

Southwark Rail Users Group

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working with Peckham Vision

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Response to DfT Consultation on the combined Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise

August 2012

The Southwark Rail Users Group (SRUG) covers train services serving stations at Peckham Rye; Nunhead; South Bermondsey; Queen's Road, Peckham; Denmark Hill; East Dulwich and North Dulwich. There are some 600 users on the SRUG mailing list, many linked to members of their families and friends who are also users of the local railways.

The terms of reference of SRUG include keeping track of planning for rail services and to lobby for improvements to services and stations.

It is convenient to consider for the purposes of the DfT Consultation all train services through Peckham Rye station, since that station is common to the services through the other stations listed above. These are:

- South London Line (SLL) Metro services provided by Southern between London Bridge and Victoria – to be withdrawn in December, 2012 and replaced by LOROL services to Clapham Junction *via* Queen's Road, Peckham and the East London Line
- First Capital Connect (FCC) Thameslink/Southeastern services *via* Elephant & Castle, Blackfriars, St Pancras and beyond
- Southeastern services to Victoria *via* Nunhead
- Southern Metro services *via* Tulse Hill, North & East Dulwich to London Bridge

SRUG Comments on Consultation (using Chapter & Clause Nos. as in Consultation)

4. Services

4.13 We agree with your intention that, where possible and appropriate, you will specify the new franchise in a manner which allows the operator more commercial freedom; however, there must be adequate control to ensure that services are not worsened.

6. Schemes, stakeholders and other initiatives

Community Rail Partnerships

Q.1 What improvements do stakeholders believe could be made on the combined franchise through partnership working between Network Rail and the new operator?

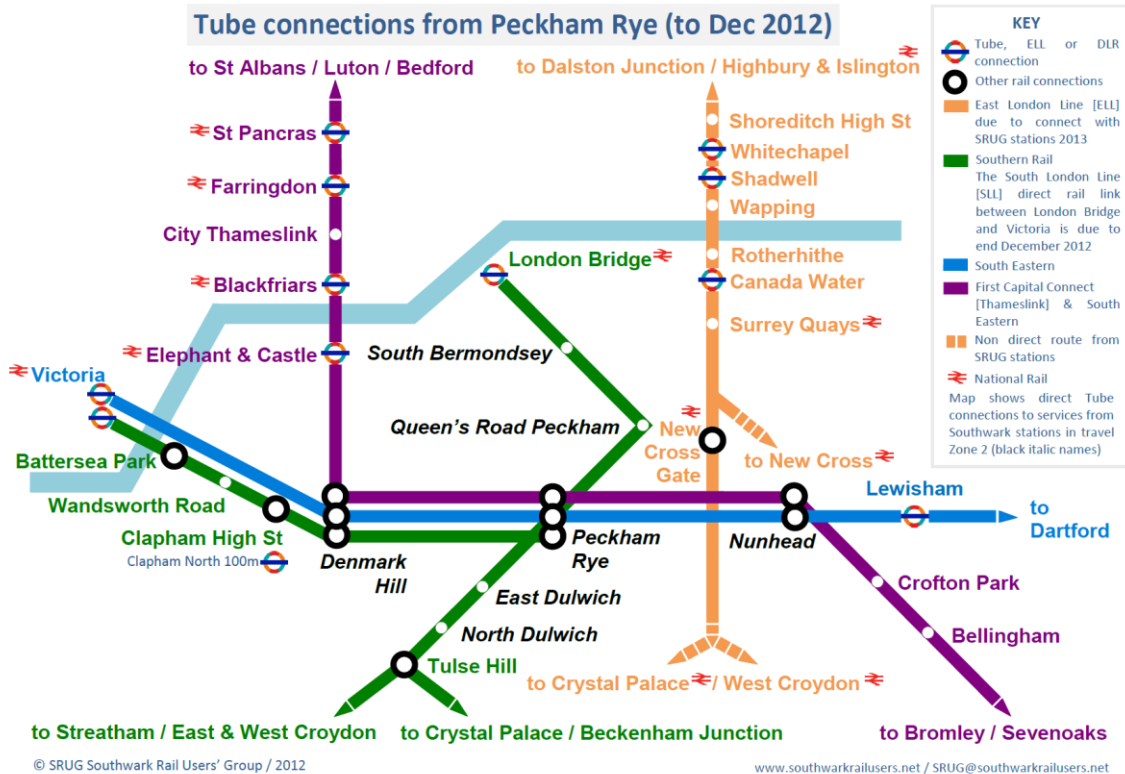
There is a need for improved arrangements for station and community rail partnerships to encourage joined up working between Network Rail and the new operator responsible for stations where the responsibility for station and railway property is divided between them. This is likely to be much more prevalent in the urban stations in south London in this franchise than it is for stations in non urban areas. An example is Peckham Rye station which is a major urban station in South East London both in terms of rail services and passengers, and also for its dominant position in Peckham town centre. The local community, through Peckham Vision and other local groups, has been very active for several years in many of the ways encouraged by the formal station and community rail partnership schemes elsewhere. However, it has been impossible to develop appropriate arrangements for this at Peckham Rye because the existing processes do not provide for or encourage joint working on this between Network Rail and the train company managing the station.

Other station developments

Q.3 Are consultees aware of any other rail or non-rail development schemes that might affect the new franchise?

There are two major development schemes relating to our services affecting stations in the new franchise. One is in Peckham town centre to change the setting of Peckham Rye station by recreating the original public square in front of the station to make best use of its high quality heritage features, and to realise the significant potential of the station as the gateway to the town centre. This is a joint Southwark Council, GLA and Network Rail scheme based on the work of the local community over many years to achieve these changes to benefit both rail users and the town centre itself (see [Peckham Vision](#) website) A significant stimulus to this new project is the resident-led successful restoration of the [Old Waiting Room](#) in Peckham Rye station. The community will wish to continue to work closely with the public agencies on the station improvements, and also to continue with the new franchisee the good current working relationship with Southern Rail to improve the rail user experience all round. We have a special interest in improving the information and marketing of rail services from the station. To this end SRUG has developed its own rail user map (see below*) to publicise the good tube connections available from Peckham Rye station (and the other 6 stations covered by SRUG).

* *map overleaf*



See Appendix 2 for further notes on the purpose of this user-initiated map.

The second development which concerns this franchise is the major regeneration scheme at the Elephant & Castle. The railway station and rail tracks are in the middle of that redevelopment, but so far there seems to have been little participation by Network Rail or the current franchisee in this important development project. The railway station is a disgrace in terms of passenger facilities, environment and accessibility. It is urgent that both Network Rail and the franchisee get involved with planning the improvement of the station and its integration into the major redevelopment around it.

7. The franchise specification

Q.5 Which aspects of the specification, other than for those services operating through the Thameslink core route, would stakeholders wish to see mandated and which aspects of the specification could be left to the discretion of the operator?

SRUG wishes to see a requirement that services are maintained at all **our** stations on at least a frequency of 15-minute intervals, for Victoria and Blackfriars/St. Pancras, and 10-minute frequency for London Bridge, and with hours of service comparable to that obtaining on similar sections of the London Underground.

Train services need to be both regular and frequent to encourage confident and consistent use.

It is well-known that, when a train operator franchise changes, the new franchisee invariably goes to great effort, and thus at significant cost to the future fare-paying passenger, in re-branding and applying new house colours/corporate livery to

everything in sight – trains, stations, staff uniforms, publicity and stationery. This is totally unnecessary, especially when Southern has performed so well recently within the greater part of the new franchise area in smartening up its stations and trains with an attractive colour scheme. There was a move to prevent this re-branding in the future but it is not reflected in the consultation and it should be. Of course, our comment becomes redundant in part if Southern win the franchise but something must be mandated in this respect and not left to the discretion of the new franchisee.

Q.7 What changes to services would stakeholders propose, what is the rationale for them and would these provide economic benefit?

The impending loss of the regular SLL service from London Bridge *via* Battersea Park to Victoria is to be much regretted, for which the LOROL ELL service is no adequate replacement, especially with the highly inconvenient interchange necessitated at Clapham Junction (both physically and time-wise), requiring crossing from one side of that extensive station to the other between LOROL and Victoria platforms. Accordingly, our answer to Q.5 applies.

In greater detail, for over 144 years, since 1st May 1867, there has been a direct service between London Bridge and Victoria *via* Peckham Rye. Currently the service runs every 30 minutes (2 trains per hour - tph) all day and evening, 7 days a week. That will most regretfully end in December, 2012 when the East London Line extension (ELL) comes into operation with 4 tph between Clapham Junction and Surrey Quays. This will provide new journey opportunities, but will detrimentally reduce the direct services to London Bridge and Victoria. While there will continue to be a seven-day a week service to London Bridge *via* Peckham Rye, Queen's Road, Peckham and South Bermondsey, albeit reduced from 6 to 4 tph off peak with irregular timing, the remaining services to Victoria would have big gaps. The regular service between Peckham Rye & Denmark Hill and Victoria will be reduced to a mere 2 tph and limited to during the day, with no services in the evenings or Sundays. This is unacceptable.

At Denmark Hill, losing its direct London Bridge services means that especial inconvenience will thus be caused to the many staff, patients and visitors of the major teaching hospital of King's College Hospital and the adjacent South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, who rely on the SLL services both to Victoria and London Bridge (particularly since hospital services are shared with Guy's Hospital at London Bridge) throughout the day and in the evenings and weekends.

It is thus essential that losses caused by the withdrawal of the SLL services be compensated in some way. In addition, it must be ensured that the timetabling of LOROL services provide convenient, i.e. swift, interchange timings at Peckham Rye for services on the South London Line London Bridge route.

SRUG has no particular comment on destinations of present Southeastern and Thameslink services beyond Peckham Rye save to say that it is known that the services both *via* Bromley South and Lewisham are essential and thus should be retained.

Q.18 What services that run via Elephant & Castle do respondents think should run via the Thameslink core route?

SRUG believes that the through Thameslink services via the core route and serving Denmark Hill/Peckham Rye should at least be maintained as at present and should not be penalised by requiring termination at Blackfriars. The cross river services are very highly valued by local rail users in SE London.

SRUG considers that if the Thameslink Improvement work is all that is said to be, then there should be no problem in accommodating the **complete present through services** on the core route, both via Denmark Hill **and** those serving Herne Hill and the Wimbledon Loop.

Clause 7.21 states that "Network Rail wishes to see trains presented to the Thameslink core punctually, and it sees the crossing moves that the Wimbledon loop trains have to make south of Blackfriars as potential conflicts with other trains, and thus a threat to punctuality."

The track between Blackfriars and Loughborough Junction is quadrupled and there are three locations – outside Blackfriars, at Elephant & Castle and outside Loughborough Junction – where crossing moves of almost any desired nature can easily be accommodated clear of tracks serving London Bridge. We believe it is within the skills and capacity of Network Rail path planners and signallers to eliminate any perceived threat to punctuality on the core route with the flexibility thus offered by the track layout on that significant quadrupled stretch for trains serving Denmark Hill and Herne Hill.

Q.19 Recognising that not all of these services can run via the Thameslink core route, what would be the most satisfactory way of managing the interchange at Blackfriars?

It follows from our answer to Q.18, that there ought to be no reason for this question to be asked. However, logic and existing experience dictates that it is far more likely that longer-distance Thameslink services, especially those on the complex route network south of the Thames (including the Brighton Main Line), will be subject to disruption and thus be a problem on the core route, rather than the suburban Metro (Denmark Hill) and Wimbledon loop services *via* Elephant & Castle. Accordingly, thought should be given to reigning in some of the longer-distance through services, say Ashford and Rochester, which traditionally terminated at Holborn Viaduct and Blackfriars. Patronage on the south London suburban services is greater and thus should be afforded priority on the core route, especially beyond Blackfriars to Farringdon and St. Pancras. Southeastern services from especially Ashford and also Maidstone East already have direct services to St. Pancras International *via* HS1.

Especially and proportionally significant for users of neighbouring stations at City Thameslink, Farringdon and St. Pancras, interchange at Blackfriars will have future imposed inconvenience and increased journey times for northbound passengers. But for passengers travelling south, since no cross-platform interchange appears to be provided, interchange is going to present more than an inconvenience – forcing southbound passengers to change *via* street level to gain the terminating platforms for onward services. Cross-platform interchange is one of the ideals almost set in stone throughout European railways since at least the 1960's. It is regretted that

Network Rail did not provide that at Blackfriars, notwithstanding the restraints of the site.

Other Southern services

Q.21 What improvements would respondents like to see made to other Southern services as part of the combined franchise from 2015, what is the rationale for such proposals and the economic benefit expected to be delivered from these changes?

SRUG is by and large pleased with the improvements that Southern has made during the period of its present franchise, both to stations and its trains and services, including customer relations, and surpasses especially FCC in all these respects by a substantial margin. Merging FCC and Southern franchises should not allow the reported FCC poorer customer satisfaction drag down the better satisfaction registered for Southern users.

However, SRUG has long pressed for the reintroduction of full services *via* Peckham Rye and Tulse Hill to East Croydon and this remains a primary need to connect passengers in the SRUG area directly with the commercial centre of Croydon and, just as importantly, providing convenient connections for Gatwick Airport and the South Coast without the necessity of travelling into Central London (Victoria or London Bridge) and out again. This would also mitigate for the future loss of the popular FCC peak hour services to/from East Croydon that stop at Tulse Hill with connections towards Peckham Rye. The economic and environmental benefit is a gain in passengers, especially those who have reverted to the use of cars/taxis between the SRUG area and Gatwick Airport since the withdrawal of the East Croydon services *via* Peckham Rye. See especially Clause 7.20 (Airport Services).

SRUG requests that further exploration is done concerning the number of services that can be handled in the future at London Bridge off the South London Line *via* Peckham Rye. At present, there are 8 tph peak and 6 tph off peak off the SLL (historically, there used to be as many as 12 tph!). With the loss of the South London Line services, this will be reduced by 2 tph. That will be inadequate, even supposing that there will be a transfer of passengers onto the LOROL East London Line services, especially since the interchange onto the Jubilee Line at Canada Water is already effectively at capacity. Here, it is also essential to bear in mind that a significant number of SLL passengers use London Bridge as their sole means to reach (and thus the main connecting station for trains serving) the West End (Charing Cross & Waterloo) and the City (Cannon Street), so that London Bridge must not be considered in isolation. Thus, access off the SLL is provided to the West End and the City as a train journey without the need to change to use the London Underground anywhere.

Better stations and better connections & Equality Act 2010

Q.29 What is important to stakeholders in the future use and improvements in stations?

Q32 What local accessibility and mobility issues do stakeholders see and how they might be addressed?

Accessibility: Much fruitful work is being achieved at Denmark Hill on accessibility in liaison with the hospitals and the local community. Plans are now well advanced for new accessibility and improving the environs of Queens Rd, Peckham station and its impact on the Queens Rd local economy. Peckham Rye station has just been entered

into the Access for All scheme, so it all still needs to be achieved. The station is very inaccessible as all platforms have major flights of stairs to them and no lifts. This is a major issue that needs to be integrated into the overall development plan for the station and will involve the new franchisee. There is poor accessibility also at South Bermondsey, Nunhead and North Dulwich stations, and no plans to rectify this that we know of.

Connections: There is a significant increase planned in housing and residents in Peckham and Camberwell with an emphasis on public transport facilities. There are also increasing numbers of visitors from across London to the growing creative and leisure industries in Peckham, which are a key to the revitalisation of the local economy. The partnership between local community and borough council, recently supported by the London Mayor, is restoring the historic Peckham Rye station to realise its potential as a major gateway to the town centre. It would be very inappropriate at just this moment as is planned for December 2012 to make the rail services to and from central London so irregular.

Shelter: One busy station that lacks adequate shelter facilities is East Dulwich. The walkways from the road below to the platforms are completely open to the elements, whilst only short and meagre bus stop-style shelters are provided on the two platforms, despite recent replacement by something a little more sheltered. It is high time that adequate platform shelter spanning the complete width of the platforms for awaiting passengers is provided, more akin to what one would expect at a well-used station – approx. 1,835,000 entries & exits annually according to Network Rail figures for 2011. The East Dulwich shelters are in stark contrast to those currently at adjacent North Dulwich and Peckham Rye stations. The new arrangements at Platforms 1 & 2 at the latter have yet to be seen in practice prior to the introduction of the LOROL services, and whether the shelter will be adequate.

Queen's Road, Peckham and South Bermondsey are also deficient in shelter on the platforms.

Toilets: Public conveniences are lacking at most stations and it is reported that there is common public nuisance especially at South Bermondsey but also at other locations because of the lack of such conveniences. SRUG therefore requests that this aspect is addressed.

Subsidiary SRUG Comments on the Consultation

A. Clause 5.1 includes the objective that it is ensured that train services perform to the highest practicable reliability and punctuality standards and continue to be amongst the most reliable and punctual services on the network, whilst Clause 7.15 points out that achievement of the 24 tph density of service on the Thameslink core route is an extremely demanding challenge and the decision has been taken that the service will operate reliably only if Automatic Train Operation (ATO)⁶ technology is deployed between St Pancras International low level and London Blackfriars. Thus we are told that development of ATO cannot begin until the new Thameslink trains are available, so it will not be possible to introduce the 24 trains per hour service until December 2018 at the earliest.

Members of SRUG have suggested that this decision is misguided and should be reversed, since it ought to be completely possible for train drivers and infrastructure with revised traditional signalling to cope with 24 tph **without** employment of ATO, as is commonly achieved elsewhere, both on the London Underground, in Continental

Europe and in e.g. Japan (where they run 11-car trains up to 30 tpm without ATO). The speed through the tortuous core Thameslink route cannot anywhere be greater than around 40 mph?

By reversing this decision, the great advantage is that the existing rolling stock cleared for use through the core route will be able to continue to be used, whilst avoiding the expense of equipping a specialised set of rolling stock and associated lineside infrastructure for ATO. ATO is an extravagance to be avoided in these straitened times. The Consultation statement that it will not be possible to introduce the 24 trains per hour service until December 2018 at the earliest thus becomes redundant.

In any case, delays through the core route are more likely to be passenger-originating than any train service shortcomings. However, one also suspects that there will be inevitable delays whilst the planned trains for ATO take time to reset their on-board computers switching between ATO and manual operation at both ends of the comparatively short ATO section, thereby cancelling out any time and efficiency of train operation perceived to be achieved through the ATO section, whilst also providing ample opportunity for trains to fail in service at those changeover locations. The concept is fine for an Underground line running end-to-end under ATO control but not simply for the sake of a short stretch connecting vast stretches of conventional railway.-See Appendix 1 for London Underground practice of 1963.

B. SRUG remains concerned at the complete lack of flexibility on the terminating side of London Bridge station for future, enhanced services off the South London Line (as well as off the route from New Cross Gate) to be occasioned by the rebuilding of London Bridge station as a result of the Thameslink project.

That station once boasted 22 platforms, now 16. The low level side is to be reduced to a mere six, which is inadequate, especially as it seems from this Consultation that the Thameslink work will be unable to cope with the services it promised.

C. Despite not forming part of this Consultation (although discussed within), members of SRUG are astonished at the revelation that, during the Christmas and New Year period 2014 to 2015, Network Rail will disconnect the Spa Road Junction (Bermondsey) and Metropolitan Junction (between London Bridge and Blackfriars) for a period of **three years**, with resultant extreme inconvenience to passengers of the SLL, let alone everyone else, who wish to access Waterloo and Charing Cross on the one hand and later Cannon Street on the other hand.

It was always the ideal of a railway civil engineer to try and maintain train services at all cost, no matter what infrastructure had to be rebuilt, re-modelled or replaced. An absolute maximum of a few weekends of disruption is all that was required (or five weeks-worth in the case of track reconstruction in the Cannon Street area). LT Underground proudly performed credible work in this regard since the 1920's with scarcely any interruption to passenger services. What has gone wrong?

Southwark Rail Users Group - August, 2012

cc to Passenger Focus, & London Travel Watch

Appendix 1 – HOW THE UNDERGROUND WORKS – by P.E. Garbutt, M.B.E., Assistant Secretary, London Transport Board – published by London Transport - 1963 – extracted from pp. 62-65:

"At some older stations, such as Elephant & Castle on the Bakerloo Line, the terminal facilities are so limited that it is impossible to allow even 3 minutes layover when a close-interval service of more than 30 trains per hour is being run. In such cases, an arrangement known as 'stepping back' is adopted, whereby the driver and guard of an arriving train, instead of changing ends and taking out the same train, drop back to take over the next arriving train. The services in the central area during the peak periods are usually based on regular intervals ranging from 2 minutes down to 1½ minutes, the latter figure being in practice the minimum interval which can be continuously worked on a single track.

Operating efficiency is generally highest when the number of branches at each end of a line is limited to two. When the trunk service has to be split among more than two branches, the timetabling becomes much more complex, particularly if some of the junctions are not of the flyover type, and there is not enough flexibility to permit of headways to meet the particular needs of each branch. The western end of the District Line, with its five branch services (Circle, Ealing, Wimbledon, Richmond and Hounslow), is particularly difficult in this respect; trains from each branch have to be funnelled together over a series of junctions to produce an intensive combined peak service with a 1½-2 minute headway in the central area.

Another aspect of timetable compilation is the correct timing of services which converge or diverge at a flat junction. One example of scheduling techniques is the practice of arranging parallel working at such junctions. The working at Minories Junction, which lies between Tower Hill and Aldgate stations, and is the eastern point of junction of the District and Circle services, will serve as an illustration. The total peak service at this point amounts to 32 trains per hour in each direction; Minories Junction splits the eastbound service into 24 trains on to the District Line and 8 trains on to the Circle, while at the same time combining an equivalent number of westbound District and Circle trains... &c. &c."

Appendix 2 - Peckham Rye & adjacent stations are already well connected to the Tube but few seem to know that. See *next page*.

Appendix 2

Peckham Rye & adjacent stations are already well connected to the Tube but few seem to know that.

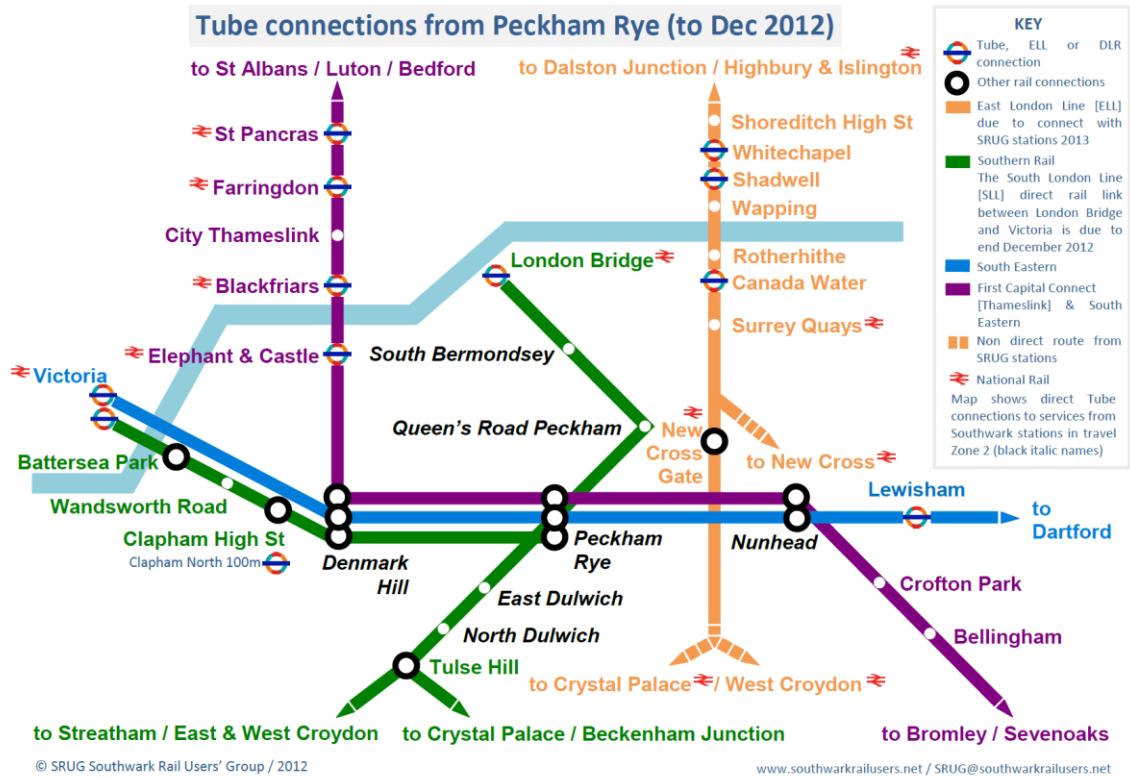
Peckham Rye, Denmark Hill and Queens Road, Peckham will be on the TfL Tube map from December 2012, when the East London Line rail service from Canada Water links with Clapham Junction via Peckham Rye (4 trains per hour). See map 1 below. This Tube map will show these three stations cut off from central London, because it shows only TfL rail services, which go east and west and not into central London.



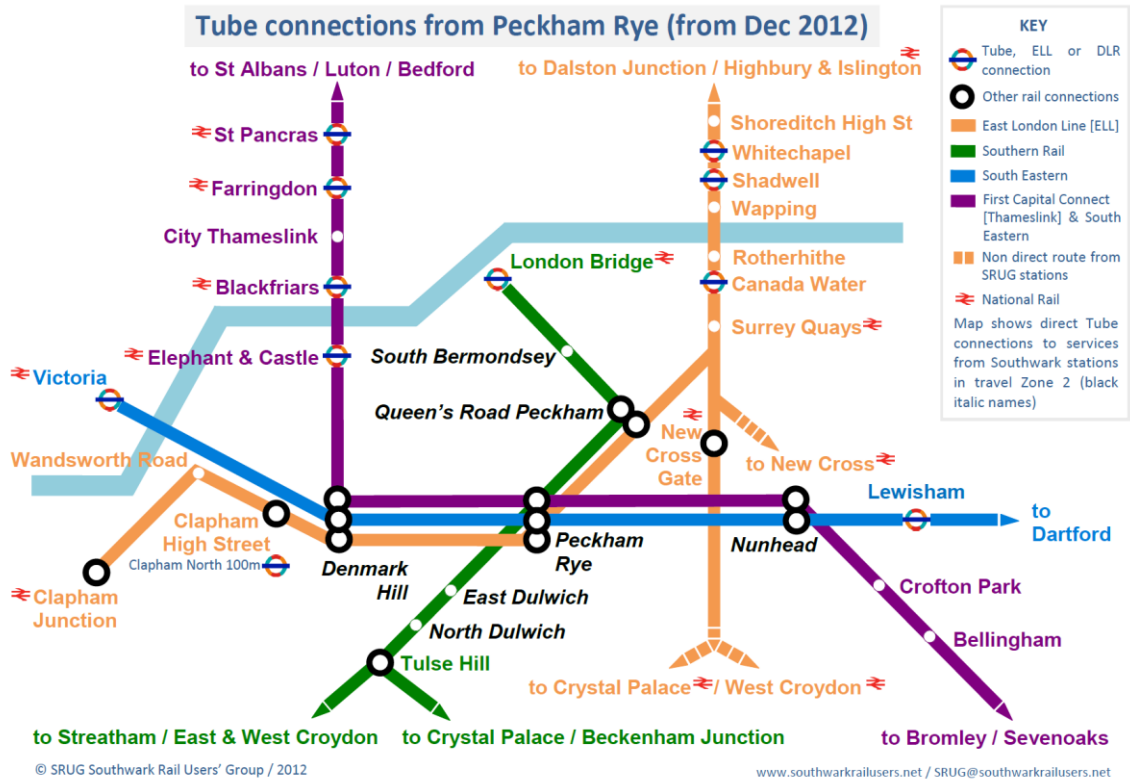
Map 1. SRUG extract from TfL produced Tube map showing the map with the ELL from Dec 2012

But in fact the three stations are directly connected, within 10 to 15 minutes, to six Tube lines in central London. Map 2 (next page) shows the services today August 2012 with the South London Line (SLL). Map 3 shows the services after December 2012 with the SLL replaced by the East London Line extension (ELL). The maps show the many short direct connections there are now from these Southwark stations to the Tube in central London, via rail services run not by TfL but by other rail companies.

It is well known that many rail users navigate London's transport system with the aid of a mental image of the Tube map. When a place is or is not on the Tube map therefore affects how they view where that place is and how easy or difficult it is to travel there. We have therefore developed this map to show users how well connected Peckham Rye and neighbouring stations are to the central London Tube system. We have been testing it and developing it for a year, and had a positive user response.



Map 2.SRUG map showing the services before the end of the SLL and the arrival of the ELL in Dec 2012



Map 3. SRUG map showing the arrival of the ELL, and loss of the SLL

Local Tube-like rail services are vital to realise Peckham Town Centre's potential, and to serve the London regional hospitals in Camberwell

This inner London area has no Tube and we use our local rail services as a substitute. This is in theory a good solution as they are directly connected within 10 to 15 minutes to the central Tube network – Victoria, District, Circle, Bakerloo, Jubilee, Northern. The problem is that the services are in part infrequent, irregular and not every day or every evening. The aim must be to make these local services, as soon as possible, Tube-like in their frequency and regularity - 7 days a week, early morning to late evening, and for off-peak 4 trains per hour (tph) to Victoria, 4tph to St Pancras, and 6tph to London Bridge, (& more tph on-peak).

Peckham Rye needs to be and could be like a *turn up and go* station. The town centre is coming alive with cultural and creative life, and has great historic assets and great gifts coming together in a new vibrant local economic seam. Keeping and improving direct connections to central London Tube stations is vital to build on that, and attract the innovative quality commercial investment to complement it that Peckham town centre needs. In addition, Kings College & SLAM (South London & Maudsley), in the neighbouring area, are two major London regional hospitals at Denmark Hill and need to be well connected into the London rail/tube system. This is why we need to:

- Save our direct Victoria services
- Keep & improve our direct St Pancras services
- Improve our London Bridge services
- Align their regularity to be like the Tube

We need also to publicise and market these services much better for the benefit of local residents, visitors, and the town centre itself.

Appendix 2 produced by Peckham Vision in association with Southwark Rail Users Group

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