

Southwark Rail Users' Group

Peckham London SE15 4LE
SRUG@bellenden.net

Some comments on the Mayor's Transport Strategy – the Statement of Intent May 2009

Q 1: are there any other transport challenges facing London that the MTS should address?

Yes. The Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS) needs to include work towards removing some severe gaps in the public transport services in *Inner South London*. The overground rail services provide the opportunity to start this process using existing infrastructure. *Inner South London*, in this case, is the geographical area sandwiched between central London, and outer south London, and on the fringes of both. This is roughly a middle section of the boroughs of Southwark and Lambeth and part of Wandsworth.

Kulveer Ranger, the Mayor's transport adviser, himself acknowledged on the recent TV programme 'The Politics Show' 28 June 2009, that there is a transport issue in South London, and he said "*the key question is how to maximise the overground rail network in South London.*" We agree that that is a key question, and suggest that it is a transport challenge that needs to be covered in the Mayor's Transport Strategy.

Focussed attention on this would go a small way to compensate for the lack of the Tube in inner South London, as well as being a particularly effective way to maximise the use of the existing rail system. We would be very glad to discuss with the Mayor's policy advisers some of the ways in which this could be achieved.

Q2: Does anything need to be added to the spatial approach?

Inner South London falls somewhat between the networks identified in Figure 1 page 20. Maybe it falls somewhere between the 'London-wide networks' and the 'sub-regional networks', and its needs deserve a special mention in the discussion in paragraphs 76 – 80 pages 26, 27. On the ground by bus it can take longer to travel into central London than it does to cover very long distances by rail to central London from well outside London. It may be that it has become a black hole because it has the special characteristic of being the southern area adjacent to central London, and maybe relatively invisible in railway strategy and planning in its needs for direct rail services to travel into central London.

This is borne out by the recent TfL decision to reduce in 2012 by more than half the direct rail services to Victoria, while introducing the new east-west orbital link through the East London Line extension. This cut has been justified on the grounds that this area's needs for east-west orbital rail travel are greater than the needs for radial travel into central London. For those of us who live in inner South London, this is not so. Quite the contrary. We can see the logic in aiming to complete the orbital link, and acknowledge that it is a useful addition to London-wide rail infrastructure. But it cannot satisfy in any way the greater need for fast travel from *Inner South London* into central London. Cutting the services, as this latest decision plans to do, is clearly not going to move towards maximising the use of the overground rail network in *Inner South London*. It is more likely instead

to lead to deterioration in use, as the services become incapable of meeting the real needs of the passengers.

Paragraph 88 in the section on Inner London, pages 29 - 31, notes that “*While public transport accessibility is much higher in Inner than Outer London, there remain pockets ... where accessibility is lower.*” This has particular resonance and implications for *Inner South London*, where in addition to the high levels of deprivation and regeneration across the area, there is also the cluster of major hospitals and academic centres of Kings, SLAM and Guys dependent on the direct rail services to Denmark Hill from London Bridge and Victoria; and just to the east of there Peckham Rye station, with its direct connections to central London, as the gateway to Peckham Town Centre and a key to its effective regeneration. The MTS Statement relates the lower accessibility to the absence of radial rail corridors and the Underground network. However, in some of the areas in Peckham and Camberwell, and west to Clapham and Wandsworth, it is the planned deterioration in the services on the existing radial networks which is further reducing accessibility. This deterioration has to be avoided if the use of the overground rail network is to be effectively maximised. Paragraph 89, page 30, gives one of the key challenges for Inner London as “*...tackling public transport crowding and road congestion...*” Deterioration in the radial rail services can only add to this public transport crowding and road congestion.

Inner South London lies on the edges of what is identified in Figure 8 as Central London Region and South London Region, and overlaps as a sub region on their edges. Pages 36 & 37 propose that the boundaries of each of these regions should be ‘fuzzy’ because of overlapping issues. This clearly is the case for *Inner South London* and its needs for direct radial rail services into central London, and should have particular consideration if it is not to remain a black hole with an underutilised overground rail network.

Q4c: the right balance in providing further transport capacity and connectivity?

Our view is that the strategy must rebalance its approach towards radial and orbital services for *Inner South London*. Paragraphs 115 – 116 give prominence to orbital rail services through the completion of the East London Line extension between Surrey Quays and Clapham Junction, and omit **any** mention of the crucial direct radial rail services into central London. The Mayor’s transport strategy must show an appreciation of the need for *Inner South London’s* direct radial overground rail links into central London, and develop an approach which maximises their use to meet the needs of the area for fast services into central London. Part of that strategy should be a new and user sensitive marketing strategy to maximise the use of the overground rail network in *Inner South London*. We would be very willing to share ideas for this with the Mayor’s policy advisers.

15th July 2009

Eileen Conn

Southwark Rail Users' Group (SRUG)

<http://www.peckhamvision.org/brg/srug>

Peckham Rye, Nunhead, South Bermondsey, Queens Road,
Denmark Hill, East Dulwich, North Dulwich.