



# BEDFORD COMMUTERS ASSOCIATION

THE RAIL USER GROUP FOR BEDFORD AND FLITWICK

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## MARCH 2019 NEWSLETTER

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### I. May 2019 Timetable

#### Thameslink

##### **Monday to Friday**

- 07.36 St Pancras to Bedford (originates from Horsham at 06.04) will no longer call at Luton Airport Parkway but will call additionally at Leagrave, Harlington and Flitwick.
- 07.41 St Pancras to Bedford (originates from Brighton at 06.22) will no longer call at Harlington and Flitwick.
- 07.51 St Pancras to Bedford (originates from Littlehampton at 05.52) will no longer call at Luton Airport Parkway but will call additionally at Leagrave, Harlington and Flitwick.
- 08.52 Bedford to Three Bridges (arrives at St Pancras at 09.39) will depart earlier at 08.46 and call additionally at Flitwick and Harpenden.

##### **Saturday**

- The service will be uplifted to the planned May 2018 frequency as follows:
- 2 trains per hour (tph) Bedford to Brighton
- 2 tph Bedford to Gatwick Airport
- 2 tph Kentish Town to Rainham
- 4 tph St Albans to Sutton

##### **Sunday**

The service will be uplifted to the planned May 2018 frequency as follows:

- 2 trains per hour (tph) Bedford to Brighton
- 2 tph Bedford to Gatwick Airport
- 2 tph Kentish Town to Rainham
- From 12 noon an additional 2tph St Albans to Sutton

#### EMT

We have lobbied for the gap in the Saturday evening service between 20.05 and 21.30 be filled from May and we are awaiting a reply.

A further meeting to discuss the reinstatement of stops at Bedford during both AM and PM peaks and the May 2019 timetable is scheduled for the beginning of April.

### 2. Midland Main Line Electrification Update

Current plans take the wires north from Bedford to Kettering and Corby. However, electrification of the Midland Main Line now looks set to be extended from Kettering to Market Harborough station. In response to a Parliamentary Question tabled by MP for Market Harborough Neil O'Brien, the Department for Transport confirmed that Network Rail has been instructed to design an extension of electrification

infrastructure from Kettering to Market Harborough.

In a statement transport minister Andrew Jones wrote: "Network Rail has been instructed to design an extension of electrification infrastructure from Kettering to Market Harborough station, as part of the Midland Main Line enhancements programme."

"The Overhead Line Equipment (OLE) extension to Market Harborough will enable a new connection to a power supply at Braybrooke. At Outline Business Case stage in March 2018 this was determined to be the best value for money option for making the power supply connection. In line with normal practice, this will be tested again when the overall Midland Main Line programme Key Output 1a, of which Market Harborough electrification is a constituent part, is assessed at Full Business Case stage."

If electrification goes further north from Bedford to Market Harborough, rather than stopping at Kettering as planned, that will also be a step towards getting the whole line electrified eventually.

Bedford Station – over the Christmas period overhead gantries were erected between the north of Bedford Station to the Bromham Road Bridge. Work commenced on March 4<sup>th</sup> on Bromham Road Bridge in preparation for its demolition and a new bridge provided that will allow the necessary clearance for the overhead wires.

Work has yet to start to extend Platform 4 to accommodate the longer trains.

At the present time the electrification is on schedule for the introduction of electric services from December 2020 although what type of electric unit will be used is yet to be decided.

### 3. East West Rail Route Option Consultation

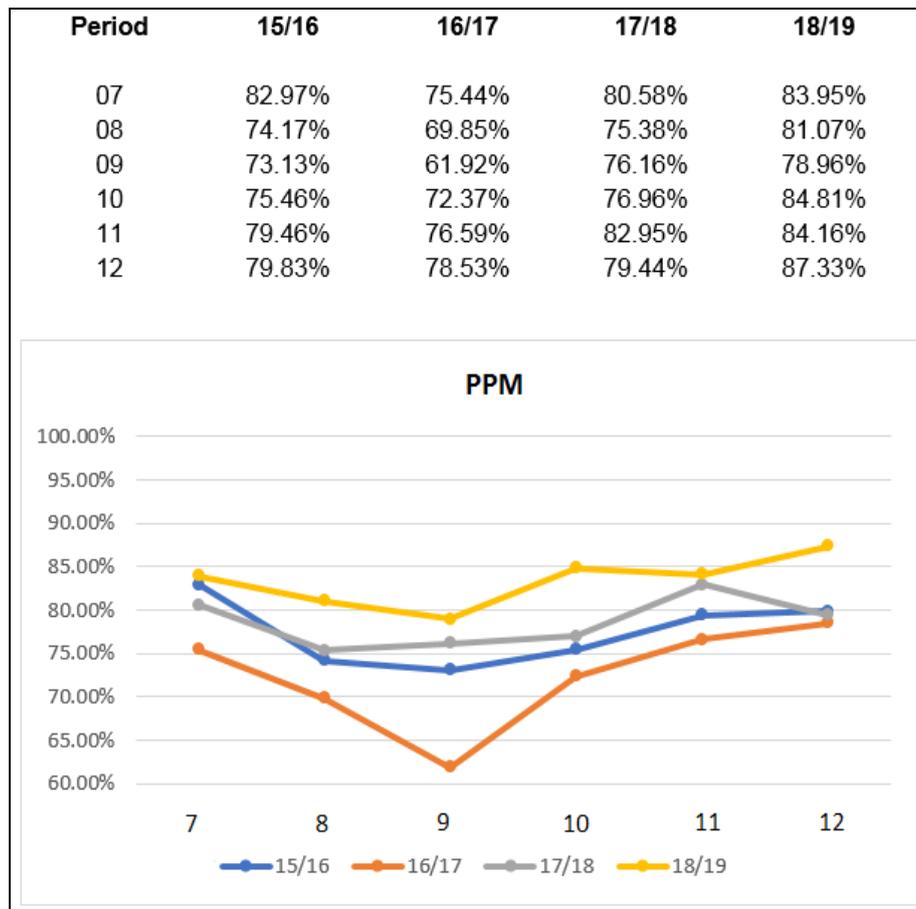
Members were recently sent a copy of the East West Rail Route Option Consultation for their comments and also to respond to the consultation themselves. The consultation ended on March 11<sup>th</sup> and the BCA duly responded. A copy of our response is on the website.

### 4. Performance

#### Performance Measures

At the present time the performance measure used is PPM which is the percentage of trains that arrive at their destination within five minutes of their scheduled time i.e. you are deemed to be on time even if in fact you are five minutes late. From April 2019 the measurement used will be the percentage of trains that arrive at their destination on time. See GTR's comments on this after the data tables on the next page.

		PPM	RT
<b>GTR</b>		87.3%	62.7%
<b>Southern</b>	METRO	90.0%	61.9%
	SXC	88.6%	64.3%
	GATX	75.5%	37.2%
<b>Great Northern</b>	GN INNER	82.5%	66.2%
	GN OUTER	83.7%	54.0%
<b>Thameslink</b>	TL BML	82.6%	55.7%
	TL ECML	82.1%	52.7%
	TL KENT	80.3%	63.3%
	TL MML	88.4%	67.4%
	TL S LNDN	92.8%	72.8%



### On time performance - every second counts

“As of March 2019, 87.3% of our 3,600 daily scheduled trains ran their entire scheduled route and arrived at their final destination within five minutes of their timetabled arrival time. This figure, known as our Public Performance Measure (PPM) was for period 12, the four-week period to the start of March, it compares to the 79.4% achieved in the same four-week period in 2018. Period 12 was not only the best four-week period of performance in the history of the franchise, but the seventh consecutive period of best ever performance. It is a testament to the significant improvement in punctuality and reliability seen on Govia Thameslink Railway services over the past six months, but it is also a sign of clear room for improvement.

To support this UK-wide ambition, in April 2019, the entire rail industry will switch to “on time” which measures punctuality at every single stop. To achieve “on time”, a train must call at every single station on its planned route within 59 seconds of the scheduled timetable. It is a reminder that every second counts. It is a tough measure, especially for services such as the soon to be twice per hour Thameslink Brighton to Cambridge service, travelling over a hundred miles across two of the busiest main lines in Britain and through central London, but it's a measure that is clear and easy to understand for passengers.

As of March 2019, our on-time performance is above 72%. That makes us the sixth best performing franchise of the twenty-three franchises in the UK, but it is also a solid base from which to improve.”

### Skip Stopping

We have noticed the increasing use of “Skip Stopping” on late running trains in an effort to improve the performance. This has led on several occasions to gaps of one hour between services. This mainly affects Flitwick. The BCA considers this practice is totally unacceptable especially if gaps of one hour occur. However it is fair to acknowledge sometimes the decision to skip stop is correct when taking into account the wider impact and if the service gap that results is not excessive. We have therefore taken up this issue with Thameslink in an effort to get the level of skip stopping reduced.

## Brighton Mainline (BML) Infrastructure Work

As you may be aware Network Rail has been undertaking infrastructure work to improve the performance of services on the BML. Any improvement will therefore have a positive reaction to Thameslink services that use the BML. This is very welcome as the level of disruption on the BML has been high and consequently affected Thameslink services both south and north of London. The improvement work has been undertaken over several weekends culminating in a week long blockade between 16<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> February and finally being completed in May. The improvement work has included:

- Renewal of Balcombe Tunnel Junction
- Improve drainage in Balcombe Tunnel to prevent flooding
- Improve drainage in Haywards Heath Tunnel to prevent flooding
- Repairs to brickwork and track renewal in Clayton Tunnel
- Upgrading signalling between Haywards Heath and Brighton
- Replacement of conductor rail at various locations

We will now be monitoring performance very carefully.

### **5. Bedford Station**

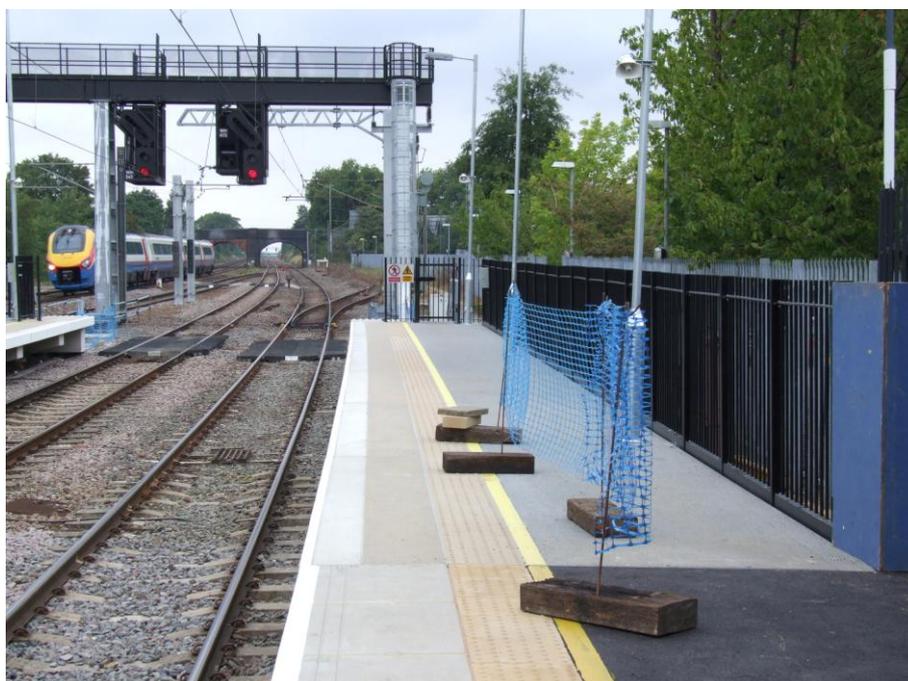
Lifts – Apart from some issues in January with the lift on Platform 4, which have been resolved, all lifts seem to have settled down and are now more reliable. However, if you have issues with the lifts please let us know.

Car Park Flooding – Network Rail has completed all the necessary drainage work. Please let us know if you encounter further problems.

Ticket Vending Machines – We continue to lobby for an additional TVM to be installed to ease the long queues that build up for the Ticket Office.

Ticket Gate Line – Thameslink have recently installed readers so that Bar Code Tickets can be read.

Bromham Road Bridge – Work has started on rerouting services ( ie. gas, electric and telephone cables) that use the bridge. This work will continue until 18<sup>th</sup> April. Work on demolishing and rebuilding the bridge is expected to commence in the summer. A result of this work it will be necessary to close some of the car parking spaces in the Thameslink car park - as yet we have not received any indication of how many spaces will be closed but once we have the information we will pass it onto you.



## 6. Flitwick Station

Work has at last commenced on replacing the present waiting shelter with a heated waiting room plus Customer Information Screen on platform 1. Completion of this is scheduled for the end of April. There is still no update on the proposed Station Regeneration Scheme.

## 7. Bedford to St Albans Community Rail Partnership

The Bedford to St Albans Community Rail Partnership (CRP) has recently been set up with the aim of getting the community more involved with their local station, and to use the rail services more often. Also improvements to stations, better integrated transport with better bus connections and cycling facilities would follow.

The first meeting of the Bedford to St Albans CRP Steering Group will be held on 29<sup>th</sup> March and will be attended by the Chairman.

Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) and station adoption groups play an important role in engaging communities with their local railways, they are involved in social inclusion projects, community wellbeing activities, economic development, enhancing station gardens, local information provision and enabling people to access sustainable, healthy travel.

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) is the national membership body for over 60 community rail partnerships, plus hundreds of station adoption and station friends groups and enterprises that make up the community rail movement. It supports community-based groups and partnerships around Britain that connect their community with their railway.

Connecting communities with *their* railway – Helping *local* community rail to flourish

CRPs undertake a wide range of activities which generally can be grouped under four main themes:

### Providing a voice for the community

Community art, gardening schemes, edible planting at both rural and urban stations too. Listening to how the community would like to be involved in the development of its railway and working with Train Operators to help this happen.

### Promoting sustainable, healthy and accessible travel

Making rail part of an end-to-end passenger journey. Cycle spaces at stations, demand responsive 'last mile' transport, station neighbours' schemes, walking and cycling routes and healthy activities led from local stations

### Bringing communities together, supporting diversity and inclusion

Community led station volunteering, outreach to non-travellers and making stations 'hidden disability friendly'. Finding out why some sections of the community don't choose to travel by rail and ways to overcome this.

### Supporting social and economic development

Local information & history boards telling the story of a station and its surroundings. Finding ways to open disused spaces at stations for community benefit.  
Developing the tourism, heritage and economic potential of rail.

## 8. Ticketing: Smart Card functionality

At present, Smart Card functionality availability is somewhat limited. The following are available:

- Any type of Season Ticket that for a commute that involves GTR and Travelcard zones 1-6 only; and
- Standard Class Adult return and single tickets to GTR destinations, on a 'Pay as you Go' basis.

Key Smartcard usage generally offers convenience – for instance, there is no need to visit a ticket office or ticket machine and the card is much more reliable (and faster) when using barriers, particularly on TfL. It only offers a financial benefit in one specific circumstance: when using off-peak tickets and being unsure of

return travel time – the fare calculated will be Off-Peak or Super Off-Peak dependent on your actual journey time. There are two material shortfalls in functionality:

- No current recognition of Railcards. We are told that it is intended to address this; the core issue is a need to change the Ticket Office Ticket Issuing Application in order that functionality is available to staff to be able to record that a Railcard and Key Smart combination has been presented.
- The lack of a Carnet like feature. It seems that this is more down to political will than Thameslink. It is not clear to the BCA why this should be, given that day to day use of Carnets is so problematic. We hear that fraudulent travel rates are relatively high, which means that legitimate users suffer from the steps Thameslink take to prevent fraudulent use (barriers are often set to refuse them). It is possible that there are worries about revenue loss (as some people avoid them due to the hassles described), but this really isn't a fair or equitable decision.

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)

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