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16 January 2017

Dear Duncan & Michael

Thank you for the time you spent with us before Christmas; it was much appreciated.

We thought it useful to set out our questions and areas of concern and actions we would like to be assessed in a single place:

Questions

We have the following questions and uncertainties (refer to Arthur's email of 4 January):

1. We would like to receive a full copy of the May 2018 timetable, including train running diagrams (that distinguish between your (de-facto) 3 types of rolling stock – (existing) HST + 8; (ex Grand Central) HST + 6; and Meridian / Class 222.
 - a. In particular we would like to understand how train utilisation has become significantly more inefficient and why there is now much less capacity in the evening peak.
2. We would like to know the normal sectional running times for each of the above between St Pancras & Sheffield (in both directions).
 - a. If faster sectional running times are not proposed for the HST + 6s (as compared to HST + 8s), we would like to know how this decision has been reached – they are lighter and, we understand, have more powerful engines (4500 hp vs 4200 hp¹).

Areas of concern

We have the following areas of concern:

1. We do not like the move away from an approximately even interval to the service to Bedford. We believe this to be a significant retrograde step.
2. We do not like the removal of the morning peak stops from Bedford and Luton on St Pancras arrivals. These services provide the option of a faster journey to travellers and can also be a significant benefit at times of large service perturbation.
3. We do not like the removal of the evening peak stops from Bedford and Luton on St Pancras departures. These services provide the option of a faster journey to travellers and can also be a significant benefit at times of large service perturbation. The BCA carried out a passenger count at Bedford on the evening of Thursday 11 January 2018 (see appendix); this showed:
 - a. Arriving at Bedford from the south: 1,711
 - b. Departing Bedford for the north: 130
4. Both 2 & 3 above require the Thameslink service to be amended, resulting in some loss of service at stations served only by Thameslink (Flitwick, Legrave and Harpenden). This

¹ Rail Guide 2016

results in service loss at these stations² and possible overcrowding (as capacity improvements are, de-facto, deferred).

5. We believe the Wellingborough – Bedford bus needs to serve the railway station in addition to the bus station, in order to meet the two markets of “journey to Bedford” and “journey changing at Bedford”.
6. We believe additional flexibility is needed in the fares system.

Possible actions – now

We would like to see the following:

1. For fares, we’d like to see double back rights between Bedford and Luton Airport Parkway. This would make the journey Wellingborough > Luton Airport Parkway > Bedford valid with just a Wellingborough > Bedford ticket. This should also be explicitly acknowledged as valid for Wellingborough > Luton Airport Parkway > Luton. Such journey choices may well make sense for travellers with mobility restrictions and/or plenty of luggage and may be generally of appeal – we can see them being competitive in journey time terms, particularly for those coming from north of Wellingborough.
 - a. We’ve heard talk of 45 minute journey times for the Wellingborough Bedford bus and those with more knowledge than us think this to be optimistic at best – thus increasing the appeal of this option.
 - b. The double back rights need to include the ability to use Thameslink services.
2. There have been suggestions that the Wellingborough > Bedford bus will terminate at the Bus station. This is generally to be welcomed, but it is not yet clear it will also serve the railway station. For those ending their journey in Bedford, the Bus station is often a better bet, but some may want to continue on Thameslink or the Marston Vale line and thus the railway station should be served as well.
3. We would like it recognised as a point of principle that during severe service perturbation, EMT services might make additional stops at Bedford and Luton during peak hours. We recognise that EMT may well have its own challenges meeting demand at the same time, but believe that EMT services should provide capacity where practical (eg if the MML is largely unaffected, but there is, for instance, a problem at East Croydon).
4. Although not within our direct remit, we believe it important that there is one morning peak hour service from Wellingborough to Bedford and a return in the evening. We believe that:
 - a. These trains should be timed to suit someone working in Bedford on typical office hours – eg it would arrive in London after the main commuter flows.
 - b. There could be set down and pick up restrictions placed on this service if needed to limit demand. In particular, a pickup only going north in the evening would be tolerable; we believe the southbound journey should allow Bedford joiners.

Actions for December 2018 timetable

We believe the following are appropriate actions for the December 2018 timetable:

1. A reassessment of the decision not to stop at Luton and Bedford in the morning peak in the light of actual operational experience. We acknowledge that the new Thameslink timetable brings significant uncertainty, and therefore caution in response. In the light of actual

² Combined 2016/17 entries & exits 6.736m

operational experience, a review over the summer can be undertaken to assess the implications of reinstating Bedford and Luton stops.

- a. If a full return to Luton & Bedford peak hour stops is still not possible, then careful consideration needs to be given to part reinstatement – eg reducing the ‘no call’ period and/or providing occasional stops.
2. A review of the overall timetable (again in the light of actual operational experience) to determine options for regularising the service interval for Bedford, Wellingborough and Kettering and for improving diagramming to allow the reinstatement of Bedford and Luton stops in the evening peak.
3. A debate with the wider stakeholder community of how stops for East Midlands trains south of Kettering will work – the debate during the consultation for the new East Midlands franchise highlighted the diverging viewpoints. It seems to us that the new service pattern foreshadows the move of these stops to a 30 minute interval Corby service with potential downsides of:
 - a. Loss of through journey opportunities to Market Harborough and further north.
 - b. Potentially [and probably not current EMT franchise decisions], a slower journey on less comfortable trains.
4. Consider the possible acquisition of additional diesel rolling stock to (a) provide additional capacity; and (b) the earlier introduction of the sixth train per hour. We imagine that candidates for such stock would include HSTs coming off lease from GWR, possibly reduced to 6+2 for improved performance.

Next steps

We would welcome a further meeting to discuss the practical constraints East Midlands Trains face in trying to address these matters.

As regards the fares issue set out in ‘Possible actions – now’, we will also address this to Thameslink as this requirement would need to allow travel by Thameslink trains as well to be most effective.

We would also welcome a special review session with the wider stakeholder community for all areas served by the Sheffield / Nottingham / Corby services in view of the wider adverse implications.

Yours sincerely

Neil Middleton
Chairman
APTU

Arthur Taylor
Chairman
BCA

EMT Northbound PM Peak Services Passenger Count – Thursday 11th January 2018

St Pancras Depart	Bedford Arrive	Passengers Off	Passengers On
16.01	16.36	114	18
16.29	17.07	172	26
17.00	17.33	217	21
17.30	18.04	319	37
18.00	18.36	324	11
18.30	19.07	370	9
19.00	19.36	195	8
	Total	1,711	130

Note

3 individual counters for each train