

NUNHEAD'S VOICE COMBINED RESPONSE TO THAMESLINK AND SOUTHEASTERN RAIL FRANCHISE CONSULTATION

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Nunhead's Voice is a formally-constituted residents' group representing the interests of the inhabitants of the Nunhead area of south east London. This response focuses on those elements of the Thameslink and Southeastern franchise consultation that relate directly to Nunhead station.

2. Nunhead station: context

- 2.1 Nunhead station serves a community of around 15,000 people; other stations used by passengers in the area include Queen's Road Peckham (for London Bridge) and Brockley (for the East London Line and London Bridge). GLA Demographics and UK Government Census data suggests that a significant increase in the population of the Nunhead and Peckham areas is expected between now and the end of the new Thameslink and Southeastern rail franchises. It is anticipated that this will be caused both by an increase in birth rates (in common with other areas of inner London) and by migration to this area, which still represents a relatively affordable place to live within Zone 2, with a good quality of life, close to major transport corridors.
- 2.2 The station is also used by residents of Brockley (in LB Lewisham) who lack a direct link either to London Victoria or to the stations on the Thameslink core, and by those living in areas west of New Cross.
- 2.3 Since 2005, use of the station has risen from around half a million passengers journeys per years to over one million journeys in 2010/11 (based on ORR figures). The South London RUS, published in 2008, reflects the fact that use of the Blackfriars-Sevenoaks and Victoria-Blackheath lines rose only slightly in those years. The accelerated increase from 2008 to 2011 – and the likelihood of further increases, as Nunhead's population increases further (as anticipated by the GLA in demographic work carried out in 2005) – has significant implications for future rail provision in the area.
- 2.4 Nunhead is served by Southeastern (two trains per hour off peak Monday-Friday early morning to early evening) and First Capital Connect (Thameslink) (two trains per hour off peak all day, seven days a week). There are more frequent services to Victoria during the morning and evening peaks.
- 2.5 Prior to the reopening of the terminal platforms at Blackfriars in May 2012, late evening and weekend FCC services were diverted to Victoria. Although this service alteration was only ever intended to be

temporary, it was well-used and we understand that representations to DfT and TfL were made by Val Shawcross AM on its removal.

3. The franchises and impact on service frequency at Nunhead

3.1 Both Southeastern and FCC services suffer significantly because they are (collectively) providing mutually incompatible services – commuter services from inner and outer London to London terminals, and sub-regional and regional services for passengers outside London. Lengthy routes and complex service patterns have, in the past, led to:

- Short notice cancellations and delays;
- Overloading of services (to the extent that, not infrequently, passengers joining the train at Nunhead have to stand all the way into London Victoria);
- Trains frequently running in short formation;
- In general, reduced resilience to engineering problems or other infrastructure issues leading to delay.

3.2 Consideration of all south London's (and much of the south-east's) rail services at once – as will happen as the Thameslink and Southeastern franchises are relet – provides a unique opportunity, in this decade, to rethink the conflicts between short and long distance travellers, and by so doing significantly enhance the travelling experience for commuters and other users.

4. Specific service improvements

4.1 Thameslink services and termination at Blackfriars – terminal capacity at Blackfriars having increased (compared to the position from 2009 to early 2012 when building work was underway), and there being limited through capacity on the Thameslink core to service the many routes acting as feeders, there is a significant problem to be overcome.

4.2 Termination of services at Blackfriars presents two difficulties for commuters in particular:

- Poor north-south connectivity through any means other than Thameslink services at Blackfriars. Passengers travelling to either the Farringdon or King's Cross areas would need to alight and cross platforms to trains travelling through the core which will already be extremely busy. Some may be able to walk or catch a bus to their destination, but this will not be the case for all passengers. Highly intensive use of the circulation space at Blackfriars is therefore likely, and the large number of passengers alighting from, and joining, trains at this station may well increase dwell times, with a consequent knock-on impact on performance. This will be exacerbated as more through services from London Bridge pass through the core.

- Poor connectivity at Elephant and Castle. While E&C might, on paper, seem to provide an opportunity for passengers for central London to change and continue their journey northbound by Tube, the poor permeability of the public realm here for passengers changing to the Bakerloo line (placing additional pressure on a non-DDA accessible station which is already at the limit of its capacity), and the fact that most northbound Northern line trains in the morning peak will already be full, means that most passengers will travel on to Blackfriars, exacerbating the problems identified above.
 - Less general resilience arising from the fact that services arriving from London Bridge will not be able to use the terminating platforms.
- 4.3 We are aware that there are plans in the long term to introduce ATO in the Thameslink core. While plans may suggest that this will allow 24tph capacity in the core, empty stock movements may use up a small number of these available paths (particularly at peak times). The introduction of 12 car trains will make stabling in the sidings between City Thameslink and Farringdon increasingly difficult. These restrictions mean that we accept that a 4tph service from Sevenoaks through the core is unrealistic now or in the future. However, we believe that at the absolute minimum a 2tph service must be maintained, supplemented by a 2tph service terminating at Blackfriars.
- 4.4 To provide more core capacity we suggest that DfT investigate the possibility of running some services from Sevenoaks to Kentish Town, freeing capacity in the core to run these services by diverting some services arriving from the north into St Pancras (High Level). We do understand that limited platform capacity at St Pancras (High Level) may limit the feasibility of this approach at certain times.
- 4.5 Southeastern services to London Victoria – these services are currently heavily-used by both commuters and leisure users. Withdrawal of evening and weekend services has caused significant difficulties for many local residents (even those services were only provided temporarily). This will be exacerbated once the South London Line service to Victoria is withdrawn.
- 4.6 We believe that there is significant latent demand for additional services on this route, and that over the life of the franchise this demand will increase significantly. This is demonstrated by the substantial rise in passenger journeys beginning and ending at Nunhead since 2005.
- 4.7 We consider that there are two ways to serve this additional demand.
- 4.8 *Option 1* - Southeastern franchise should specify a new 2tph metro stopping service between London Victoria and Bellingham, calling at Wandsworth Road, Clapham High Street, Denmark Hill, Peckham Rye, Nunhead, Crofton Park, Catford and Bellingham. The introduction of

this service was recommended by the South London RUS in 2008. The RUS saw the introduction of this service as an integral part of the South London Line replacement package, and we consider that it should be introduced from December 2012.

- 4.9 Platforms at Clapham High Street and Wandsworth Road are still not long enough for 8 carriage trains to call, but we suggest that either SDO or 4 or 6 carriage trains be used in the interim.
- 4.10 This service would be in addition to (not instead of) the current service to Dartford during the day. This would maintain a 4tph service from Nunhead to Victoria all day, every day, while increasing resilience on the longer distance Dartford services. While we would countenance such a limited change, we consider that Dartford/Orpington services must continue to stop at Peckham Rye and Nunhead at other times.
- 4.11 An evening service would be in addition to the current evening service from Blackfriars to Sevenoaks, with the last train leaving London Victoria at 2345 approx.
- 4.12 This option would provide the benefit of continuing the direct service to Victoria from Wandsworth Road and Clapham High Street that will be withdrawn with the South London Line in December 2012. We consider that, if timetabled sensibly, it would allow interchange with TfL's Overground services at Peckham Rye, allowing a semi-orbital route from London Victoria, via Peckham, to Canada Water/Shoreditch/Highbury and Islington (again, providing resilience for the likely heavily-used East London Line extension in south London).
- 4.13 We understand that this may require additional crossing moves for services on the Victoria-Bellingham services. We do not however consider that these movements, limited to twice an hour in each direction, need to have an effect on the wider railway if managed properly.
- 4.14 *Option 2* – the current metro service should be extended to offer 4tph London Victoria-Dartford (or Orpington) seven days a week, from early morning to late evening.

Of the two options, this one is not preferred because:

- It places additional pressure on the “pinch point” to the west of Lewisham station;
 - It would not be as flexible as Option 1 (in terms of resilience);
 - It would not serve Wandsworth Road and Clapham High Street, and therefore would not offer the same interchange possibilities for displaced South London Line passengers as Option 1.
- 4.15 It should be noted that we strongly believe that the current status quo – 2tph in off-peak times and no evening or weekend service – is not

sustainable in a growing community, where access to central London via the inadequate interchanges at Elephant and Castle and Blackfriars are the only other means.

5. Station facilities at Nunhead

- 5.1 Nunhead station has a ticket office (open part time, usually during peak hours), a small coffee shop (open during the morning peak only) and two vending machines. A new touch-screen ticket machine has been installed on the platform with Oyster charging facility, although facilities in the manned ticket office do not allow Oyster cards to be charged. The station has been the subject of sporadic renovation attempts over the last several years, including the retiling of the stairwell, the construction of an ornamental “station arch” and a partial repaint in summer 2011. These improvements seem to have been ad hoc and reactive in nature, and do not point to a long term plan for sustainable station upkeep. For example, walls have been painted but leaks to the platform canopy have not been repaired.
- 5.2 The station is currently classified in category E. Category E is reserved for occasionally-staffed stations with an annual use of under 250,000. ORR figures state that combined entry and exit use was 1,012,106 in 2010/11, suggesting that the station should in fact be in category C1.
- 5.3 “Better Rail Stations” (DfT, 2009) sets out general requirements for category C stations. We would suggest that steps be taken to require the new franchise holder to bring Nunhead station up to these standards, which would include in the short-term;
- Better lighting around station access to Gibbon Road;
 - More and better-position seating and cycle parking under platform canopy;
 - Complete repair of the platform canopy;
 - Reopening of waiting room on platform (currently used as a storeroom);
 - Additional ticket machine;
 - Extended ticket office opening hours, with ticket office facilities being upgraded to allow Oyster use (in addition to the likely DfT specification for ITSO);
 - Completion of platform wall and canopy painting;
 - Implementation of a consistent maintenance schedule for planting at station entrance (at present there appears to be a dispute as to whether Southeastern or LB Southwark is responsible for this).
- 5.4 In the long-term, in order to meet the requirements of Access for All and to bring the station up to C1 standards, we would suggest the following:
- Creation of a larger “public square” at the main entrance, removing existing walls and bringing into use derelict Network Rail-owned

land adjacent to the entrance passage for cycle parking facilities.
This could possibly incorporate new small retail uses;

- Construction of a new step-free entrance to the station from Evelina Road (using Network Rail-owned land).

Nunhead's Voice
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