
Secretariat memorandum

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Draft for Kent RUS paper to TSC**1 Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To brief the members on the proposed response to the Kent RUS (Rail Utilisation Strategy).

2 Introduction

- 2.1 Network Rail, on behalf of the rail industry, has issued a consultation draft for the Kent Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS).
- 2.2 A RUS is defined by the Office of Rail Regulation as a strategy to promote the route utilisation objective. The latter is in turn defined as “the effective and efficient use and development of the capacity available on the network, consistent with the funding that is, or is likely to become, available.”
- 2.3 The Kent RUS deals mainly with outer area trains from Kent into London – see attached map. The routes in this area are complex, and services run to several central London terminals. Day-long services run to Victoria and to London Bridge / Waterloo / Charing Cross. Additionally there are peak services to Blackfriars (which continue via the Thameslink route towards Bedford) and to Cannon Street. From December 2009 trains will also run from Kent onto the High Speed line (HS1) to Stratford and St. Pancras.
- 2.4 Metro services on these routes were dealt with separately in the South London RUS issued in 2008. However metro and outer area trains share the same tracks for significant parts of each route, so proposals for improving the latter must be reviewed for possible knock-on effects on the former.
- 2.5 Also, outer area trains provide fast services to London from London TravelWatch stations at Sevenoaks, Chelsfield, Orpington, Otford, Swanley, St. Mary Cray and Bromley South.
- 2.6 The RUS looks ahead 30 years to 2039. It includes detailed recommendations for the period to 2019 and an indicative strategy beyond that point.

3 What the RUS says

- 3.1 So far as London TravelWatch’s interests are concerned, the broad conclusions of the RUS, brutally summarised, are:

- Outer area peak services are heavily loaded, and inwards of Sevenoaks and Bromley South there is overcrowding above the Passengers In Excess of Capacity rules (PIXC) specified by the Department for Transport (DfT). The new timetable being introduced in December 2009, followed by some longer trains and then the Thameslink programme due to be completed in 2015 will provide some extra capacity but – when allied with expected demand increases - will not provide significant improvement in crowding conditions.
 - The RUS therefore considers further ideas for capacity improvement.
 - For the Sevenoaks route, the RUS looks at several ideas for creating paths for more outer area trains. However it concludes that any viable solutions would have to be accompanied by reductions in the number of metro trains operating into Cannon Street and Charing Cross. The RUS clearly states that, even after existing plans to lengthen metro trains to 12-cars have been implemented, demand will be such that the idea of reducing the number of metro trains is not acceptable.
 - On the Bromley South route, the RUS recommends that most Chatham line trains be lengthened to 12-cars and Maidstone line trains to 8-cars. Beyond that, it identifies a possibility – no more than that – of running additional fast trains from Swanley into Victoria or Blackfriars, or into Waterloo using the former Eurostar platforms. However this could only be achieved – if at all - from December 2015 as part of the new timetable for the completed Thameslink programme. The RUS therefore limits itself to recommending that these possibilities are considered further during the December 2015 timetable development work. As with the Sevenoaks route, the RUS accepts that increasing outer area services by reducing metro ones is not acceptable – although in this case the point is implicit rather than stated explicitly.
 - For capacity improvement for outer area services beyond 2015 the RUS therefore recommends concentration on building more high speed trains (the so-called Javelins) so that more and longer trains can operate via the HS1 route to Stratford and St. Pancras. This fits in with local government planning policy which seeks to focus new housing developments in places which are either on HS1 or on lines which can be served by HS1 trains, particularly Thames Gateway and Ashford. Once again this would not have any adverse impact on metro area services.
- 3.2 A key point of focussing on increased use of HS1 is to encourage as many existing outer area passengers as possible to transfer to the new line, so that capacity on the existing routes is freed up for the benefit of shorter distance (e.g. Sevenoaks and Bromley South) passengers. The RUS makes three recommendations to help achieve this:
- ensuring an appropriate pricing policy for 2015 and beyond, to ensure loading levels are balanced between High Speed line and other services. (This is code for querying the level – or perhaps even the principle - of the present HS1 surcharge policy.)

- maximising the accessibility of Ebbsfleet from the local area – including bus links from “hub” stations on other routes. (Ebbsfleet is fundamentally a park-and-ride station, with very limited public transport access at present.)
- improving connections between Stratford’s International and Regional stations, to ensure that passengers using this station can access the major office developments around Liverpool Street and Canary Wharf by changing at Stratford rather than at London Bridge. (Current plans are for a link by DLR train, or a walk through the new shopping centre.)

4 Secretariat comments

4.1 The results of implementing current industry plans, plus the RUS recommendations, are summarised in the following table for seat utilisation across the three hour peak:

Figure 9.3 – Seat utilisation across three hour peak

| | High Speed line | Tonbridge main line | Chatham main line |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 2010 base | 116% | 120% | 120% |
| 2019 committed schemes only | 108% | 118% | 114% |
| 2019 strategy | 112% | 112% | 106% |

- 4.2 The message is clear. Current crowding levels on Southeastern outer area trains – which of course are worst once inside the London TravelWatch area – will be reduced, but substantial numbers of passengers will still have to stand. Note that these figures are for the entire three hour peak.
- 4.3 Demand in the busiest hour is much higher, so passengers at stations such as Sevenoaks and Bromley South will continue to be faced with their present choice – stand on a fast train or get a seat on a metro stopping train. Most will doubtless do what they do now – stand.
- 4.4 Also noteworthy is that HS1 is forecast to be as crowded as the Tonbridge / Sevenoaks line, and this will be before Thames Gateway is fully developed.
- 4.5 The RUS looks at the possibility of using pricing policy to encourage demand to spread more evenly, but does not offer much hope of success – even when smartcard technology makes differential pricing easier to implement. The problem – as identified by limited recent experiments and by Passenger Focus research – is that:
- a) passengers are not likely to shift their travel times by more than 30 mins.
 - b) will only shift at all if the improvement in travelling conditions is substantial.

- 4.6 The consequence of a) is that b) is unlikely to be achieved. Therefore, unless the price differential is made very large, this solution won't work. Also, a large differential is unlikely to be sustainable. Either the high-peak fare will be politically unacceptable, or the low fare will be unaffordable to government – and could be self-defeating by simply encouraging more and longer-distance commuting.
- 4.7 The brutal truth is that we are dealing here with a largely Victorian railway network, enterprisingly and economically electrified between the 1920s and 1960s, which has generated home / work relationships which has pushed capacity to its limits.
- 4.8 North of the river, such extreme outcomes have been avoided. Here the Underground (sometimes as a result of taking over sections of main line railway) carries much of the metro area traffic, so more capacity is available for outer area commuting. This never happened in south London, because after the Morden section of the Northern line was opened in 1926, the Southern Railway and the Underground made a pact for the latter to make no more incursions into the former's territory.
- 4.9 This was a good decision at the time, because it gave the Southern the commercial protection it needed to enable it replace slow and infrequent steam trains with fast and frequent electric ones. By the 1960s, passengers were paying the price – particularly on the Charing Cross and Cannon St. routes - and the RUS tells us they will still be paying it 60 years later.
- 4.10 This lesson of history is gradually being learnt. Crossrail to Abbey Wood is effectively an underground for the western end of Thames Gateway, and the Kent RUS recommends that a scheme for its extension to Gravesend over existing tracks should be developed for implementation beyond 2019.
- 4.11 The RUS goes a stage further, by recommending that for post 2019 a study should be made of handing over one of the exiting Southeastern metro lines – it suggests the Hayes line – to either the DLR (as an extension of its existing Lewisham route) or to the Underground by extending the Bakerloo line from Elephant & Castle via Camberwell and Lewisham. Either of these would free up capacity on Southeastern into Charing Cross and Cannon Street, and the RUS suggests this benefit be split 50 / 50 between more outer area trains on the Tonbridge / Sevenoaks route and more trains on other metro branches.
- 4.12 The Hayes idea is not new. The Underground version was part of the original concept in the 1960s / 70s of what is now the Jubilee line, and the DLR version has been suggested by London TravelWatch and others for the past ten years.
- 4.13 Certainly the Bakerloo line idea would satisfy long-standing aspirations for getting the tube to Camberwell and Peckham – but of course building new railways under London to modern standards is very expensive (witness Crossrail). Even if it could be justified as an investment on cost-benefit criteria, finding the money would be a huge issue – both in competition with other big ideas (such as High Speed 2, Crossrail 2 and suggestions in the Sussex RUS for tunnelling from Croydon into central London) and in light of the long term public finance issues which the UK now faces.

- 4.14 For these reasons – and because major London transport investments are best looked at on a London-wide basis – the time is now right for TfL to develop a long term rail plan beyond their current Rail 2025 strategy to recommend priorities to follow Crossrail.

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 That the secretariat issues a response to the draft Kent RUS based on the contents of this report.

6 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 6.1 There are no specific implications of this nature arising from this report.

7 Legal powers

- 7.1 Section 252A of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places a duty upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) to keep under review matters affecting the interests of the public in relation to railway passenger and station services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area, and to make representations about them to such persons as it thinks appropriate.

8 Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no financial consequences for London TravelWatch.

Figure 2.1 – Geographic scope

