

## **There's more to Chiltern than the Chilterns – The Case for a Chiltern Metro**

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# There's more to Chiltern than the Chilterns - The Case for a Chiltern Metro

## ***Foreword***

**by Suzanne May**  
**Chair of the London Transport Users Committee**

In 1984, British Rail proposed that Marylebone station should be closed. Aylesbury line services would be absorbed into the Metropolitan Line route to Baker Street, High Wycombe line trains would be diverted to Paddington, and the stations at Wembley Stadium, Sudbury & Harrow Road, Sudbury Hill Harrow and Northolt Park would close.

Amidst great controversy BR brought Chris Green down from Scotland to create Network South East. Mr. Green deftly extricated his masters from the mess by highlighting an upswing in traffic on the Underground, agreed that the Metropolitan Line could not cope with the Aylesbury line traffic and withdrew the entire proposal. He then set about implementing a total route modernisation package and introduced a devolved management team led by Adrian Shooter. Like a phoenix Chiltern Railways emerged to be one of the most successful of the privatised train operating companies.

Today, with more new investment brought to the route and with the 'small is beautiful' management style pursued by the self same Mr. Shooter, the Marylebone lines enjoy a level of service unparalleled in their history and even compete with their saviour Mr. Green – now at Virgin Trains - for traffic between London and Birmingham. With a new long term franchise agreement about to be concluded with the Strategic Rail Authority, Chiltern have ambitious plans for further development.

With the current travails of the railway industry this is a rare 'good news' story. But there is one vital link missing. The suburban stations in Greater London between Wembley Stadium and West Ruislip are amongst the least well served anywhere in the capital, and the two Sudburys are pretty well rush hour only. Worse, the new franchise plan includes no significant proposals to change things, despite a welcome commitment to spend thousands of pounds at each station to make them fully wheelchair accessible.

We do not think this is right. In this new era of integrated public transport for London the opportunity to make proper use of this direct line into Central London must be seized and we urge all concerned to take this on board now.

If you support our case for the Chiltern Metro – tell the Strategic Rail Authority, tell Chiltern Railways, tell Transport *for* London, tell the Mayor, tell your local council and please tell us. You will find an address list at the back of the report; we look forward to a large post bag.

## **Executive Summary**

The railway line between Marylebone and West Ruislip is the only route in London which does not have a regular day-long all stations train service.

This report highlights the wide range of passenger and community benefits which would be secured by introduction of a Chiltern Metro offering frequent day-long train services to the stations between Marylebone and West Ruislip. Such a service would serve the following stations:

Marylebone  
Wembley Stadium  
Sudbury & Harrow Road  
Sudbury Hill Harrow  
Northolt Park  
South Ruislip  
West Ruislip

A Chiltern Metro would offer faster journeys to many central London destinations. It would also provide direct connections at West Ruislip for centres on the M40 corridor towards Birmingham, and thus provide a competitive public transport alternative to the M40 from a wide sector of west and north-west London.

Combined with separate and widely supported proposals for a major new interchange at West Hampstead, which would provide an interchange between Chiltern and LUL Jubilee & Metropolitan Lines, Silverlink North London Line, Thameslink, Anglia Crosslink and possibly Midland Main Line, a Chiltern Metro would create a wide range of journey opportunities avoiding central London interchange, including links to Gatwick and Luton Airports.

The imminent letting of a long term franchise for M40 Trains to operate services on the Marylebone lines creates a window of opportunity for this long neglected suburban corridor to be upgraded into a fully functioning part of an integrated public transport system for London.

## **Recommendations**

- a) The Shadow Strategic Rail Authority, in partnership as appropriate with Transport for London, M40 Trains and Railtrack, should carry out a full feasibility study of a Chiltern Metro.
- b) The study should include consultation with local authorities, LTUC and other appropriate user groups.
- c) The target should be to introduce a Chiltern Metro service within four years.
- d) All investment plans for train services on the Marylebone routes should meanwhile take account of, and safeguard provision for, the needs of a Chiltern Metro.

# London Transport Users Committee

## There's more to Chiltern than the Chilterns - The Case for a Chiltern Metro

### Introduction

#### Description of line

1 The railway line from Marylebone to West Ruislip and beyond, operated by Chiltern Railways, has suburban stations in the Greater London area at:

Wembley Stadium  
Sudbury & Harrow Road  
Sudbury Hill Harrow  
Northolt Park  
South Ruislip  
West Ruislip

2 From Marylebone the line is double track to Neasden, largely paralleling the Metropolitan & Jubilee lines of London Underground (LUL). At Neasden the line divides at a flat junction. One route continues via Harrow-on-the-Hill and over Metropolitan Line tracks to Amersham and then to Aylesbury. The other line (the subject of this paper) runs via the suburban stations to West Ruislip and thence to High Wycombe, Banbury and Birmingham - see map at Appendix 1.

3 From Neasden to South Ruislip the line is double track, although land is available for four tracks along much of the route. From South Ruislip to West Ruislip the line has three tracks at present and Chiltern Railways have plans to lay a fourth track.

4 This line is the only route in London which does not have a regular day-long all stations train service.

#### What is a 'metro' service?

5 The term 'metro' is derived from the Paris Metro and conveys an image of high frequency, day-long, seven day per week services where passengers can turn up knowing that a train will be along in a few minutes. The frequency is such that it is unnecessary to look at a timetable. In London this type of service is provided by LUL, where most sections of line have at least 6 trains per hour (tph), i.e. one every ten minutes

6 On the national rail network, where suburban trains often have to share tracks and inter-work with longer distance services, "metro" has become accepted as meaning a service of 6 tph or better. 6 tph are provided on parts of the First Great Eastern and Connex networks operating from Liverpool Street and Victoria / London Bridge, and this frequency has been included in the South London Metro project being developed by SSRA, TfL, SWELTRAC, SELTRANS, Railtrack, the South London train operators and LTUC.

7 To be effective in encouraging modal shift, a metro also requires user friendly stations and interchanges, strong branding and effective marketing.

## **The Present Position**

### **Train services**

8 The Marylebone – West Ruislip line is presently operated by Chiltern Railways, with whose owning company (M40 Trains) the Shadow Strategic Rail Authority (SSRA) is presently negotiating a new twenty year franchise.

9 Except for the two Sudbury stations, the present services are better than those operated up to the 1980s and the journey times are fast. However at 1 or 2 tph the level of service remains well below the norm for London and can in no way be regarded as a ‘turn up and go’ service. Apart from a couple of midday trains, the Sudburys have peak period services only, with none at weekends. A summary of present train services is shown at Appendix 2.

### **Franchise replacement plans**

10 Under the Heads of Agreement being negotiated between SSRA and Chiltern Railways for a new franchise, there are no specific proposals to improve the suburban services.

11 This omission of metro proposals stands in contrast to Chiltern’s position in October 1997 when they issued “Chiltern Metro – A Discussion Document” seeking local authority support for such a project, and to their letter of 3 September 1999 indicating a clear commitment to investment to provide a regular half-hourly all stations service between West Ruislip and Marylebone (see Appendix 3).

12 In response to questions since announcement of their preferred bidder status, Chiltern’s Managing Director has stated that:

- they intend to improve the service at Wembley Stadium
- previous aspirations to improve services at all the suburban stations have not been included in the franchise replacement bid because of the high level of performance incentive and penalty régime specified by SSRA
- the Sudburys are only 2 minutes from adjacent Underground stations
- they regard a Metro service as incompatible with their plans for improved services to stations further out on the High Wycombe line
- they plan to reinstate four tracks between South Ruislip and West Ruislip, but even with this enhancement they consider the existing infrastructure inadequate for both a Metro and their planned longer distance services
- improvements to the infrastructure to support a Metro would be very expensive
- they are willing to discuss the matter

13 SSRA have also indicated a willingness to discuss the matter. Recently, by letter of 10 November 2000 to LTUC, SSRA have stated that they are in discussion to incorporate two scenarios for a metro style service into the franchise agreement as secondary aspirations (see Appendix 4).

14 Chiltern have agreed a firm commitment to make all stations on their network fully accessible.

## London Underground stations

15 Like many other National Rail suburban stations, the Chiltern suburban stations have LUL stations nearby. At South and West Ruislip the Chiltern platforms form part of the Central Line stations of the same name. Full details, including (where appropriate) bus journey information to the nearest LUL stations, are shown at Appendix 5

## Benefits of a Chiltern Metro

### Direct passenger benefits

16 A Chiltern Metro would offer faster times to London than LUL. Sample running times to Marylebone would be:

- West Ruislip 24 mins
- Sudbury Hill 15 mins

17 Actual journey times, allowing for waiting time, interchange and (where appropriate) bus connections, to a range of destinations in Central London will vary according to location and the number of interchanges required. Selected comparative journey times for Chiltern Metro (at 6 tph) and LUL (including allowances for interchange) are shown below. These examples use the methodology adopted by TfL for network planning purposes, which adds a weighting to the calculations to allow for the fact that passengers prefer direct journeys to ones which involve interchange. Where Chiltern Metro offers a quicker journey than the Underground, its time is shown in large bold type.

From	To	via Chiltern Metro	via Central Line	via Piccadilly Line
West Ruislip	Marylebone	<b>34</b>	64	
	Oxford Circus	52	46	
	Piccadilly Circus	<b>54</b>	61	
	Canary Wharf	77	75	
	Waterloo	<b>58</b>	64	
	Moorgate	<b>63</b>	71	
	Kings Cross	<b>57</b>	63	
	Westminster	63	62	
Northolt Park *	Marylebone	<b>28</b>	72	75
	Oxford Circus	<b>46</b>	55	70
	Piccadilly Circus	<b>48</b>	70	56
	Canary Wharf	<b>71</b>	84	83
	Waterloo	<b>52</b>	72	72
	Moorgate	<b>57</b>	79	82
	Kings Cross	<b>51</b>	72	64
	Westminster	<b>57</b>	73	68

\*Central Line route is via Northolt. Piccadilly Line route is via South Harrow

From	To	via Chiltern Metro	via Central Line	via Piccadilly Line
Sudbury Hill	Marylebone	<b>25</b>		58
	Oxford Circus	<b>43</b>		53
	Piccadilly Circus	45		39
	Canary Wharf	68		66
	Waterloo	<b>49</b>		55
	Moorgate	<b>54</b>		65
	Kings Cross	48		47
	Westminster	54		51

Full details of these calculations are shown in Appendix 6.

### Local benefits

18 In addition to the obvious advantages of improved public transport access to central London, a Chiltern Metro service would provide many other benefits and opportunities. General transport integration in the area would be improved, and a particular benefit would be the interchange with the Piccadilly Line at Sudbury Hill (200 metre walk) which would offer convenient new journey opportunities between the Chiltern area and many stations in West London. For local communities there would be a range of specific benefits as follows:

#### West Ruislip

Improved public transport access for substantial residential catchment area.

#### South Ruislip

Improved public transport access for substantial residential catchment area and local industrial area.

#### Northolt Park

Improved public transport access for substantial catchment area in Ealing and Harrow – complementing north-south orbital bus links to Harrow town centre, Hayes, Heathrow and Park Royal / Willesden.

Supports West London Transport Strategy (WLTS) proposal for transport interchange on Northolt Road – an important orbital corridor identified by WLTS and London Bus Initiative (LBI).

#### Sudbury Hill Harrow

Improved public transport access for substantial residential catchment area, local offices and hospital

Located on Greenford Road – part of WLTS strategic network and ‘second generation’ LBI network.

Bus links to:

- employment and tourist interest in Harrow on the Hill;
- employment, shopping and entertainment in Harrow town centre
- employment and shopping in Greenford.

### Sudbury & Harrow Road

Improved public transport access for substantial residential catchment area.

Located on Harrow Road – part of WLTS strategic network and ‘second generation’ LBI network.

Bus links to:

employment and tourist interest in Harrow on the Hill;  
employment, shopping and entertainment in Harrow town centre.

### Wembley Stadium

Improved public transport access for substantial residential area, and to commercial and shopping centre.

Located on Harrow Road – part of WLTS strategic network and ‘second generation’ London Bus Initiative (LBI) network.

Improved public transport access to events at stadium, conference centre and industrial estate – necessary to support car parking restrictions at the new complex.

Supports WLTS proposals for transport interchange and local area regeneration.

### Marylebone

Improved public transport access for the Paddington Special Policy Area, the boundary of which is close to Marylebone station.

### **Interchange at West Ruislip for the north**

19 Chiltern Metro would provide direct connections at West Ruislip with trains to Buckinghamshire centres such as High Wycombe and Aylesbury. The value of the interchange would be greatly enhanced if longer distance trains to Bicester, Banbury, Leamington, Warwick and Birmingham were to call at West Ruislip (say) once per hour. Taken together the Metro and the Central Line, by avoiding the need to travel into central London and out again, would provide a competitive public transport alternative to the M40 from a wide sector of west and north-west London.

### **Extension to Denham**

20 Suggestions have been made at various times for an M25 / M40 parkway to be provided at Denham. This report does not seek to review the merits of such a project, but if it came to fruition, it would be beneficial for Chiltern Metro to be extended northwards accordingly.

### **Accessibility**

21 With Chiltern’s committed new franchise plan to provide step-free access at all stations, a Chiltern Metro would provide a fully accessible link for all journeys on this route. This would benefit both users travelling between the local stations, travellers to Marylebone (where low-floor buses will be available nearby for onward connection to many parts of London), and those wishing to make journeys to the north. By contrast, LUL aspirations for

making the Underground accessible are, of necessity, both limited and spread over a period of twenty years or more.

## **Network benefits**

22 A Chiltern Metro would also provide benefits to the users of other routes by virtue of releasing space on lines which are presently crowded. Beneficiaries would include the western and central sections of the Piccadilly and Central lines and the Metropolitan Line south of Wembley Park. In the longer term, transfer of traffic from the Rayners Lane branch of the Piccadilly Line may make it easier to cope with rising traffic to Heathrow.

## **Other Aspects**

### **Infrastructure**

23 Chiltern Railways plan, as part of the new franchise, to quadruple the track between South Ruislip and West Ruislip and to provide additional platforms at Marylebone. A metro service would require further improvements to the infrastructure. In "Chiltern Metro – A Discussion Document", Chiltern identified these as:

- a reversing facility at West Ruislip
- passing loops at Sudbury Hill Harrow
- passing loops at Wembley Stadium (desirable for circumstances when large crowds are being detrained or entrained)

Land is available for all these facilities within the existing boundaries of the railway.

### **West Hampstead Interchange**

24 For the new franchise Chiltern proposes a major new interchange at West Hampstead. This would provide interchange between Chiltern and LUL Jubilee & Metropolitan Lines, Silverlink North London Line, Thameslink, Anglia Crosslink and possibly Midland Main Line.

25 A wide range of new rail journey opportunities avoiding central London interchange would be created. These would include links to Gatwick & Luton Airports and would both relieve LUL congestion and encourage modal shift from road transport.

26 This interchange is strongly supported by LTUC, LB Camden and TfL. A Chiltern Metro would both enhance and be enhanced by the improved journey opportunities which it would provide.

27 Taking the sample of journeys shown in the table in para. 17 above, creation of a West Hampstead interchange would further reduce journey times from each of the Chiltern Metro stations to Canary Wharf, Waterloo, Moorgate, Kings Cross and Westminster. The time savings range from 2 to 10 minutes.

28 In some cases where the basic Chiltern Metro does not reduce journey times below the Central or Piccadilly Line alternatives, the West Hampstead interchange swings the balance. In our examples, journeys to Canary Wharf and Westminster come within this category. From Sudbury Hill Harrow, the West Hampstead option is fast enough to become the preferred route to Kings Cross rather than the direct service on the Piccadilly Line.

29 Looking further afield, West Hampstead would offer single interchange connections to Luton and Gatwick Airports. Journey times to Luton Airport would be reduced by 35 to 40 minutes. Time savings to Gatwick Airport would not be as great, but for luggage laden passengers the reduced number of interchanges and avoiding crowded central London stations would count for much more than conventional journey time analysis (which is based on the behaviour and preferences of commuters) would suggest.

30 West Hampstead interchange would also make for easier connections to suburban and regional centres such as Richmond, Stratford, Basingstoke, Bedford, Brighton and Colchester, and also to East Anglia and the East Midlands. The range will increase with the advent of Thameslink 2000 and if schemes such as through running from Clapham Junction to the North London Line and the expansion of Anglia Crosslink come to fruition.

31 Appendix 6 includes comparisons of journey times for selected West Hampstead connections.

### **Transport Strategy**

32 The Chiltern Metro proposal is consistent with the Mayor's draft transport strategy for London. The draft includes the following at Proposal E6.5: "Transport for London will work with the Strategic Rail Authority, Railtrack and the train operating companies to identify a phased programme, co-ordinated with franchise replacement, for the implementation of the London Metro concept."

### **A pointer to success**

33 As acknowledged earlier in this report, since taking over the franchise in 1996 Chiltern have improved services to the suburban stations. Although not up to metro standards, there are signs that worthwhile traffic has been generated. At Northolt Park, for example, peak period passengers in autumn 2000 are understood to be 12% up on 1999 and 28% up over three years. A local survey carried out during October 2000 showed 91 passengers boarding the 0826 train to Marylebone. These are promising figures which augur well for the success of a frequent all-day metro service.

### **Implementation**

34 Allowing for full analysis, project development and construction, it is suggested that a Chiltern Metro should be achievable within four years from the start of the new franchise. This is on the assumption that infrastructure improvements can be achieved within the existing railway boundary. If this is not the case and Transport and Works Act approval is therefore required, it is accepted that the project will need additional time.

35 Although this report is couched in terms of M40 Trains operating a Chiltern Metro the SSRA could decide to franchise such a service to an alternative operator.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

36 This report highlights the wide range of passenger and community benefits which would be secured by introduction of a Chiltern Metro offering frequent day-long train services to the stations between Marylebone and West Ruislip.

37 The imminent letting of a long term franchise for M40 Trains to operate services on the Marylebone lines creates a window of opportunity for this long neglected suburban corridor to be upgraded into a fully functioning part of an integrated public transport system for London.

38 We therefore **recommend** that::

- a) The Shadow Strategic Rail Authority, in partnership as appropriate with Transport *for* London, M40 Trains and Railtrack, should carry out a full feasibility study of a Chiltern Metro.
- b) The study should include consultation with local authorities, LTUC and other appropriate user groups.
- c) The target should be to introduce a Chiltern Metro service within four years.
- d) All investment plans for train services on the Marylebone routes should meanwhile take account of, and safeguard provision for, the needs of a Chiltern Metro.

38 This report has been prepared by the London Transport Users Committee, with the support and assistance of the London Boroughs of Brent, Camden, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon and the City of Westminster. Transport for London have indicated support for the Chiltern Metro concept within the context of the Mayor's draft transport strategy.

**Summary of train services – Chiltern suburban stations – winter 2000-01**

Key: *tph* = trains per hour    *down* = from London    *up* = to London

	<b><u>Mondays - Fridays</u></b>	<b><u>Saturdays</u></b>	<b><u>Sundays</u></b>	<b><u>Typical journey time to Marylebone</u></b>
Wembley Stadium	2 tph (sometimes 3 tph) all day	3 tph daytime, 2 tph evenings	2 tph	10 mins.
Sudbury & Harrow Road	<u>Down trains</u> 5 from 0630 to 1030 1 at 1400 7 from 1630 to 2030  <u>Up trains</u> 4 from 0645 to 0930 5 from 1555 to 2000	None	None	14 mins.
Sudbury Hill Harrow	<u>Down trains</u> 3 from 0640 to 0830 1 at 1230 1 at 1403 7 from 1630 to 2030  <u>Up trains</u> 4 from 0640 to 0930 4 from 1645 to 2000	None	None	17 mins.
Northolt Park	Generally 2 tph peak, 1 tph off-peak and evenings	1 tph all day	1 tph all day	18 mins.
South Ruislip	Generally 3 tph peak, 2 tph off-peak and evenings	2 tph all day	2 tph all day	19 mins.
West Ruislip	2 tph peak, 1 tph off-peak and evenings	1 tph all day	1 tph all day	23 mins.

**Adjacent stations – Chiltern and LUL**

<b><u>Chiltern Station</u></b>	<b><u>LUL Station</u></b>	<b><u>Distance between Chiltern &amp; LUL stations</u></b>	<b><u>Bus journey time between Chiltern &amp; LUL stations</u></b>	<b><u>Typical bus frequency (buses per hour)</u></b>
Wembley Stadium	Wembley Park	1.2 km	4 mins	Peak 10 per hour Off-peak 6 per hour
	Wembley Central	0.9 km	3 mins	Peak 10 per hour Off-peak 6 per hour
Sudbury & Harrow Road	Sudbury Town	0.5 km	Not applicable	Not applicable
Sudbury Hill Harrow	Sudbury Hill	0.2 km	Not applicable	Not applicable
Northolt Park	South Harrow	1 km	4 mins + 0.2 km walk	Peak 10 per hour Off-peak 6 per hour
	Northolt	1.4 km	5 mins + 0.3 km walk	Peak 10 per hour Off-peak 6 per hour
South Ruislip	South Ruislip	Not applicable – joint station with one booking hall	Not applicable	Not applicable
West Ruislip	West Ruislip	Not applicable – joint station with one booking hall	Not applicable	Not applicable

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The Committee is grateful for assistance provided by the London Boroughs of Brent, Camden, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon and City of Westminster

Published by: London Transport Users Committee, Clements House,  
14 – 18 Gresham Street, London EC2V 7PR

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January 2001