our utter conviction that learning from mistakes of the past – privatisation – is the only sensible way to inform the future.

My hackles rise every time I read that Network Rail and a train operator are now sharing a control centre as if that were a radical new development worth celebrating.

In the good old days track and train were part of a unified, integrated railway. It didn't have a

company in charge of the railway that doesn't run trains. The train operator didn't have public subsidy haemorrhaging cash to shareholders. The industry didn't have a risibly convoluted and unsustainably over-expensive so-called 'structure' where profit is sucked out at every stage.

I hope Mr Brown will join me in looking to the future of the privatised railway with regional companies responsible for both track and train – companies such as LMS and LNER. Ooops – there I go again!

Martin Shuttleworth  
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## Televisions on trains

Many readers were delighted to learn of the demise of the noise pollution in class 323 electric multiple units on the Birmingham Cross City Lichfield-Redditch line.

London Midland inherited the televisions on trains from Central Trains which at one time threatened to extend it to other areas. Mercifully financial difficulties beset the media firm responsible.

No more will I hear the same banal showbiz gossip twice on my 13-minute journey to and from work nor weather-forecasts which were often wrong.

I understand the televisions are to be replaced with screens giving helpful information to passengers. Sounds like a change for the better.

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## Seating sense

I note with pleasure that East Midlands Trains will retain the current open and airy BR-style seating in their refurbished IC125 trains, rather than switch to First Great Western's high-seatback "cubicles" (Roger Bacon, *Railwatch* 120). I hope EMT will also retain the family-friendly bay-style seats.

FGW may argue that high seatbacks are a "crashworthiness" response to safety requirements but they probably now realise they have exceeded what was strictly necessary.

For passengers, having to peer into each airline seat to see if anyone is sitting there (when approaching from the rear), is nonsensical.

John Davis, *Fairmead Avenue, Harpenden, Herts AL5 5UD*

## Send your letters to:

The Editors, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU  
Email: editor@railwatch.org.uk  
*Railwatch* also welcomes articles and pictures  
Please use email if possible

## London and South East

By Laurence Fryer and Graham Larkbey

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### South London line

Pressure is mounting on Transport for London to reconsider the decision to axe South London line services to Victoria and London Bridge when the East London Line Extension commences operating to Clapham Junction in 2012. Many people complained that this decision would greatly extend their journeys to work, especially from Wandsworth Road and Clapham High Street.

Perhaps in response to the fears reported above, the East London Line Group suggested in early September that South London links can be retained with an improved train service throughout the week.

It said: "Improving alternative Victoria services to run all-day all-week, and extra stops by existing trains, are suggested by the East London Line Group as probable options to replace the south London line service, if that ceases in 2012 with Thameslink works at London Bridge."

"For example, one combined option is to improve the Victoria-Denmark Hill-Peckham Rye-Dartford service to become a Metro service across south London. This could also call at Wandsworth Road and Clapham High Street.

"Transport for London and London TravelWatch are jointly looking at 30 options to replace the south London line trains, in a six-month study due to report in December 2009. The East London Line Group welcomes the collaborative work being undertaken by the official organisations."

The group's Archie Galloway said: "We are keen to help TfL and LTW achieve a positive outcome which is in the interests of south London communities".

The statement continued: "The group also suggests that while options are still open, the possibility of trains continuing to call at Battersea Park should be included in the studies. A better range of local services can also improve the investment case for a new station at Brixton High Level."

See also letter (left) on page 12 headed: South saved by East

### Barking-Gospel Oak

Because of delays at Bombardier's Derby works, the much-needed new trains are not now expected to arrive until well into 2010. A 15-minute service was supposed to start in September this year, using a Turbo borrowed from Chiltern to augment the line's Sprinter fleet, but this has been put back due to delays in completion of Network Rail signalling works. We need to fight to get Barking-Gospel Oak included in the planned electrification programme.

### Sudbury Hill Harrow

The long-running campaign continues to get evening and weekend services restored. Chiltern's "consultation" on the December 2009 timetable improvements was virtually unadvertised and ran for two weeks in August, when many people were away on holiday!

### National Express East Anglia

NXEA invited suggestions for timetable improvements from December 2010. Suggestions included a minimum four trains per hour at all London-area stations all day every day and restoring a full service at Angel Road to serve the adjacent giant IKEA store.

### West London Line

In addition to its "normal" trains, scheduled to become even more overcrowded when Imperial Wharf station opens, the line now has two near-useless "Parliamentary" services: one train each way (Monday-Friday) between Olympia and Wandsworth Road, and the virtually unadvertised Tuesdays-only bus between Wandsworth Road and Ealing Broadway, which costs the Department for Transport £500 a week of taxpayers' money to provide. In addition, Southern plans to introduce an Ealing Broadway-Olympia service using Class 170 units although timings and frequencies are yet to be advised.

Branch members with items of interest for *London and South East* notes, please send them to Laurence Fryer: lfryer@railfuture.org.uk