



BEDFORD COMMUTERS ASSOCIATION

THE RAIL USER GROUP FOR BEDFORD AND FLITWICK

SEPTEMBER 2018 NEWSLETTER

I. May 2018 Timetable

There are currently two timetable inquiries underway: - by the House of Commons [Transport Select Committee](#) and the [Office of Rail & Road](#). The former had a deadline for comments of the 5th of September. We await the outcome of both inquiries. What went wrong?

There now seems to be general consensus that the most immediate cause was that the entire timetabling process ran out of time – for instance timetabling steps that should have been finalised 12 weeks (84 days) before the 20th of May were actually finalised 16 days before hand – and the key rostering process (allocating driver diagrams) that normally requires 12 weeks only had three weeks available. The root cause of all this seems to be driven by three key factors:

- A collective failure to understand that taken as a whole the timetable change was undeliverable;
- The late imposition of supposedly risk reducing decisions such as the timetable phasing. By the time they were decided upon, the increase they caused in changes needed may well have been detrimental; and
- Late decision making (for instance apparently GTR proposed phasing delivery in April 2017; the DfT didn't approve until October and stakeholders were not briefed until November).

BCA Priorities

In discussions with **Thameslink** our priorities have been and will continue to be:

- Lobbying for the reinstatement of the full May timetable for peak hours. We have been told that this is due by the end of September. At a meeting with Thameslink on 28th August we were informed by Thameslink that peak services are due to be added back on the 3rd, 10th and 17th September. The amended timetable is now available on the Thameslink website.
- Lobbying for reinstatement of the full off peak May timetable (due by the December timetable change)
- Lobbying for the reinstatement of services taken out at Flitwick for "Thameslink Express" services.
- Lobbying for the reinstatement of the full weekend timetable (4tph instead of the present 2tph).
- Feeding back on operating decisions that seem particularly perverse and/or very much not in the passenger interest.

In discussions with **EMT** our priorities have been and will continue to be:

- Lobbying for EMT to initially make a partial return to trains stopping at Bedford and Luton during peak hours. This could also include a reduction in their 'no calling' time; and then

- Lobbying for EMT to make a full return to trains stopping at Bedford and Luton during peak hours.



The BCA and APTU met recently with EMT to further discuss the peak hour services to Bedford and Luton. Since the meeting we have written to EMT with our priorities for making an initial start in reinstating peak services. This would initially entail an approx hourly service before reinstating the full service. We have also asked for an update on a promised review of the May timetable.

Whilst BCA and fellow Rail User Groups can have success with those priorities within the remit of Thameslink, the greater the number of people that lobby politicians (local and national) to take the issue up with the DfT, the better.

2. Additional Compensation

GTR announced additional compensation for season ticket holders for the disruption since 20th May and have extended it to include day ticket users (please refer to the Thameslink website) This is a refund of up to four weeks travel. If you are a monthly (or more) ticket holder or use the Key Smart Card, Thameslink should be contacting you around now. Otherwise (weekly season ticket holders with paper tickets and day ticket users), you will need to register to make your claim. Details are below.

Along with the APTU we lobbied Thameslink to complain that the original season "ticket holders only" offer was unfair to regular travellers who do not have a season ticket (e.g. off-peak travellers, or someone only travelling 3 days a week) and initially received a refusal to extend the compensation. However, this announcement shows that, collectively, we have been successful.

Thameslink issued the following Press Release:

Additional industry compensation scheme

- Start of the scheme for season ticket holders
- Extending the scheme to non-season ticket holders

Overview

- On 4 July GTR announced an additional industry compensation scheme for qualifying Thameslink and Great Northern season ticket holders most affected by the May timetable change.
- Tomorrow (29 August), we will open phase 1, where we begin to contact known eligible season ticket holders.
- Today we also announce that we will extend the industry compensation to include non-season ticket holders who frequently travel on qualifying TL and GN services.
- Regular travellers are those who do not hold a season ticket but have a minimum of three days' return travel in any week, Monday to Sunday, in the period 20 May to 28 July from the stations most affected. Carnets are included in the scheme.
- Industry compensation is being offered in addition to Delay Repay and enhanced compensation.
- A new website has been created for passengers and it includes an easy-to-use [eligibility tracker](#) and a list frequently asked questions that we will update as we need to. It will also host the online claim form for passengers when phase 2 and 3 go live.

Implementing the scheme

To manage the volume of expected claims and ensure an efficient process for customers, GTR has set up a dedicated team recruited additional staff team to handle claims and enquiries. The team will start taking customer calls from 29 August.

The scheme is rolling out in phases:

How will the scheme work?

Phase 1 From 29 August	• We will contact eligible customers with season tickets who are on our database outlining what compensation they are entitled to and let them know what they have to do.
Phase 2 By the end of September	• We will invite season ticket holders who weren't contacted in Phase 1 to claim online.
Phase 3 ASAP	• We will extend to those without season tickets.

More information is available online, including frequently asked questions. Please click here for details: railcompensation.thameslinkrailway.com

3a. Fares Review

The Rail Delivery Group (the umbrella group for Network Rail, Train Operating Companies and Freight Operating Companies [and others]) is undertaking a review of fares. It is important to understand that this is only tackling three of four broad questions:

In scope

- How should fares be structured?
- What is the relevant balance in terms of price etc between different communities (e.g. peak v off-peak)
- How should the technology of ticket selling change?

Out of scope

- Should the taxpayer (local, regional or national) pay more (or less)?

The BCA has responded to this consultation.

3b Fares Increase

As you are aware the government recently released the July RPI figure that is used to indicate the fares increase from January next year. This will be 3.2%. The BCA will be writing to all local MPs asking that they lobby the Transport Secretary to freeze this increase at 0%, to take into account the severe disruption to Thameslink services since the introduction of the May timetable and the reduction in train services as a result of EMT not calling at Luton and Bedford during peak hours.

We would also urge all members to lobby their MP on this very important issue.

4. Performance

Please see the latest performance data from Thameslink. Although it shows that the services have stabilised and performance improved there is still a long way to go. We would expect the performance to continue its improvement and will be closely monitoring it.

Thameslink	PPM
2 July - 13 July	59.25%
16 July – 27 July	76.15%
30 July – 12 August	81%

5. EMT Franchise

The Chairman as now met with all the EMT Franchise Bidders – Stagecoach, Abellio and Arriva to outline our aspirations and concerns as set out below:

- Reinstatement of peak calls at Bedford with an approx. 40 minutes journey time
- Reinstatement of the half hourly InterCity services to Nottingham/Derby
- Continuation of the half hourly service to London
- Continuation of InterCity services calling at Bedford
- East West Rail connectivity at Bedford with MML services to be developed by planners
- EMU fleet should be as near as possible to Intercity standard train
- Bi-Mode fleet for all MML services would be supported thus allowing greater flexibility for train services

- Robust contingency plan to cover train cancellations and periods of disruption
- Wi-Fi, USB and charging points fitted on all trains
- More comfortable seats on trains than GTR Thameslink 700s
- A wider rollout of Smart Cards
- Acceptance of GroupSave tickets on MML services
- Greater stakeholder collaboration
- Improved timetable consultation with stakeholders

6. **BCA AGM – a date for your diary**

Please note that the BCA AGM this year will be held on **Monday 29th October 2018** at the RAFA Club, Ashburnham Road, Bedford commencing at 19.30. Representatives from Thameslink, EMT and Network Rail will be in attendance to answer any questions you may have on the Thameslink Timetable, EMT Peak services not stopping at Bedford or any other issue you may have with the Train Operating Companies.

7. **Bedford**

We have been informed by Thameslink that major maintenance work to make all the lifts at Bedford more reliable is to be undertaken commencing in October. The work will take approx nine weeks and will mean that all lifts during this time will be out of service. By taking all the lifts out at once will mean that the work can be carried out quicker.

Thameslink will be making alternative arrangements for disabled travellers.

8. **Flitwick**

We have been informed by Thameslink that the waiting shelter on platform 1 (north end of platform located in the recess) will be demolished and replaced by a heated Waiting Room. This work is scheduled to commence during October. We welcome this as the BCA has lobbied Thameslink very hard for this work to be undertaken.



9. Membership Renewals

As always, the falling leaves of September will see BCA committee members take to Bedford and Flitwick stations in an attempt 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. This last year has been very challenging with issues around the new Thameslink Timetable from May, EMT services not serving Bedford during the morning and evening peaks and the new EMT Franchise. We continue to have regular meeting with senior management of Thameslink to get improvements to performance and reliability.

It is for this reason that we need a strong membership so please 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 Thameslink services.

You will have received a copy of the membership application form recently. 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 18th September 2018(AM & PM) Bedford Station
Thursday 20th September 2018(AM & PM) Flitwick Station

For more information, see our website - www.bedfordcommuters.org.uk

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

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