

Meeting with Centre for London

Time: 10am, Tuesday 25th August

Attendees: Valerie Shawcross CBE AM, Chair, Transport Committee
Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM, Deputy Chair, Transport Committee
Richard Brown, Research Director at Centre for London
Jonathan Roberts, independent transport consultant
Richard Ainsley, Atkins
Brell Wilson, Centre for London (CfL)
Richard Berry, Scrutiny Manager, Transport Committee

CENTRE FOR LONDON PROJECT

Centre for London's project on rail devolution is entitled *Turning South London Orange: A plan for reforming suburban rail*. It is examining with the metro-style services available in the north and east of London could also be brought to south London. The co-chairs of the steering group are Steve Norris and Andrew Adonis. The project is sponsored by Thales, the Canary Wharf Group and several south London boroughs. The expected completion date is November 2015.

The CfL project has three objectives:

- Cost-benefit analysis of previous investment in the London Overground network.
- Developing costed proposals for bringing up existing south London services to Overground standards.
- Developing a ten-year roadmap for reforming the rail network in south London.

OVERGROUND PERFORMANCE

TfL has improved performance of the Silverlink franchise, since it was devolved and transformed into the London Overground. Customer satisfaction and usage have increased significantly since 2007. The improvement has been greater than that seen across the network generally.

Usage of the London Overground has mainly increased on the orbital routes, where passengers stay within the same fare zone. On the radial route between Watford and Euston, usage has been stable.

MODELLING

The project is focusing on the suburban routes operated currently by Southern (on the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise). These routes were chosen above other south London franchises because a) TfL already has live proposals for the South Eastern franchise, and b) issues on the South Western franchise will be partially addressed by Crossrail 2.

The modelling work for the project is considering:

- How close these routes can get to 'metro' standards seen on the Overground – frequency, capacity.
- What the transport benefits of this would be – accessibility, travel times.
- What the development benefits of this would be – residential and commercial development.

ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

CfL has engaged with south London boroughs and out-of-London county councils during the project. Kent and Surrey are happy to rail services to be devolved, provided this has a purpose of improving services. They stress the importance of being equal partners with TfL.

South London boroughs such as Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark are positive about devolution. They would like to see train stations and surrounding areas better utilised. London Councils has concerns about Freedom Pass finances after devolution.

Local authorities argue that their areas should not to be treated just as corridors into central London – orbital transport should be prioritised. For instance, improving connectivity in Lewisham is important to deliver objectives of the New Cross Opportunity Area.

STRATEGIC TRANSPORT ISSUES

There is high population growth in London, in different locations, requiring improved connectivity. Mapping of public transport accessibility shows that south London has poor connectivity compared to other parts of the city.

The rail network is under-utilised in south London, and there is suppressed demand. For instance, stations such as Streatham have large catchment areas and relatively few passengers. A huge number of people are getting the bus to Brixton for the tube and bypassing National Rail services. South Wimbledon tube station has more passengers than the nine Thameslink stations on the Wimbledon loop combined.

Major risk areas for the network include shortcomings in interchanges, train loading and unloading times constraining increases in frequency, and the need for bigger depots.

Making improvements to the network relies on completing several upgrades at once: trains, signalling, etc. No intervention on its own will deliver. Routes on the Southern network are currently constrained to 24 trains per hour, regardless of who manages them.

DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

CfL are considering the development potential around 52 south London stations post-devolution. Across the catchment areas for these stations, around 33,000 dwellings are already planned (two-thirds of these have planning permission). CfL will therefore be investigating how devolution could deliver development in addition to this baseline.

There are risks of linking devolution to residential development – this implies that there will be high numbers of additional transport users in the area, with existing users not seeing the benefits of capacity increases.

Development creates value that could be used to pay for rail upgrades. London may need to fund its own infrastructure improvements.

Devolution is an opportunity for train operating companies, because it could help to increase their revenue by increasing the total size of the passenger market.

CfL will explore the changing role of outer London town centres in relation to changes in the rail network.