



Crofton Park Transport Users' Group

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED NEW THAMESLINK TIMETABLE FOR 2018

The Crofton Park Transport Users' Group, running the 'A Cinderella Line' campaign, broadly welcomes the proposals made for the new Thameslink timetable in 2018.

It is pleasing to see that the increased demands on our service have been recognised. We have experienced a 36% passenger growth in the last four years with no concomitant increase in service. This is an official figure, which we know is under counted due to poor passenger data, which means our need for more services is even greater than the numbers suggest.

Although our user group is based at Crofton Park, nearly half of the public responses to the consultation that we have facilitated have come from users of other stations, notably Nunhead, Catford and Bellingham and our views are strongly supported by a vast number of users of the line.

We summarise our response in these bullet points, and then go on to detail them further below.

- **Basic service pattern: Four trains per hour through the core** - A basic service pattern to be recognised as comprising four trains per hour at all times and on all days, including Saturdays and Sundays, from Sevenoaks/Orpington through the core to St Pancras. This is the most pressing concern we have with the consultation proposals.
- **Train spacings & Interchanges** - Trains to be spaced at regular intervals through the hour and with consideration for key interchanges such as London Overground services.
- **Consistent Stopping pattern at all stations on the route** - Trains to stop at all stations on the route, giving a consistent stopping pattern and providing a reasonable turn up and go service that reflects the service-users needs.
- **Late night and early morning services**- Later finishing times and earlier starting times to harmonise with tube services.
- **Passenger number data** - We would like to see a robust survey of passenger numbers before committing to the proposed changes to services since current data is inadequate for thorough current and forward planning. We understand this could be provided by passenger data from the new Class 700 trains.

Basic Service Pattern: Sevenoaks/Orpington through the Core to St Pancras

As a priority the CPTUG would like to see the minimum basic service pattern on this line set at four trains per hour between Sevenoaks/Orpington through the core at all times and for seven days a week.

We are pleased that the proposals for the TL8 and TL9 services cover some of our key requirements. However, we think additional steps are necessary to meet current and future passenger needs:

- The proposed TL8 service should be extended beyond Blackfriars to go as far as St Pancras, whether this service terminates at Finsbury Park, Welwyn Garden City or Kentish town is a detail that is not of significant importance. This would then provide us with both the consistent turn up and go service which has become imperative for service-users on this line and provide the vital interchanges needed on the route.
- Currently there is no proposed TL9 service on Sunday. We believe that it is vital that our minimum base service is 4 trains per hour every day including Sunday. Passenger numbers have increased dramatically at weekends and there is a real demand for the service with virtually no difference between Saturday and Sunday usage. The public response to the consultation also supports this with demands for Sunday services almost as high as Saturday.

- The TL9 service currently doesn't appear to stop at Kentish Town during the peak. It is our belief that this service should stop here during the peak as this is a key stop on our route and offers a more accessible interchange to anyone using Northbound Northern line services than changing at St Pancras.

We believe these points need to be considered as:

- This would keep the service consistent through the day, a stated aim of the Thameslink planners and also essential for customers, providing a real turn up and go service.
- There is much demand for travel to all of central London and not just Blackfriars. Furthermore, Blackfriars does not offer an accessible interchange for passengers and our group represents many disabled passengers, and parents with young children.

Train spacing & Interchanges

In discussions with Thameslink planning staff, it emerged that the pattern for the four trains per hour would be ten and twenty minute gaps, e.g. 00, 10, 30, 40. We believe that both the TL8 and TL9 services should have 15 minute gaps. Currently in peak periods there are gaps of 20 minutes between trains and this is too long and leads to overcrowding. The planned 20 minute gaps in the peak do not represent an improvement and will take away the 'turn up and go' nature of the service being proposed. The Overground is a good example of this. They will also run the risk of having two trains an hour being severely overcrowded and two being under-used.

We are aware that the TL8 and TL9 services may be supplemented by Southeastern Metro services, however we would suggest that the Thameslink services are evenly spaced without factoring in Southeastern services so that if they are not implemented then we still have an even and consistent service.

This users' group would also request that consideration be given to the interchanges with the Surrey Quays-Clapham Junction section of the London Overground when train timings are finalised. We would request that 5 minutes is allowed for interchange with the Overground services.

Consistent stopping pattern at all stations on the route

In discussions with the Thameslink planning team, it was communicated to the CPTUG that it was not possible to stop peak hour services at Kentish Town whilst maintaining the through services to Luton and Welwyn Garden City. This users' group's view is that we would be prepared to sacrifice these longer through services, which are currently only proposed during peak time, for trains that stopped and/or terminated at Kentish Town; this should also have a positive impact on reliability. It would also make the service more consistent and accessible (by being turn up and go).

Late night and early morning services

Currently the last service from Blackfriars to Crofton Park is at 2342 on all days. The first service from Crofton Park to Blackfriars is at 0558 on weekdays, 0614 on Saturdays and 0715 on Sundays. This users' group requests that service finishes from Blackfriars at c. 0030 in the evenings, and commences from Crofton Park at c. 0530 in the mornings (0630 on Sundays) to match tube times, although we recognise this is not part of the initial consultation.

Passenger number data

As noted above, the Thameslink line through Crofton Park has seen significant growth over the last few years and the CPTUG is concerned that decisions are being made in the absence of fully robust passenger number data. This is exacerbated by the fact that many of the stations on the Catford Loop are ungated and only one train currently has weight-sensory equipment to measure passenger volumes. The group believes it is vital to undertake a detailed and comprehensive survey of passenger numbers prior to finalising the timetable.

Summary

As mentioned, the Crofton Park Transport Users' Group is generally welcoming and supportive of the proposals from Thameslink for the 2018 timetable. We are very pleased to see the train operator and the Department for Transport responding to the huge increase in demand and once the points made in this response are addressed it will come much closer towards providing what the Catford Loop needs.