



# **Sussex Route Utilisation Strategy – consultation by Network Rail**

## **A response from London TravelWatch**

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### **A response by London TravelWatch**

#### **Executive summary**

- A. The draft Sussex RUS follows the established method of reviewing gaps and options to cope with forecast demand levels for ten years ahead. In addition it takes a broad look up to 30 years ahead.
- B. It concludes – at least so far as the congested lines between Gatwick and London are concerned – that:
- current committed schemes (including the Thameslink Programme for completion in 2015) will not cope with expected demand by 2019
  - additional schemes – including new rolling stock for longer trains - can be adopted to deal with this
  - these will do little more than prevent present crowding levels from getting worse
  - they will exhaust the potential for incremental capacity improvements, so major new construction will be then be needed (tunnels from the Croydon area into central London are suggested)
  - the timescales are such that planning for major new construction needs to start soon.
- C. At a time when public funding is likely to be tight for many years ahead, these conclusions raise serious questions of affordability and of competition with other national rail and TfL projects. For example High Speed 2 is already gaining serious political momentum, and from a London point of view other projects – e.g. Crossrail 2 – may be more important than congestion on the Sussex route.
- D. Similarly for the smaller pre-2019 proposals, those being put forward in other RUSs or by TfL will be competing with the Sussex RUS for scarce funds.

- E. However London TravelWatch believes that there are other options because the draft RUS has missed several important points:
- The Brighton main line timetable has grown piecemeal over 25 years, despite huge growth in demand and major changes in travel patterns. This is bound to have led to inefficient use of capacity. The RUS fails to consider re-casting the timetable based on up to date demand information. Worse, it seems that even the post-Thameslink timetable in 2015 will still be based on the present structure dating from 1984. This must surely be to miss an opportunity to make best use of capacity
  - The validity of keeping Gatwick Express sacrosanct as a non-stop service between Gatwick and London, when its trains have spare capacity, must be reviewed. The political pressures which led to this issue being ducked in a DfT decision as recently as 2007 should now have eased, and changes in the nature of the air traffic using Gatwick have certainly weakened such justification as may have existed.
  - 48 modern carriages (worth over £70m) are unused for most of the commuter peak periods. The RUS does not consider whether this wasteful situation can be ended. Yet it makes new proposals to operate longer trains, for which additional carriages would have to be bought.
  - No consideration has been given to modifying current operating methods to enable more trains to be operated by running them closer together and turning them round more quickly in the platforms at Victoria and London Bridge.
- F. We believe that a review of any one of these issues would show that more passengers can be carried both now and in the future than the RUS suggests. Taken together, the increase could be substantial.
- G. This means that the investment schemes proposed by the RUS might not be needed as soon as it indicates.
- H. This also applies to its suggestion that to cope with demand after 2019 a new tunnel could be needed between Croydon and London. Such a scheme would be hideously expensive, only yield benefits in the peak hours, and would compete for funds with other large schemes and requirements such as a high speed line and Crossrail 2.

- I. Our main recommendation is that a review should start at once into four key topics –
  - Timetable re-cast
  - Gatwick Express
  - 48 unused carriages
  - Modified operating methods
- J. The review should be led by the two main train operators on the Sussex route, and it should be funded to carry out any necessary market research into the journeys that passengers make and will want to make.
- K. Oversight of this review would need to be organised, and London TravelWatch would be pleased to participate. However the important thing at the moment is to get started so that the results can be implemented as soon as possible.
- L. Meantime work on the RUS should continue, but it should be given no more than provisional approval by ORR pending the outcome of the review.
- M. Separately, Network Rail must be pressured to bring forward changes to its maintenance arrangements so that year-round Sunday train services can be substantially improved.

## Response to the draft Route Utilisation Strategy

### Introduction

1. This response to the draft Sussex Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) is, as far as possible, couched in terms which can be readily understood by the lay reader. Also, because the RUS is long and complex, our response is written so that it can be understood without having to read the original document. However the draft RUS is available on the Network Rail website at [Sussex RUS Draft for Consultation](#) (3.2 Mb), and readers may wish to refer to it.
2. The RUS is largely concerned with train services on the Brighton line and its coastal and weald feeder lines, most of which originate outside the London TravelWatch area. Formally the scope excludes local services within the London metro area, which were dealt with in the South London RUS. Nevertheless the practical logistics of the route mean that some of these routes are discussed in the Sussex RUS. Also on this particular route the London TravelWatch remit extends well beyond the London boundary, as far as Gatwick Airport.
3. However the major issues which the RUS identifies really come down to one big question – how can future demand for travel into London be accommodated on the congested railway north of Gatwick and in particular from East Croydon to London Bridge, Clapham Junction and Victoria. The solutions proposed by the draft RUS to problems of present congestion, poor connectivity between key stations, wasted resources and future rising demand, are therefore of great importance to London.
4. Although it will make reference to some of the detailed aspects of the RUS, this response largely concentrates on the big question described above. To do this in a manner which will enable non-railway readers to fully appreciate the issues, we must do an Orwell in reverse and go back to 1984 to see how train services on the Brighton line have developed over the past quarter-century.

### The Brighton main line timetable since 1984

5. The service which any railway provide for its passengers depends on the timetable. It is this, together with the number of carriages used on each train, which determines the journeys which passengers can conveniently make and the number who can be carried.
6. The present Brighton line timetable basically dates back 25 years to 1984. In that year British Rail introduced the Gatwick Express. This was a Victoria

– Gatwick non-stop service running every 15 minutes and using special trains with low-density seating and extra luggage racks. In return for a premium fare, Gatwick Express provided a service – even during the commuter peaks - which was completely separate from all other services. The timetable built all other trains around the Gatwick Express. This was possible because commuter traffic was relatively light and (if anything) expected to decline.

7. From the early 1990s, both peak and off-peak traffic on the Brighton line increased beyond recognition. Progressively, additional trains were added to the timetable and many existing ones were re-timed, re-routed and / or given additional stops. However the Gatwick Express was inviolate, with non-stop trains running every 15 minutes throughout the day. Even their precise timings remained the same – 00, 15, 30 & 45 minutes past each hour from Victoria, 05, 20, 35 & 50 from Gatwick – along with their exclusive use of two platforms at Victoria.
8. The result was a timetable which developed and grew in a piecemeal and rather haphazard manner. It never benefitted from the periodic “clean sheet” review which would normally be expected as demand patterns, passenger numbers, train design and other factors changed. By the turn of the century the strain was showing. Many peak trains were over-crowded (except Gatwick Express trains, all of which had spare seats and most of them amply so), punctuality was poor and some stations (particularly on the so-called ‘Redhill corridor’ between Purley and Gatwick) had poor frequencies and unsatisfactory service patterns.

## **The BML RUS**

9. In 2004 the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) published a draft Brighton Main Line (BML) RUS. This was the first attempt to deal with the increasingly unsatisfactory situation described above. It was very controversial as it proposed integrating Gatwick Express with the general BML service. It is important to understand what happened with this RUS because it has a strong bearing on today’s situation - the starting point for the Sussex RUS.
10. When the SRA was abolished the Department for Transport (DfT) took over the BML RUS. In response to the consultation results, four new options were developed for a second consultation in autumn 2006. Option 1 would substantially integrate Gatwick Express into the general service. Option 2 would leave Gatwick Express largely unchanged. The other two options would provide different levels of integration.
11. Both London TravelWatch and Passenger Focus – the statutory bodies representing all rail users and therefore obliged to consider the balance of

advantage between different groups of users – supported option 1. Many other groups consulted represented local interests up and down the line and – quite legitimately – chose whichever option best favoured their particular stations or areas. Also, DfT was subject to very strong pressure from BAA (including a “Save the Gatwick Express” website petition) and from some American airlines to retain Gatwick Express as a separate and non-stop service between Gatwick and Victoria. It is no secret that the government faced strong political pressure from the US government likewise.

12. DfT announced the consultation results in April 2007. They reported that “no single option emerged as a clear preference with stakeholders and reservations with all of the options were expressed by a number of respondents.” Judging by their official Stakeholder Briefing Document, DfT made no attempt to weight the responses in accordance with the number of passengers represented, or even to separately analyse those made by region-wide bodies from those with largely local interests.

### **The December 2008 timetable**

13. The outcome was that DfT decided on a new option, on which there was no consultation. It was implemented in December 2008. This perpetuates the structure of the 1984 timetable as developed piecemeal, retains Gatwick Express as a non-stop service to Victoria, but in the peaks the Gatwick Express trains extend from and to Brighton with further timetable adaptations to make this possible.
14. To enable this new option to be implemented, DfT decided to amalgamate the Southern and Gatwick Express franchises. DfT also funded the refurbishment and leasing of 85 carriages recently made redundant from the London – Weymouth line. Most importantly, and little known by the public, the 48 modern carriages (built in 1999) which operate Gatwick Express for most of the day now do no work during the main peak periods. This is the opposite of the whole basis of transport economics in Britain, which since time immemorial has been based on maximising the use of assets to handle peak traffic in the most economic way. London TravelWatch understands that new trains now cost around £1½m per carriage, so the replacement capital value of these 48 carriages is over £70m.
15. The main aim of the BML RUS, and therefore of the December 2008 timetable, was to reduce peak overcrowding to and from London. The actual outcome after the industry converted the DfT’s strategic decision into a workable timetable has been to:

- largely eliminate overcrowding on Brighton – Victoria trains
- reduce it to some degree on Redhill corridor services  
but on the other hand to
- reduce services between the coast, East Croydon and Clapham Jct. – a significant issue for quite a lot of passengers, and one which both London TravelWatch and Passenger Focus warned against when we saw the draft timetable
- increase overcrowding to serious proportions on trains from the coast to London Bridge

### **The Sussex RUS – its purpose, methodology and main conclusion**

16. The main aim of the Sussex RUS is to look in detail at the capacity requirements of the route for ten years up to 2019.
17. Its method is to take data from rail industry, national government and local government planning documents to assess the likely growth in demand on various corridors: mostly for commuting into central London, but also into Croydon and Brighton. It also looks at aspirations for service improvements tabled by major stakeholders. From this data it develops a picture of the level and pattern of future demand.
18. This information is matched against the present train service (broadly the December 2008 timetable), plus the capacity improvements which will be yielded by investment schemes which already have committed funding, i.e. schemes which are reasonably likely to go ahead. The schemes which fall into this category are: the Thameslink Programme for more and longer trains on the route through London Bridge to St. Pancras and beyond, longer trains between East Grinstead and London, enlargement of the passenger concourse and platform access at East Croydon, and track layout enhancement and an extra platform at Gatwick Airport. Account is also taken – where details are known – of any capacity reductions which will occur during construction of these schemes and of any timetable changes which are being planned.
19. Comparing demand and aspirations with capacity reveals a number of gaps. The RUS then examines possible ways (called options) of closing those gaps. The options for each gap are sifted to see if they are practical and likely to be fundable by 2019. Those which are short-listed are then given an economic appraisal in accordance with DfT guidelines. These, *inter alia*, allow schemes which show a benefit to cost ratio of 1.5 (2.0 for infrastructure investment) to be included in the RUS recommendations for development of the Sussex route.



20. The outcome of this process – so far as the London TravelWatch area is concerned - is that the draft RUS produces a complex list of recommendations for the gaps which have been identified. These range – for example – from lengthening selected (or all) peak trains on a particular route to running additional trains, and collectively the recommendations comprise the strategy up to 2019.
21. Two significant points emerge from this:
- Longer trains – over and above those already required by existing funded investment schemes – will be needed, for which extra carriages will have to be purchased.
  - Even if all these measures are implemented (in addition to the schemes which are already funded), all they would achieve would be to maintain “...levels of crowding at a generalised level over the three hour peak remaining similar to today ... “ In other words, on some sections of the route, substantial investment would result in no more than containment of present overcrowding levels, and not the improvement which (over a ten year period) passengers would be reasonably entitled to expect (see para 9.2.6.3 & 9.2.6.4 [Sussex RUS Draft for Consultation](#))

### **Beyond 2019**

22. Given this conclusion – that for London commuting a series of significant investment projects are likely to do little more than maintain existing levels of crowding – it is hardly surprising that where the draft RUS looks beyond 2019 to judge capacity issues 30 years ahead it suggests that:
- a new line through the London suburbs will be necessary. The only way to achieve that will be by going in tunnel from the Croydon area. That is longer than the London tunnel on High Speed 1, and longer than the tunnel planned for Crossrail
  - it will be needed sufficiently soon that “... early planning will be essential...” (see draft RUS para. 10.5.10)

### **Problem – how can all this be funded?**

23. As the draft RUS explains, there are several schemes to increase capacity on the route of the Sussex RUS which are already committed in Network Rail's 2009 –14 budget . Furthermore, these are just part of a package of measures for London commuter routes which add up to some £3.5bn, and around £7.5bn for England & Wales as a whole. This effectively is a cost to passengers and taxpayers, and it excludes the costs of rolling stock, the £16bn cost of Crossrail, TfL's relatively modest investment in London Overground, and London Underground's upgrade needs.
24. In the best times of stable economic prosperity these are big sums of public money and it has been a long task (not yet fully won) to get these schemes approved.
25. In the real world of 2009, and the likely state of the public finances for many years to come, the pressure to squeeze the maximum possible value from every pound spent will be huge. Even the smallest of the proposed schemes put forward by the Sussex RUS will be subject to the closest scrutiny.
26. To follow these by suggesting that we might drive long tunnels through South London for fast trains is bold indeed, and London TravelWatch would never wish to discourage bold thinking about solutions to London's present and future public transport needs.
27. However we must also be mindful of two realities: one is that long tunnels in built-up areas are hideously expensive. The other is that even if such a scheme passed a benefit-cost appraisal, it would have to compete for funds against other proposals such as High Speed 2 (behind which there is gathering political momentum), Crossrail 2 (south-west to north-east London, which TfL tells us is the next corridor after Crossrail 1 most in need of congestion relief), and the rail industry's own suggestion (in the draft Kent RUS) of extending the Bakerloo line to Lewisham. It is surely not conceivable that all of these could go ahead within the next ten years. A Croydon – London tunnel offering extra capacity for peak period trains, but few other benefits, must equally surely come bottom of the list.

### **The missing stages of the analysis**

28. Normally when responding to a RUS consultation draft, London TravelWatch concentrates on the detail of what is proposed – supporting what is good and offering constructive criticism of the less good.

29. In this case, however, we are concerned that the draft Sussex RUS offers well intentioned solutions which will prove difficult to justify – both the pre-2019 small schemes, and the big tunnel idea for post 2019 but for which planning would need to start now.
30. If these solutions were the only way forward then we would argue strongly in their favour. But in fact we believe the draft RUS has omitted some important stages in its analysis. To understand these we must go back to the starting point of the RUS – the present timetable.
31. Our examination revealed several key points:
  - The timetable is basically 25 years old
  - In that period demand has mushroomed
  - The timetable has grown in a piecemeal and haphazard way to try and accommodate this
  - Despite this, peak trains are full or overfull – except Gatwick Express (in spite of the changes made to this in December 2008)
  - 48 modern carriages – capital value around £70m – sit idle during the main part of the peaks
  - Some stations have inadequate levels of service, and important peak links such as Brighton – East Croydon and Brighton – Clapham Jct. have been reduced or withdrawn
  - The obvious first step when faced with such a list of issues is to take a serious look at recasting the timetable from a clean sheet of paper, taking account of up to date passenger numbers, and their origins and destinations
32. As a member of the RUS stakeholder management group, London TravelWatch (together with Passenger Focus and a few industry representatives) advocated that the RUS should consider this approach – if for no other reason than to look closely at the apparent scandal of the 48 wasted carriages.
33. Sadly, not only was this course not adopted, but the draft RUS perpetuates the problem by acquiescing in the industry's apparent intention to continue making piecemeal timetable changes to deal with the two Thameslink Programme key output phases in 2012 and 2015. This will mean that in 2015 a railway which will have seen huge infrastructure and demand changes will be running a timetable which is basically over 30 years old.

34. London TravelWatch cannot recall any precedent for such a situation. We consider it self-evident that such a timetable must contain inefficiencies and mismatches of demand and supply which result in wasted capacity. These – as the draft RUS shows – will result in calls for further new investments (big and small) which will either not be granted, or will crowd out other and more justified investment needs elsewhere in the public transport industry.
35. We are also concerned that in examining the potential for running additional trains in the peak period – and in concluding that there is space on the line for only one extra train in the peak hour – the draft RUS fails to give sufficient consideration to improved operating methods. Examples of what should be looked at are:
- Allowing trains to operate on closer headways (i.e. closer together) than now, e.g. by relaxing the policy of scheduling trains so that the driver should not see any restrictive signals
  - Installing additional signals to enable trains to close up on a train ahead, e.g. at Clapham Jct. to allow more trains to call there
  - Using turnaround drivers at Victoria and London Bridge to enable trains to reverse more quickly than if the arriving driver has to take the same train out, so that more trains can use each platform per hour
  - A review of the practice of allowing Gatwick Express trains sole use of two platforms at Victoria and thus limiting each of these platforms to just two trains per hour.
36. It is impossible for us to say exactly how much extra capacity could be created by reviewing these practices, but we would be surprised if it were less than 10% and – when allied with a fully recast timetable - we think it could be much more.

### **The fine detail of the RUS**

37. This consultation response has deliberately majored on the high level ‘big picture’ of the draft Sussex RUS. That is not to say that we wish to ignore the detailed proposals for the period up to 2019, nor that we suggest they be cast aside. Many of the points discussed in the draft will have merit, and may well remain relevant even if our recommendations to address the high level issues are accepted.

38. Detailed issues which we regard as particularly important are as follows:.
- The principle of revisiting the use of Gatwick Express trains to address some of the capacity and connectivity issues on the route between Gatwick and Victoria. As previously discussed, this was the core issue of the DfT's decision on the BML RUS and we believe that, although doubtless well intentioned, the failure to grasp this nettle is responsible for some of the issues which the draft Sussex RUS has so far not resolved.
  - The proposal to increase capacity between East Croydon and Victoria by lengthening East Grinstead to Victoria trains from 8-cars to 12-cars. This carries with it significant disadvantages, namely a need to omit South Croydon calls (because it would be too costly to lengthen the platforms there) and restrictions on the routing of such trains across the Croydon area junctions. We believe that the extra capacity from East Croydon to Victoria can be better provided by calling some Gatwick Express trains at East Croydon, using the 48 carriages specially designed for this service and which are well suited to rapid loading and carrying large numbers of standing passengers on this short journey.
  - The need to run more trains (and more 12-car trains) on the Redhill corridor to serve new housing developments in the area,
  - The urgent need to improve Sunday services. Their present inadequacy is entirely due to Network Rail's insistence on blanket engineering access to two of the Brighton main line's four tracks on most Sundays of the year. It is now several years since Network Rail's directors accepted the need for a seven-day railway, but progress "on the ground" has been disappointingly slow. Both the main train operators on the Sussex routes have made it clear to us that they would welcome more track capacity on Sundays so that they can offer better services and attract more passengers to rail. It is time that Network Rail translated their words into real and visible action.
39. These issues are included in a consultation response provided by the East Surrey Transport Committee, a rail user group which *inter alia* covers the key area out to Redhill. They also make many other worthwhile comments and we therefore attach their response as an appendix to this paper.

## Conclusions

40. The draft Sussex RUS follows the established RUS method of reviewing forecast demand levels for ten years ahead, comparing these with the capacity the railway will provide after already committed and funded investment schemes have been implemented, identifying likely shortfalls (gaps) between future demand and capacity, considering possible schemes (options) to fix those gaps, and recommending implementation of options which (subject to certain minimum cut-off points) show the highest ratio of benefits to costs.
41. In addition, and in common with other RUSs now in progress, it takes a broad look up to 30 years ahead.
42. The draft RUS concludes – at least so far as the lines into London are concerned – that:
  - current committed schemes (including the major Thameslink project for completion in 2015) will not cope with expected demand by 2019
  - additional schemes – including new rolling stock for longer trains - can be adopted to deal with this
  - these will do little more than prevent present crowding levels from getting worse
  - they will exhaust the potential for incremental capacity improvements, so major new construction will be then be needed (tunnels from the Croydon area into central London are suggested)
  - the timescales are such that planning for major new construction needs to start soon.
43. At a time when public funding is likely to be tight for many years ahead, these conclusions raise serious questions of affordability and of competition with other national rail and TfL projects. High Speed 2 (for example) is already gaining serious political momentum, and from a London point of view other projects – e.g. Crossrail 2 – may be more important than congestion on the Sussex route.
44. Similarly for the smaller pre-2019 proposals, those being put forward in other RUSs or by TfL will be competing with the Sussex RUS for scarce funds.

45. If there were no other options, Sussex route passengers would simply have to take their chance with everyone else in the politics of public transport funding.
46. However London TravelWatch believes that there are other options because the draft RUS has missed several important points:
  - The Brighton main line timetable has grown piecemeal over 25 years. It has never been reviewed from scratch despite huge growth in demand and major changes in travel patterns. This is bound to have led to inefficient use of capacity. Failure to consider a recast based on up to date demand information – and worse, the apparent likelihood that even the post-Thameslink timetable in 2015 will still be based on a structure dating from 1984 – must surely be to miss an opportunity to make best use of capacity
  - The validity of keeping Gatwick Express sacrosanct as a non-stop service between Gatwick and London, when its trains have spare capacity, must be reviewed. The political pressures which led to this issue being ducked as recently as 2007 should now have eased, and changes in the nature of the air traffic using Gatwick have certainly weakened such justification as may have existed.
  - 48 carriages (worth over £70m) are unused for most of the commuter peak periods. The draft RUS does not consider whether this wasteful situation – surely unprecedented in the UK - can be ended. Yet it makes new proposals to operate longer trains, for which additional carriages would have to be bought.
  - No consideration has been given to modifying current operating methods to enable more trains to be operated by running them closer together and turning them round more quickly in the platforms at Victoria and London Bridge.
47. We believe that a review of any one of these issues would show that more passengers can be carried both now and in the future than the draft RUS suggests. Taken together, the increase could be substantial.
48. This is not to say that the work should stop on the investment schemes proposed by the draft RUS. These should be developed so that they are available for implementation when needed. However we believe the “when” could be significantly later than is presently suggested, which means that more money would be available for more pressing schemes elsewhere

## Recommendations

49. Our main recommendation is therefore that a review should start at once into the four key topics we have identified:
  - Timetable re-cast
  - Gatwick Express
  - 48 unused carriages
  - Modified operating methods
50. The review should be led by the two main train operators on the Sussex route, because these are the organisations which are closest to the needs of their passengers, and it should be funded as necessary to carry out any market research which can usefully add to this knowledge, e.g. the number of additional passengers who would fill spare capacity on Gatwick trains if they made additional stops.
51. Oversight of this review would need to be organised, and London TravelWatch would be pleased to participate. However the important thing at the moment is to get started so that the results can be implemented as soon as possible.
52. Meantime, the remaining work on the RUS should continue, but it should be given no more than provisional approval by ORR pending the outcome of the review.
53. Separately, Network Rail must be pressured to bring forward changes to its maintenance arrangements so that year-round Sunday train services can be substantially improved.

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## **Appendix**

### **East Surrey Transport Committee Comments on Network Rail Sussex RUS Consultation**

East Surrey Transport Committee represents users of the bus and rail network in the South of the borough of Croydon and in North East Surrey. Our members use the Caterham and Tattenham Corner Branches, The East Grinstead/Uckfield line as far as Oxted and the main Brighton Line from East Croydon to Redhill.

#### **General**

East Surrey Transport Committee welcomes the opportunity of commenting on the Sussex RUS and its implications for rail services in our area. We support the general proposals, but have some concerns for a number of the stations in our area. We support making provision for longer trains, but would also point out that increased frequency is equally important in satisfying existing demand and also attracting new passengers especially in the off-peak and on Sundays.

#### **Oxted East Grinstead and Uckfield services**

We support the lengthening of station platforms on these lines to enable 12 coach trains to be introduced during the peaks. However, we are very concerned that this would prevent East Grinstead trains calling at South Croydon during and on the shoulder of the peaks. At present these calls provide additional capacity for South Croydon passengers which cannot be accommodated on Caterham and Tattenham Corner trains. They also provide a service for school children along the Oxted line attending Whitgift School and other schools in the South Croydon area.

We are of the view that the best way to deal with this issue would be to restrict 12 coach trains to the London Bridge trains which are the most crowded and leave Victoria trains as 8 coach trains which would allow these trains to continue to call at South Croydon. This would also have the advantage that it would allow these trains to continue to cross to the fast line at Selhurst and not block Windmill Junction. Increased capacity could be provided at East Croydon and Clapham Junction by stopping more south coast and Gatwick trains at both stations.

Electrification of the Uckfield line would also allow splitting and joining at Oxted providing longer trains during the peak and a reorganisation of the off-peak service to provide both faster and all station services to both East Grinstead and Uckfield.

#### **Caterham and Tattenham Corner Branches**

A number of existing peak hour trains are still only 6 coaches and this often causes overcrowding and standing north of Woodmansterne as the 2 coach sets are used on the Tattenham Corner branch. We are of the view that all peak hour trains should be of at least 8 coaches 4 for each branch as soon as possible. These should be increased to 10 coaches by running 6 coaches to Tattenham and 4 to Caterham. All platforms on the Tattenham branch can accommodate 6 coaches except Chipstead and this should be lengthened as soon as possible. At a later stage stations on the Caterham branch and at

Purley should be lengthened to allow 6 coach trains to operate on the branch and 12 coach trains to operate by splitting and joining at Purley.

We are also of the view that consideration must be given to the ability to operate additional peak hour trains on the branches if passenger growth exceeds forecast.

In the off peak we believe the Tattenham Branch should be increased to 4 trains per hour

### **Purley Oaks and South Croydon**

We support lengthening the platforms at Purley Oaks to initially take 10 coach trains and 12 coach trains at a later date. We understand that due to its location platforms at South Croydon cannot be lengthened. We would expect the same number of trains to call, but where trains are longer than 8 coaches selective door opening should be used to ensure there is no reduction in frequency of trains at South Croydon from both the Oxted line and the Caterham and Tattenham Corner branches.

We are also of the view that consideration must be given to the ability to operate additional peak hour trains at these stations if passenger growth exceeds forecast.

### **Redhill Corridor including Coulsdon South and Merstham**

We note that the RUS acknowledges that trains on this corridor during the peak are full and standing from Coulsdon South onward. As these stations can already accommodate 12 coach trains and at least two trains per day are already 12 coach trains. We support increasing the number of trains to 12 coach trains to increase capacity. We note that the RUS has indicated there is an additional path between Redhill and Victoria in the peaks and shoulder peaks, we strongly support an additional train in each of these hours between Redhill and Victoria. However, we are of the view that these additional trains must also call at Coulsdon South and if possible Merstham as well.

Growth in new housing is already taking place at Redhill has already and will happen at Coulsdon South in the next two years and both of these stations are key bus interchanges.

In the off-peak restoration of a Victoria service to Coulsdon South and Merstham is required especially as the Charing Cross service will be shortened back to London Bridge in December 2009.

### **Gatwick Express**

We are of the view that now the majority of business class airlines flying to the USA have moved to Heathrow the need for a non-stop service to Victoria is no longer a priority. We are of the view that existing peak hour South Coast/ Gatwick services should stop alternatively at East Croydon and Clapham Junction to provide additional capacity at these stations and fill the gaps between these stations and the south coast created in the December 2008 timetable.

This pattern should be repeated in the off-peak Gatwick service with alternate trains stopping at Clapham Junction and East Croydon.

## **Watford Junction, East Croydon and Gatwick**

These services should be increased to 2 trains per hour throughout the day with additional trains to Kensington Olympia in the peaks. In the off-peak one train per hour should be extended to Gatwick airport providing a through service from stations between Balham and Selhurst. If this services uses the Redhill Line it should also stop at Coulsdon South and Redhill.

## **Southern off-peak services to Charing Cross.**

We are concerned that off-peak Southern Charing Cross services from our area is being withdrawn. Charing Cross offers a West End terminus to those stations that do not have a Victoria service. Therefore we would want this link kept and reinstated on completion of the rebuilding of London Bridge.

***London TravelWatch note:** Whilst we support this aspiration in principle, we will have to consider it against the possible trade-off of service reductions from other stations to Charing Cross before taking a final view.*

## **Sunday Services**

These have not kept pace with the changes to travel patterns by the public or with local buses services in our area. For example London Buses operate 8 buses per hour between Coulsdon and Croydon on a Sunday. It is our view that with the commitment to a seven day railway by Network Rail Sunday services should be improved as part of this RUS.

We would suggest that all stations in our area could move from hourly services to half hourly service quite easily. We would suggest the following.

- **Caterham and Tattenham Corner**  
Increased by splitting and joining at Purley, the Tattenham portion could be at the rear southbound and again at the rear northbound to improve turn round time. This puts no extra trains on the mainline but provides a half hourly service to each branch.
- **Redhill Corridor**  
The existing London Bridge to Redhill Summer Sunday service should run all year it could be extended to Tonbridge to avoid turning at Redhill (Purley stop could also be missed to reduce running time). On those days that there is actually a two track working an alternative service could be run as is run now or a substitute bus could run between Purley and Redhill.
- **Oxted, East Grinstead and Uckfield**  
The existing Oxted to Uckfield shuttle should start from East Croydon and run 30 minutes apart from the East Grinstead train calling all stations. This would use the reversible line between East and South Croydon.

## **Redhill Station**

We are of the view that the Redhill track layout should be modified to make the station more flexible and improve passenger interchange.

- We believe that the remodelling should allow Tonbridge and Reigate lines to be served all day as either through trains or as a portions of another train. This could be the same train north of Redhill or as a rear portion of another service such as the Horsham service.
- We believe the track and signalling should allow these trains to join and separate while also allowing other trains to call and at least two Reading to Redhill trains per hour to continue to Gatwick Airport. We believe this is in the interest of both long distance passengers to Gatwick and local passengers.
- On the downside platform we believe that the track and signalling should be such that down Tonbridge line trains can leave the platform without having to access the mainline.

The existing ex post office platform should be modified to allow existing Metro (early morning and Sundays) and additional Metro trains in the future. Terminate and start without interfering with the through lines

## **Other Issues : Electrification**

### **Redhill to Reading Route**

This route is partially electrified with electric services running between Redhill and Reigate, Guildford and Ash and Wokingham and Reading and one semi-fast and slow diesel service each hour between Reading and Redhill with one and sometimes two being extended to Gatwick airport.

This route should be electrified in two sections: The first from Reigate to Guildford this would allow the existing Southern London/Redhill to Reigate trains to be extended as an all stations to service to Guildford. This would allow the two existing GWR diesel services to continue as two semi-fast services from Reading to Reigate, serving stations between Wokingham and Guildford and only Deepdene and Reigate between Redhill and Guildford.

This would improve the local service to all stations while providing a faster more frequent service between Reading and Gatwick. This would also allow a better use of rolling stock.

The second section would be to electrify from Ash to Wokingham allowing the diesel services between Reading and Gatwick to be converted to electric traction. This would then allow the service to transfer to and be incorporated in either Southern or South West franchises, allowing more efficient use of existing electric rolling stock and allowing the Transfer of diesel units to other parts of the UK network.

Electrifying this route create a very useful diversionary route, it would also allow the running of electric trains between Brighton and Reading improving journey opportunities without the need to travel via central London.

### **The East Grinstead to Uckfield Route**

This is our second priority as electrification of this route would fully integrate the service into the Southern services on the mainline and would also allow attaching and joining of services at Oxted to enable longer trains to run in the peaks on the busiest section of the route, between Oxted, East Croydon and London. It would remove the need to treat this service separately to all other services and for it only to run London Bridge.

This would allow the off-peak train service to be reviewed to provide a mixture of all stations and semi-fast services to both London Bridge and Victoria. This would also allow existing very good 172 Diesel Units to be transferred to other parts of the UK rail network.

### **Freight traffic**

We support the electrical isolation of the route between Clapham Junction and Tonbridge to allow class 92 electric loco to haul freight trains to the Channel Tunnel rather than existing diesel traction which is less efficient, noisier and less environmentally friendly.

### **Freight Loops**

The existing long siding at Stoats Nest junction between Purley and Coulsdon South should be converted into a freight loop to provide more flexibility with southbound freight services.

### **Engineering works and Seven day operation**

We strongly support the seven day railway principle. To this end we would like to see the following this would enable towns that have more than one station on a different lines to still be rail connected during engineering works:

1. There should always be a route to Brighton open and engineering works should not be planned on all routes on the same weekend.
2. More use of bidirectional signalling and single line working
3. Parallel routes should not be closed on the same weekend such as :
  - Uckfield and Tonbridge lines
  - Oxted and Caterham lines
  - Tattenham Corner and Redhill lines.

NOTE. It is not London TravelWatch's normal practice to attach local user group papers to its RUS consultation responses, although we are always pleased to receive such submissions and take them into account in preparing our own response. On this occasion, the wide range of the RUS analysis, and other pressures on time, have limited our own scope for detailed analysis. As we find the East Surrey Transport Committee's paper persuasive, and it does not set the interests of one part of the London TravelWatch area against another, we consider it appropriate to attach it in full.