

External meeting report

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Proposed permanent closure of the exit of platform 4 at Lewisham station

1 Purpose of the report

To provide notes of a meeting with Southeastern to discuss the proposed permanent closure of the exit of platform 4 at Lewisham Station.

2 Information

- 2.1. The meeting took place on 13 May 2009 on platform 4 near the proposed exit closure at Lewisham station and attendees included

Mike Crane	Commercial Development Manager, Southeastern Trains
Mike Gibson	Public Affairs Manager, Southeastern Trains
John Hine	Blackheath Society
Saira Lalloo	Station Manager, Southeastern Trains
Cllr Chris Maines	Lewisham councillor

- 2.1. London TravelWatch was represented by the Director, Research and Development, the Director, Public Liaison, the Casework Manager and the Transport Policy Officer.

3 Background

- 3.1. London TravelWatch was informed by Southeastern that they were proposing to install a gate line at Lewisham station due to the introduction of Oyster Pay-as-you-go (OPAYG) on Southeastern's network. London TravelWatch was invited by Southeastern to a site meeting on 2 April 2009 to discuss the proposed gate line scheme. At this meeting London TravelWatch was notified that the current exit of platform 4 was to be closed.
- 3.2. Local councillors, local stakeholders as well as Blackheath Society were alerted that the exit ramp of platform 4 is to be closed permanently. As a result London TravelWatch received over 90 complaints with regards to this closure; these complaints were mainly received from residents who live on the side of Lewisham Road.
- 3.3. London TravelWatch told the complaints that a new exit/entrance gate line was proposed to be built via the Tesco's car park; after which Southeastern then declared to London TravelWatch that the proposed new gate line would not be installed. This resulted into Network Rail having no idea of this gate line being built.

- 3.4. Southeastern did not communicate with passenger representatives including London TravelWatch, local councillors, local stakeholders, local residents and regular users of the station in an adequate manner. As a result London TravelWatch organised this site meeting where questions could be asked to the Commercial Development manager and station manager directly in order for them to give full justification; which includes full justification for the permanent closure of platform 4 exit ramp.

4 Meeting content

- 4.1. The main problem Southeastern has had to deal with was compliance of the new underpass of the lifts and the stairs with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). These would give access to platforms 3 and 4 and there would be no lift access to platform 2 because there is a lift already in place. The main problem Southeastern has also had difficulties with providing the power supply to these lifts.
- 4.2. The only access for passengers to come out of the station from the platforms is from platform 1. The stairs to the platforms will be located from the Dockland Light Railway concourse to platform 3. Here there will also be a lift in place as part of the 'Access for All' scheme.
- 4.3. The control system to both the underpass of platform 1 and the underpass of platforms 3 and 4 can only be controlled from the proposed gate line which will be positioned in front of the Dockland Light Railway area. This is creating more problems for Southeastern because Dockland Light Railway objects to Southeastern positioning its control system near their area of use.
- 4.4. There is considerable work in process as part of the National Stations Improvement Programme (NSIP), as a result of which all of the toilets have been replaced.
- 4.5. Platform 4 exit ramp

Southeastern have caught most trespassers with out having a valid ticket from the current exit ramp to platform 4.

Southeastern agreed that OPAYG validators could be placed in front of the ramp but there was insufficient room for a gate line to be put in place which complied with safety regulations restrictions, Southeastern are unable to place validators at this exit ramp. Southeastern had placed station staff in front of the exit ramp to carry out a passenger count on the number of passengers who used it.

Hypothetically, if ticket barriers were installed in front of the exit ramp; Southeastern would need to insert at least two ticket barriers to meet passenger demand. This would be especially for those passengers who exit the station from the current exit ramp of the platform. Due to the width of the ramp, the gate line would have to be narrow in size, which contravenes safety regulations. Widening the area was not possible as this would infringe upon privately property. A gateline would also cause over crowding issues because Platform 4 is a very narrow platform. Mike Gibson therefore stated that stated that in terms for a valid safety case, it was impossible for Southeastern to gate the exit.

Security was another issue : if a gate line was installed, it would need to be staffed, especially during late hours in the evening, Southeastern would not be comfortable with having staff

man the gate line during late hours. This was complicated by the fact that no station announcements are permitted at Lewisham after 20.00 hours, which would not be ideal in case of an emergency. If there was a serious case after 20.00 hours, Southeastern would be unable to make an announcement which was a risk to both passengers and station staff.

The current exit of platform 4 would not be blocked off completely; it will have a gate at the ramp which will be permanently locked. The gate would be open during major events such as the marathon and Blackheath fireworks.

4.6. Proposed option of having a ticket barrier via Tesco's car park at the side of platform 4

Southeastern needs to show a valid business case to the Department for Transport in order to place an alternative gate line via the Tesco's car park.

4.7. Walking Route

The walking routes for residents from the Lewisham road side need to walk all the way to the front side of the station which is an extra 4 minutes walk.

4.8. Gate line near (in front) of DLR

The pathway outside the station which is in front of the new gate line is very narrow and would be a major concern during station peak hours.

Mainly during peak hours, there would be an crowding concern because the pathway is narrow and would mean that passengers had no choice but to walk on the main road. This poses a safety hazard, with buses approaching the roundabout; due to the narrow road they turn very close on to the pathway. During these hours, passengers were more likely to be pushed onto the road, resulting in inconvenience to buses.

4.9. Platform 4 – Tesco side

If an alternative access/exit were to open via Tesco's car park, Southeastern would not feel comfortable placing staff there to man that side of the station especially during late hours. Another reason for Southeastern not opening a gate line at Tesco's car park is because they believe the gate line will be vandalised and will not be maintained (especially by the public). The reason for Southeastern's caution is because toilets had been installed at the station on Monday 11th May and had been vandalised by the Wednesday 13 May.

If a gate line was to be put in place, Southeastern suggested that the gate line could be kept shut when the station was shut. The problem is that the station office is located on the opposite side of the platform which means that Southeastern can only rely on the station CCTV cameras to keep an eye on the gate line.

The car park company 'Europarc' is in charge of the Tesco's car park. Europarc staff do not monitor the car park at all times; this gives Southeastern more of a reason not to place a gate line here. Here there will also be a lot of cost implications for Southeastern.

4.10. Lifts

If the lift does break down and there is a disabled person in the lift, Southeastern explained there is a 1 hour recovery service. One of the paths will become a fire exit.

5 Thoughts and Recommendations

London TravelWatch suggests that the main reason for the closure of the ramp of platform 4 is for Southeastern to protect their revenue loss and not consider passenger convenience. During the meeting on 2 April, we were given the impression from Southeastern that a replacement gate line exit/entrance would be provided via the Tesco's car park. However, although aware of this, Southeastern denied that this was the case.

5.1. Alternative entrance/exit via Tesco's car park

We believe that a new entrance/exit at the Tesco's car park is the ideal solution. As there is major redevelopment in process on this side of the station, this new entrance could be part funded by the redevelopment of Tesco or other planned developments.

If a proper car park was developed here, this would provide a revenue stream to justify all staff costs.

5.2. Alternative Walking Route

In London adding an extra 4 minutes to a passenger's journey makes a huge difference. This walking time is a key consideration on whether passengers use the station and how this will affect passengers who live on the side of Lewisham Road or Lewisham Hill areas.

5.3. Station plan to include DLR, PCO, London Buses, Lewisham Council and SET

We believe that Lewisham is the prime transport interchange in South East London and requires a coherent development plan involving DLR, PCO, London Buses, Lewisham Council and SET. The general problem is that the main entrance is some distance away from the community it serves. This plan needs to seriously look at bus stopping arrangements, walking routes, cycle parking and routes and a route for wheelchairs.

5.4. Trains and platforms

Train stopping arrangements should be reviewed to ensure that all trains stop next to the shelters and DLR exit and the train indicators.

5.5. Old Ticket Hall and Toilets

Southeastern should review the use of the old ticket hall and consider its conversion to either a waiting room or retail unit.

When the station has been gated, Southeastern should review the policy of locking the toilets.

5.6. Locked gate at the exit ramp of platform 4

We believe that as the exit ramp of platform 4 will not be blocked off completely, the gate which is situated at the exit ramp should be opened two hours in the morning peak and two hours in the evening peak.

Southeastern station staff could be placed at the gate line during the day to catch trespassers entering and leaving the station via the ramp during the day. If Southeastern are concerned about their station staff during late hours; then these gates can be locked.

[end]