



# BEDFORD COMMUTERS ASSOCIATION

THE RAIL USER GROUP FOR BEDFORD AND FLITWICK

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## JULY 2017 NEWSLETTER

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### I. EMT Franchise

The DfT published the East Midlands Franchise Public Consultation document on July 20<sup>th</sup>, with the public consultation period running from July 20<sup>th</sup> to October 11<sup>th</sup> 2017. It is important to note that EMT services at Bedford will be severely affected.

The following extracts from the consultation document outline the options for "improvement" being put forward by the DfT:

#### **Option for improvement- I**

#### **What we propose to do - to reduce long distance journey times on the Midland Main Line**

We want to reduce journey times on intercity services, which are longer during the peak hours compared with off-peak. We also want to give everyone a seat.

At the moment all passengers on the Midland Main Line travel on the same intercity trains. This means that passengers travelling to London from South Yorkshire and the East Midlands have much longer journey times during the peak because intercity trains also serve stations closer to London to pick up commuters.

Commuters travelling to London from Kettering currently receive a frequent peak service, with up to five trains an hour. However, because the trains are carrying passengers from further north some people do not get a seat. On northbound peak journeys, passengers are often unable to get a seat until after the commuters travelling shorter distances have disembarked.

We recognise that there are distinct intercity and London commuter markets on the Midland Main Line and want to improve the overall service offered to both. We are investing in building new track in order to increase the number of services on this route and enable a better service for passengers.

An option we are considering to improve intercity journey times between Sheffield (via Derby), Nottingham and London St Pancras is to not stop as often at stations used by commuters, such as Luton, Bedford, Wellingborough and Kettering. Passengers at these stations would instead be served by dedicated high quality commuter trains operating on the Corby – London route. In sum our proposals will enable the next franchise to:

- Reduce journey times on the peak-time intercity long distance services by up to 20 minutes.
- Relieve over-crowding on all East Midlands services to and from London.
- Introduce higher capacity trains, up to 12 carriages long, on dedicated commuter services.
- Deliver over 1000 additional seats an hour in the peak into London, an increase of more than 50%.

## **Option for improvement - 2**

### **What we propose to do - stopping patterns on the Midland Main Line**

Although we intend to deliver faster journeys and introduce more seats, we recognise that the proposed changes have the potential to inconvenience some passengers. Whilst they may result in some stations having more train services an hour at peak times compared to today other stations would have fewer services. However, overall, the revised timetable and introduction of modern, longer trains would increase the number of available seats at peak hours, reducing overcrowding and making journeys more comfortable.

For example, at the moment a lot of southbound intercity trains call at Kettering but they are full by the time they get there. Our proposals mean that fewer peak time intercity trains would stop at Kettering – and none would call at Wellingborough, Bedford, Luton or Luton Airport Parkway – reducing the overcrowding on those intercity services. Instead, in the peak hour, Kettering, Wellingborough, Bedford, Luton and Luton Airport Parkway would be served by trains that started their journey in Corby. Although the service at peak time would be less frequent, far more seats would be available meaning more capacity and a better commuting experience for all passengers. Additionally, Kettering and Corby would get an increase in off-peak services.

Another consequence of our proposals would be that (apart from intercity journeys starting or ending at St Pancras) journeys between destinations north and south of Kettering (e.g. Luton Airport to Nottingham or Leicester to Wellingborough) would no longer have direct through-trains. Passengers would instead potentially have to change at Kettering.

#### Thameslink services consultation

Separately, Govia Thameslink Railway is consulting on the possible implications of a new timetable for the Thameslink services using parts of the East Midlands network, which is due to start in May 2018. This consultation is available at [www.transformingrail.com](http://www.transformingrail.com) and will end on 27 July 2017.

## **Option for improvement - 3**

### **What we propose to do - To increase the total number of seats for passengers**

We know that the number of people travelling on East Midlands services will rise and some services are already very crowded, in particular at peak times. For example, peak services to and from St Pancras are more crowded than those of any other intercity operator into London. In order to address this, options may include:

- Introducing intercity Midland Main Line trains with more seats.
- Introducing high quality trains suitable for the long distance London commuter market on the Corby and Kettering routes, with up to 12 carriages.
- Using longer trains on the inter-urban and local routes, where the infrastructure allows.

These options would increase the number of seats on key parts of the network. We will encourage bidders to develop solutions so that the network can carry more seated passengers than it does today.

#### To improve airport connectivity

Currently, East Midlands Trains provides one train an hour to and from London St Pancras that calls at Luton Airport Parkway. This is in addition to the six trains per hour provided by Thameslink. East Midlands services take 20 minutes to Luton Airport Parkway, while the fastest Thameslink service takes 33 minutes.

Providing additional East Midlands fast trains to Luton Airport Parkway might only be possible by reducing the number of stops elsewhere, such as at Luton itself.

The slower, Thameslink services are accessible from a greater number of Central London stations compared to the East Midlands services, which start from and terminate St Pancras only.

The East Midlands franchise provides access to a number of other regional airports including East Midlands, Liverpool John Lennon, Manchester and Norwich. We understand that the connectivity and journey opportunities between the railway and the airports could be improved. For example, trains that serve some of these locations do not always have sufficient space for luggage.

### BCA View

The BCA view/requirements for the new franchise is:

- a) We strongly oppose any proposal that means Inter City type services will no longer stop at Bedford.
- b) A half hourly service from first train to last to London St Pancras.
- c) A half hourly service from first train to last to Leicester then alternatively to either Nottingham or Derby. (we have been lobbying for this since 2008 when the former BR InterCity service was changed by the franchisee).
- d) A robust contingency plan to cover for train cancellations.
- e) More new good quality rolling stock to provide extra capacity.



The Good Old Days – Bedford Station in 2003

### Summary

We have looked at the document. As a result of these proposals Bedford will lose its direct Inter City Services to/from Leicester and the north. Bedford would only be served by the St Pancras to Corby service and would be operated by Long Distance Electric Commuter trains of up to 12 carriages.

However before we respond we would like to have the following clarified:

- a) What are the defined peak hour parameters?
- b) Does this affect both southbound and northbound services at AM and PM peaks?
- c) What level of service will be provided by the London to Corby trains eg every half hour?
- d) Will Inter City trains continue to call at Bedford during off peak hours?
- e) Would the "Long Distance Electric Commuter Train" be new build or cascaded down from another TOC?

For members who use EMT services could you please let us know your views on the possibility of travelling on a Long Distance Electric Commuter Train instead of an Inter City train by emailing to: [admin@bedfordcommuters.org.uk](mailto:admin@bedfordcommuters.org.uk). Any other views would also be of interest.

For members who use EMT services northbound from Bedford we would strongly urge you to respond individually to this consultation indicating that you DO NOT AGREE with ceasing to stop InterCity services at Bedford. Any views please email to: [admin@bedfordcommuters.org.uk](mailto:admin@bedfordcommuters.org.uk)

We would also urge members to individually respond to the Consultation Document and write to their MP. The document [Future of East Midlands Rail Franchise](#) can be found on the DfT website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-east-midlands-rail-franchise>

**PLEASE REMEMBER ALL RESPONSES MUST BE RETURNED BY 11<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2017**

The Chairman will take the opportunity to meet with prospective bidders, the DfT, Bedford Borough Council and local MPs if necessary to discuss all these issues.

**2. Membership Renewals**

As always, the falling leaves of September will see BCA committee members take to Bedford and Flitwick stations to persuade existing members to renew and new members to join the Rail User Group. The membership fee will remain at £5.

Please remember that the BCA regularly represents the views of its members in both local newspapers and broadcast media, as well as our meetings with the Govia Thameslink Railway and East Midlands Trains, Passenger Focus/London Travelwatch, Local Authorities, MPs, etc. Over the last year some of issues we have been involved in were responding to the GTR December 2018 timetable consultation (which will continue into next year), the EMT Franchise consultation and the successful lobbying for Super Off Peak tickets being available from the first off peak train and regular meeting with senior management to get improvements to performance.

**Why not suggest to a fellow traveller or a friend that they sign up too!** The more members we have, the better able we are to influence the policies of the railway companies as the only officially recognised Rail User Group for the people travelling from Bedford and Flitwick on EMT and GTR services.

**You will find a membership application form with this newsletter.** It will save BCA volunteers a great deal of work if you can bring it to the station on the days listed below with your payment (cheques made payable to Bedford Commuters Association or complete the Standing Order details on the form) and hand it to a BCA representative at:

**Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September (AM & PM)**  
**Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> September (AM & PM)**

**Bedford Station**  
**Flitwick Station**

**3. BCA AGM – a date in your diary**

Please note that the BCA AGM this year will be held on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2017 at the RAFA Club, Ashburnham Road commencing at 19.30. Representatives from Thameslink, EMT and Network Rail will be in attendance.

#### 4. GTR December 2018 Timetable Consultation

As promised from our last newsletter the BCA responded to the Draft Timetable for 2018 as follows:

*GTR Timetable Consultation  
East Side Offices  
Kings Cross Station  
Kings Cross  
London  
NIC 4AP*

24th July 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

#### **GTR December 2018 Timetable Consultation – Phase 2**

Thank you for the draft timetable for December 2018. The BCA with input from its members has thoroughly reviewed the timetable and would like to make the following response:

1. We welcome the extension of 4 trains per hour northbound from the present 22.03 to 22.51.
2. We welcome the extension of 4 trains per hour southbound from the present 19.08 to 22.19.
3. **PM Peak** – we are concerned that there are no stops Northbound at West Hampstead Thameslink for both Bedford and Flitwick travellers between 16.00 and 20.30. We would ask you to review this and consider stopping some of the trains at West Hampstead Thameslink between these hours.
4. **AM Peak** - we have a number of issues with the AM southbound peak service as follows:
  - 4.1 From the Phase 1 Consultation we were told that the number of services arriving London between 07.00 and 09.59 from Bedford would be 22 and from Flitwick 18. In the draft timetable the number of trains from Bedford is 18 and Flitwick 14 a decrease at both stations of 4 trains. Why the difference? This equates to 48 carriages of capacity which the BCA cannot accept (please note that a 12 car class 700 has fewer seats than a 12 car 377/387). We therefore ask you to review this and provide the stated number of trains as indicated in the Phase I of the consultation.
  - 4.2 The present timetable provides 11 trains that arrive in London between 07.00 and 09.59 that are all stations to St Albans from Bedford then fast to London. In the 2018 timetable this number is 8. In the high peak you are only providing a 30 minute interval service compared with the present approx every 15 minutes (services from Flitwick are maintained at approx 15 minute interval). This especially adversely affects passengers wishing to travel to Luton Airport Parkway. We would strongly suggest that you start the 07.12 and 07.42 services that start at Flitwick back to start at Bedford thus maintaining the approx 15 minute service.
  - 4.3 No southbound trains from Bedford or Flitwick stop at West Hampstead Thameslink between 07.09 and 10.09. We would ask you to review this and consider stopping some services at West Hampstead Thameslink between these hours.
  - 4.4 We do not agree with the proposed departures of trains from Flitwick at 07.12, 07.13 07.42, 07.43 08.12, 08.13. We ask that you reconsider this and have a better time interval spread between these services. Eg 07.12, 07.17 07.42, 07.47 and 08.12, 08.17. This would then provide a better spread of services and bring Flitwick into line with other stations such as Legrave.
  - 4.5 In the evening peak southbound from Bedford there is a gap between the 17.48 and 18.18 departures of trains stopping at Flitwick. Could you please consider stopping either the 18.04 or 18.09 Bedford departures at Flitwick to plug this gap.

**4.6** We are concerned to see that the running time of trains between Bedford and London St Pancras has been increased. We had hoped that due to the better acceleration/braking characteristics of the class 700 train, running times could have been made shorter.

**5. Other Timetable Matters:**

**5.1** We note that services do not stop at London Bridge between 23:30 and 0500 (approx). We assume this is because overnight engineering work closes the line. If this is not the case, or when the line is made available again, then services should stop there.

**5.2 Saturday:** We note that the Saturday service timetable is not yet available. We urge that the full service operates from around 0600 (as now) through to around 22:50 (i.e. as Monday to Friday).

**5.3 Sunday:** We note that the Sunday service timetable is not yet available. We urge that the full service operates from around current start times through to around 22:50 (i.e. as Monday to Friday).

**5.4 Contingency timetable.** The new timetable will mean that virtually all capacity for Flitwick and Bedford travellers will come from trains that have travelled up the Brighton Mainline from at least as far south as Purley. Failures between Purley and London Bridge will therefore result in severe capacity reduction and detailed work is required to develop a contingency timetable.

I would be grateful if you can reply with answers to all the issues I have raised.

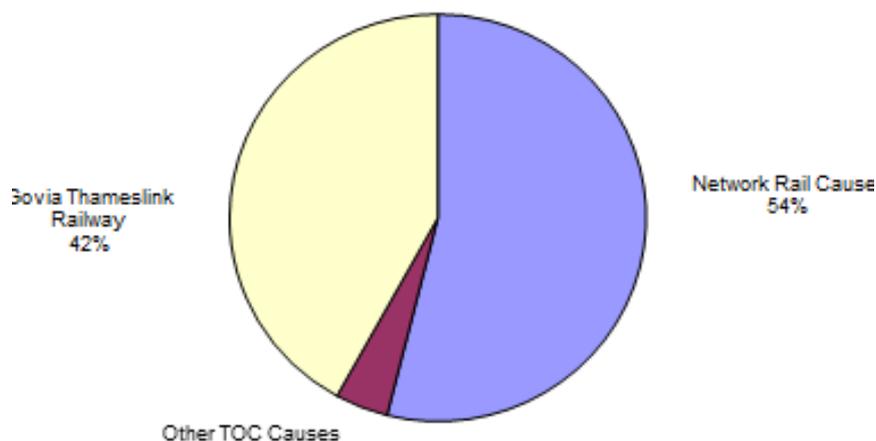
Yours sincerely

Arthur Taylor  
BCA Chairman

We now await their reply to this response. Further meetings with the Timetable Planners will continue into 2018 to ensure the best possible timetable is achieved. We will keep you updated.

**5. Performance**

**Govia Thameslink Railway - Thameslink Route Delay Responsibility (13 Periods)**



## **Major incidents that affected performance in P3:**

4 June 2017: Signalling fault on the South London metro line

6 June 2017: Fallen tree on the track/overhead lines at West Hampstead Thameslink

18 June 2017: Electrical fault on the overhead lines at London St Pancras

19 June 2017: Trackside fire in the Earlswood area

## **6. Key Smart card user? – Automated Delay Repay**

Thameslink have updated us on the above as follows:

### "Automatic delay compensation for Govia Thameslink Railway passengers

As part of plans to modernise one of the most congested networks in the country, train operator Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) has today announced that Thameslink and Great Northern passengers using a key smartcard are now being automatically compensated for delays of 15 minutes or more.

In the coming weeks, the system will also be phased to roll out to the larger Southern and Gatwick Express network, benefiting thousands more people.

The automated system uses complex algorithms after the customer has tapped in and tapped out and will be able to tell if the journey made was delayed by 15 minutes or more. If that's the case, it will send an automatic claim to the customer's online account. All the customer has to do is to review the claim for accuracy and confirm the method of payment preferred.

Thameslink and Great Northern's Passenger Services Director, Stuart Cheshire said: "While our punctuality continues to improve for the sixth month in a row, inevitably, there will still be delays to some journeys. Now, with automatic Delay Repay it couldn't be simpler to get compensation when this happens, but you have to have a key smartcard to benefit from this amazing new system."

Getting a key smartcard is really easy. It's free, it's paperless, it's hassle-free and it's a speedy way to purchase tickets. It only takes a few minutes online to get one and it's delivered within 3-5 working days. Customers can go to [thameslink.com/thekey](http://thameslink.com/thekey) or [greatnorthernrail.com/thekey](http://greatnorthernrail.com/thekey) to get theirs.

Southern and Gatwick Express customers will also benefit from automatic Delay Repay compensation once launched on those networks in the coming months.

ENDS

Editor's notes

To determine whether a claim can be made, the system uses data that comes from entry and exit taps at the station validators. It compares how long it has taken the customer to complete the journey against how long the journey should have taken. Where there is a discrepancy, it looks to see whether there were any corresponding train delays/cancellations and if it finds a relevant delay of 15 minutes or more, a claim will be automatically created.

This method is complimentary to the conventional Delay Repay claim process and does not replace it. Claims for delays of 15 minutes or more can still be made as usual."

## **7. Key Smartcard - Single and Day Return tickets on the Key**

We have been advised by Thameslink that there is a soft launch (ie available, but no or limited publicity) of Single and Return Tickets on the Key Smartcard. Critically, this works like Oyster – it records the journeys you make then calculates the cost at the end of the day. Therefore, for instance, if you leave at around 10am and return at 6pm, you will be charged an Off Peak fare; if you return at 7:30pm, it will charge a Super Off Peak fare.

There are three noticeable shortcomings with the current version:

1. No support for Railcards. We are told this is both a software issue and the need to create a process to reliably associate a Railcard with a Key Card account – we are told there is no suitable national database and that something like taking your Key card and your Railcard along to a GTR ticket office will be required. *We will continue to lobby for this feature to be added.*
2. GTR journeys only at present – ie if also travelling on TfL services, then you need to use Oyster or a Contactless Bank Card (or get a paper ticket).
3. No Carnet discounts.

To enable your Key Card for Key Go (irrespective of the Brand you purchased), go to the Southern website: [southernrailway.com/tickets-and-fares/the-key-smartcard/keygo/](https://southernrailway.com/tickets-and-fares/the-key-smartcard/keygo/).

Over and above the FAQs on the website, the following comments from Thameslink may be useful:

**Validity:** At the moment the public communications only talks about KeyGo being valid outside London in the Southern area whilst we finish testing. However, actually as I said it is live on TL/GN and national rail stations in London and is working for any member of the public that has KeyGo on their card.

**Travel exclusively in the TfL fare zone:** It can be used just in the TfL area but only for journeys between stations GTR serves; for example Elstree - East Croydon or Victoria - Battersea Park would work fine. It cannot be used on Underground, DLR, Tram or Bus Services yet.

**Also valid on Great Northern?** Yes at stations where the Key works (so as far as Huntingdon and Foxton on GN).

**Same core approach of start with a £25 top up, then it will be topped up with another £25 anytime the balance falls below £5?** Yes that is correct although we are working to make a change where customers would have deducted the cost of the journeys actually made for each day. So if on one day you make a £12 journey we would deduct that, if the next it was £20 we would deduct that and so on. We think this approach is closer to the TfL systems and is what customers would expect hence making the change.

**Is it accepted on East Midlands Trains?** No, not at the moment.

**Is it valid on any buses north of the TfL fares zone?** Not at the moment no - the bus operators it can be used on are owned by our parent company and so it was technically and commercially fairly simple to integrate, that isn't the case with other operators unfortunately.

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For more information, see our website - [www.bedfordcommuters.org.uk](http://www.bedfordcommuters.org.uk)

If there is something you want to tell us about, please email: [admin@bedfordcommuters.org.uk](mailto:admin@bedfordcommuters.org.uk)

This newsletter is published by the Bedford Commuters Association.

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