

Future Transport London campaigns for sustainable solutions to London's transport problems favouring public transport, walking and cycling over private cars.

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The newsletter is edited by Chris Barker. Contributions are welcomed. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of Future Transport London.

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# Fury over closure of rail ticket offices



**The government announced yet another blow to older, disabled or vulnerable people in their instruction to rail companies to close ticket offices.**

In London it is proposed to close up to 150 ticket offices leaving only ones at some main line terminals and at some busy suburban stations such as East Croydon and Finsbury Park. Even many of these will operate for restricted hours and it is the long term aim to close them all.

The rationale for this drastic change is that more and more tickets are now being purchased on line or from vending machines. Last year, according to the Rail Delivery Group (RDG), only 12 per cent of tickets were bought at ticket offices although 12 per cent amounts to over a billion pounds a year collected from 168 million passengers. That ticket offices are regarded as important can be seen by the queues which normally form at the larger stations.

Activists have described the closures as 'catastrophic', 'disgraceful' and 'horrendous' and say they will have a huge impact on disabled passengers and their right to use the railway. A coalition of organisations, representing 14.6 million disabled people, has written a strong letter of protest to Transport Focus and London TravelWatch who are

coordinating protests. Doug Pauley, a wheelchair user, and Sarah Leadbetter, who is registered blind, are taking legal action and claim that the consultation is unlawful and discriminates against disabled people.

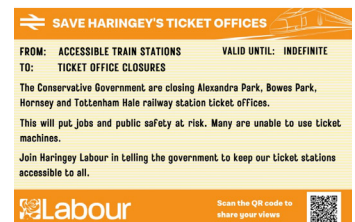
The RDG said the changes will involve moving staff 'from ticket offices and into stations, offering more face-to-face support for customers across the network as a whole', although 'ticket office facilities will remain open at the busiest stations and interchanges, selling the full range of tickets while the transition takes place'.

### Difficult

Although the RDG said that 'An estimated 99 per cent of all transactions made at ticket offices last year can be made at ticket vending machines (TVMs) or online' the ticketing system is so complicated that it remains difficult for passengers to be sure they are getting the appropriate ticket for their journey and in many cases machines are not equipped to issue some tickets and sometimes fail to work at all. The RDG says 'TVMs across the network will be improved and upgraded'.

The RDG adds: 'Following these changes, if a customer is unable to buy a specific ticket before boarding the train because it was unavailable at the station, they would be able to buy one during their journey, at a ticket office en-route, or at their destination'.

Although the intention is to move staff from ticket offices to ticket concourses and on platforms,



the unions fear that the intention is to reduce staff. Mick Lynch, general secretary of the RMT union, said: 'The decision to close up to 1,000 ticket offices and issue hundreds of redundancy notices is a savage attack on railway workers, their families and the travelling public'. The RDG, however, says that no redundancy notices have been issued although they also say that 'train operators have issued a letter to trade unions which opens consultation on managing the transition in a way that minimises the impact of the changes - examples include moving to a new multi skilled role and comprehensive re-training and re-skilling, staff moving to other roles and the potential for a voluntary severance scheme'.

### FTL Podcasts

Check out our podcasts at <https://www.futuretransportlondon.org/podcasts>. In the latest FTL's vice-chair Andrew Bosi explains the challenges of bringing HS2 into central London and why Old Oak Common rather than Euston may end up as the long term terminus for the completed HS2 line.





**Andrew Bosi writes:**

The scheme is extremely ill-thought out, leading many to suspect that TOCs have been pushed into it by the government. It would have been far better to introduce ticket machines that a) work and b) offer the same comprehensive range of tickets, before embarking on this exercise.

No thought appears to have been given to the option of expanding the purpose of ticket offices to sell refreshments or other goods that travellers might wish to buy, if it is the case that staff there have time on their hands, as Merseyrail is trialling in Liverpool,.

My local station is Essex Road. While it would be nice to see more staff, indeed any staff, on the platforms, this is no substitute for a presence at ground level. This station has no ticket machines of any description, and precious little space upstairs to accommodate one or accommodate a member of staff to greet passengers and tend to their

needs in the way suggested in some of the blurb promoting these closures.

On many stations, ticket machines are open to the elements. At Canonbury for example, it is difficult to use the machine in bright morning sunlight. People are not going to use the train in preference to their car or staying at home if it means being drenched while purchasing a ticket.

The machines at Marylebone have been heralded as selling tickets from anywhere on the network to anywhere else. However, the time taken to use them is excessive, particularly for people prone to typing mistakes, and some of the machines do not respond to touch as they should or else respond with the neighbouring letter/destination. No doubt they will improve with time, but in the meantime most people will rely on staff and will want them in a fixed place where they can be readily located. A purpose-built ticket office is the obvious such place.

**A disabled FTL member adds their comments.**

Ticket office staff provide advice on a wider range of ticket options than do machines, many of which options are

cheaper: split ticketing for example, or the 50 per cent discount for wheelchair users who do not transfer to a seat (the latter is only available from ticket offices, not even on line). Ticket office staff are required to offer the cheapest option. The proposal is unfair and inflationary and may well deter travellers from using trains.

Many people are unable or unwilling to buy tickets on line or from machines: for example the digitally excluded, visually impaired people (VIPs), wheelchair users who cannot access many ticket machines, some older or neurodivergent people who find ticket machines confusing or even panic-inducing. They will be excluded from travelling at all.

Ticket office staff provide other support such as advice on train times and routeing. They are invaluable for visitors, including foreign tourists, who are unfamiliar with the ticketing system and/or the network and services. Some of this advice is sought by travellers planning a future journey, maybe trying to make a modal choice. Without advice on the possibilities by rail, it would be easier to drive.

They also offer a security focal

point for people on the station. They are the focal point for disabled people requesting assistance. Train Operating Companies (TOCs) in the UK are legally required to provide assistance on a Turn Up And Go (TUAG) basis, with no requirement to book in advance. As a minimum, if ticket office staff are replaced by staff floating on the station, there needs to be a Help Point at the station entrance or former ticket office location for disabled passengers to use to call for assistance.

The proposals include reducing staffing times at some stations. Outside these hours there will be no security, no passenger assistance even pre-booked (for example ramps or a guiding arm for VIPs), no TUAG, and probably no access to toilets. Disabled passengers will be excluded from being able to travel.

At the extreme, there could be mobile teams covering more than one station for short periods. This would avoid stations being classified as 'unstaffed' but is a cynical move and provides no meaningful service to travellers.

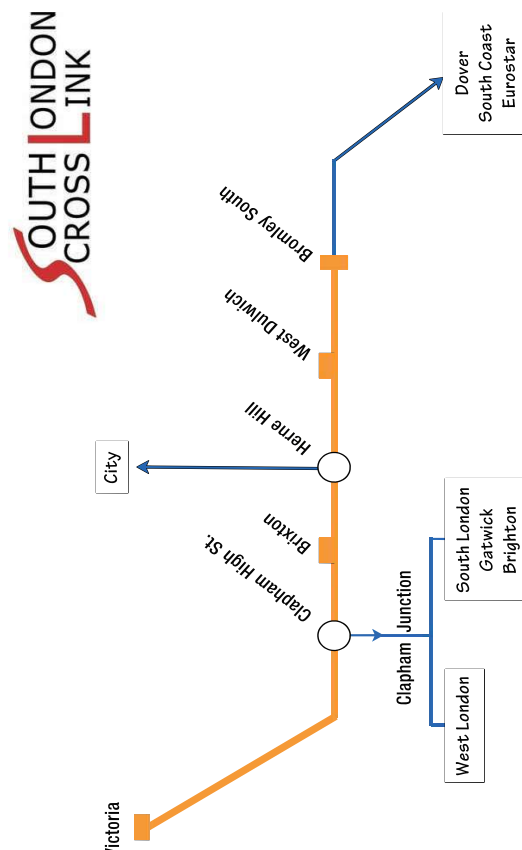
It is understood that there is actually no requirement for stations to be staffed at all if there is no ticket office!

# CROSSLINK FOR SOUTH LONDON

**Clapham High Street station could in future see new services once the Networker fleet is replaced on the Southeastern network.**

Local councillors, London Assembly Member Marina Ahmad and the Clapham Transport Users Group have been holding discussions with Network Rail about future opportunities that the provision of a new fleet for the Southeastern Metro network will provide. Of key interest is the re-instatement of direct trains to Victoria. These were lost in December 2012 when the South London Line shuttle which linked Victoria and London Bridge via Clapham High Street was withdrawn in favour of the London Overground service to Clapham Junction. This has created a gap for commuters, forcing passengers to use the Northern Line at nearby Clapham North which has a dangerous winding narrow island platform and is crowded at peak times.

Currently Victoria-Dartford Southeastern trains pass through Clapham High Street but are unable to stop because the existing Networkers lack the Selective Door Opening (SDO) to serve the shorter platforms. New trains will have SDO however,



*continued on page 3*

# Boroughs marked on healthy streets

The Healthy Streets Coalition (of which Future Transport London is a member) ranks boroughs each year according to their performance on six key measures shown to reduce car use and enable active travel, These are:

**LOW TRAVEL NEIGHBOURHOODS /  
20 MPH SPEED LIMITS/  
CONTROLLED PARKING /  
BUS PRIORITY/  
PROTECTED CYCLE LANES/  
SAFE 'SCHOOL STREETS'**

All of which have a big impact, often literally overnight, on residents' health.

This year they have awarded top marks to five boroughs: City of London, Waltham Forest, Camden, Islington and Richmond.

The City leads the way on delivering schemes for walking, wheeling and cycling, as well as public transport, and reducing and restricting car use. They are also praised for their visionary schemes such as the pedestrian and cycle friendly reworking of Bank junction.

Islington is praised for its delivery on 20mph, bus priority, LTNs, schools provision and controlled parking, and Waltham Forest for its LTNs.

Lurking at the bottom of the table are Hillingdon, Bexley and Havering with car-dominated environments failing to enable residents to switch to public transport, walking and cycling. The coalition draws attention to the fact that 38 per cent of adults and 66 per cent of children in London do not have the recommended amounts of physical activity and nearly 40 per cent of all children in London are overweight or obese. They point out that active travel (walking and cycling) instead of using cars or buses would help deal with the problem.



Traffic calming in Waltham Forest

*Crosslink for South London continued from page 2*

enabling the Victoria-Dartford service to stop at Clapham High Street and provide a direct eight minute journey time to Victoria. Another benefit will be to enable Clapham High Street passengers to access key South London destinations such as Lewisham for onward travel across South East London.

Still further potential lies in the proposed South London 'Crosslink' where rebuilding

the additional two platforms that once existed at Clapham High Street would enable Victoria-Orpington services to serve the area. The major benefit would be not just to supplement the Victoria- Dartford services but to offer, for the first time, fast cross-orbital links across South London to Herne Hill, West Dulwich and Bromley South, creating a South London 'Crosslink'. This would help achieve modal shift from car to rail particularly for school-run journeys, so alleviate congestion on the roads which are heavily used for South London commuting

(see diagram on page 2). New platforms at Clapham High Street and the new links generated would create a favourable Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) and be cheaper than either new tunnels or a new station at Brixton.

Lambeth Council is supportive of new platforms whilst Network Rail has stated it is supportive of Clapham High Street gaining Victoria services and plugging the gap caused when the South London Line was withdrawn.

**Nick Biskinis**  
Clapham Transport Users Group

## Superloop gets new numbers

Two of the three existing express bus routes were designated with 'X' numbers (the other is 607) and the new orbital Superloop routes were to be given the same treatment. But now, as part of the publicity for the new project, all are to be numbered 'SL'. The full list is as follows:

- SL1 - North Finchley to Walthamstow (X34)
- SL2 - Walthamstow Central to North Woolwich (X123)
- SL3 - Thamesmead to Bromley (X269)
- SL4 - Canary Wharf to Grove Park (X239)
- SL5 - Bromley to Croydon (X119)
- SL6 - Russell Square to West Croydon (X68)
- SL7 - Croydon to Heathrow Airport (X26)
- SL8 - Uxbridge to White City (607)
- SL9 - Heathrow Airport to Harrow (X140)
- SL10 - Harrow to North Finchley (X183).

The first route to be rebranded was SL8 on 15th July.



SL8 at Uxbridge

## SWITCHING TO SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT IN OUTER LONDON



**It is well established that there is more car use in outer than in inner London and the reasons are not hard to find.**

A report from Centre for London shows that 38 per cent of journeys in outer London are by car compared with 19 per cent in inner London. The report goes on to list ways in which this disparity might be reduced.

Repurposing roads to make them more accessible for cycling and walking is one way but local authorities are hampered by lack of funds not only to implement schemes but to navigate the inefficient and time consuming application process.

The report also advocates encouragement of shared transport schemes

including club cars and bike hire.

Improved public transport inevitably features. There is praise for TfL's proposed Superloop but more bus priority schemes are necessary. The report says that public transport access and cycling and walking infrastructure should be implemented in new developments before or during construction so that new residents could see in advance that it is possible to move around without needing a car. Early use of developer funding should be used for this.

The report mentions rail transport and urges that more should be done to improve frequencies and reliability of train services,

but the possibility of building more lines is recognised as being very expensive. There are of course some possibilities such as the West London orbital line and there could be other orbital rail possibilities given imagination and funds.

The report suggests that decisions on transport investment are largely based on the economic gains from business and commuter travel. It suggests that developments in travel, particularly after Covid, might put more weight on other transport uses such as hospital visits, shopping and leisure trips, and that this might help shift the emphasis from radial to orbital journeys.

# SAFER HGVs

New rules by TfL are requiring all goods vehicles over 12 tonnes to have a three-star rating or fit a Progressive Safe System (PSS) to ensure that drivers have a sufficient view of cyclists and pedestrians.

Changes include Camera Monitoring Systems (CMS) which will be fitted in place of mirrors and audio warnings to ensure vehicles have the ability to warn of an intended manoeuvre. The system is designed to eliminate any remaining blind spots on the passenger side. Moving Off Information Systems (MOIS) have to be fitted to 'prevent collisions at the frontal blind spot zone when a vehicle moves off from rest', said TfL.

The changes will strengthen the present Direct Vision Standard (DVS), HGV Safety Permits Scheme and the Safe System. TfL said that fatal collisions where vision is a factor have fallen by 75 per cent since the introduction of DVS in the capital in March 2021.



**The legal challenge against the extension of the Ultra Low Emission Zone by the boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Harrow and Hillingdon and Surrey County Council was dismissed. Mayor Sadiq Khan said the judgement was a 'landmark decision' and the extension to the GLA boundary will therefore take place on 29<sup>th</sup> August.**

The unexpected Tory win in the Uxbridge and South Ruislip byelection was widely put down to the unpopularity of the ULEZ expansion. It is certainly true that a huge amount of anti-ULEZ invective had been pumped out by the right-wing press, including the Evening Standard which opined that people in outer London don't believe that air quality is a problem. The Labour candidate, Danny Beales, responding to this pressure, said that he thought implementation should be postponed and Labour leader Keir Starmer called on the Mayor to 'reflect' on the Mayor's decision to go ahead. Tory mayoral candidate, Susan Hall, said she would axe the expansion 'on day one', despite

the fact that it was initially a plan proposed by Boris Johnson when he was Mayor. The furore continues as the prime minister declares he is 'on the side of motorists' and has ordered a review of low traffic neighbourhoods.

The level of compensation for people who have difficulty in finding the money to replace non-compliant vehicles was a factor which opponents seized upon. This was originally only available to people on benefit but, to sugar the pill, will now be extended to anyone - £2,000 for a car and more for sole-traders who need to replace vans and for charities which need to replace mini buses. Grant to replace a wheelchair-accessible vehicle

is to be doubled.

It is unfortunate that the byelection happened just at the time when people were likely to be most anxious about the effects of the change, although for 90 per cent of car owners and, of course, all non-car owners, the only affect will be better air quality.

Experience with the Congestion Zone and the initial imposition of ULEZ to the North and South Circular roads suggests that opposition dies down after a while and people are generally supportive. It's certainly necessary that moves to reduce air pollution and reduce the attraction of private motoring continue if we are to have any chance of keeping the earth habitable.

### One day travel cards

The decision of the Mayor to scrap the one-day travel card has been met with outrage by many campaigners. The travel card enables passengers to buy a ticket covering all transport systems in London; either for zones 1 and 2, or 1 to 6. It can be purchased by cash or by card. It can be bought as an add-on to a rail ticket to London from outside the GLA area. Despite the outrage TfL is to stop selling the travelcards in January 2024 unless TfL can find someone to cover the costs.

The alternative is to use an Oyster card or a contactless card. Using a card accumulates costs as you travel up to a maximum which is at present £14.90 for zones 1 to 6. (A day travel card costs £15.20.)

The problems are that Oysters are not that suitable for someone who wants to travel in London for only one day, and using cards requires passengers to have a bank account. Young people cannot access reduced fares unless they have a Zip Oyster card which requires a photo and a wait of 28 days to obtain it. Although travel cards allow discounts for young or disabled people to be applied, the alternatives do not. Additionally many overseas visitors would have to pay more to use their bank cards if their bank charges them for making payments in the UK. The forthcoming closure of most ticket offices will make the situation worse.

TfL is desperate to save money to comply with the government's demands and it is estimated that scrapping the one-day travel card would save £40 million per year, but at the cost of inconveniencing many vulnerable people and possibly putting them off travelling by public transport at all.

### London TravelWatch Survey - Southeastern Timetables

After Southeastern imposed reduced timetables from 11<sup>th</sup> December 2022 without prior consultation (reported in Newsletter 47), London TravelWatch commissioned a survey to which 528 passengers responded in March 2023.

Eighty-two per cent said that Southeastern should consult passengers before timetable changes. Other results were mixed: those on the Hayes line had the most positive reaction to the new timetables; those on the Bexleyheath line the most negative. Having to change additionally at Lewisham or London Bridge and/or having longer journeys clearly caused discontent as did levels of crowding at London Bridge <https://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/publication/southeastern-timetable-changes-passenger-research-results/>

No formal consultation preceded Southeastern's summer timetables from 21<sup>st</sup> May, either, but complaints were addressed with 29 additional trains every Monday to Friday, and 34 additional trains on Saturdays. Twenty-five trains each weekday now have more carriages. There is now an hourly direct off-peak service to Charing Cross every weekday and on Saturdays on the Bexleyheath line and additional peak services on weekdays on the Sidcup line.

### Silvertown Tunnel

Greenwich Council, along with Southwark, Hackney and Lewisham, have for a long time been opposed to the Silvertown Tunnel. They say that TfL's claim that the new tunnel will virtually eliminate traffic congestion in Blackwall

Tunnel is unlikely to materialise even if both tunnels are tolled. Greenwich Council have now asked that the tunnels be repurposed in favour of active travel and public transport. The present plans exclude cycling and, initially, only two bus routes are planned, only one of which would include stops near the tunnel entrances.

Mayor Sadiq Khan in a vigorous support for the tunnel described his opponents as 'living in never-never land'. He says the tunnel is essential to relieve congestion and thereby to reduce air pollution. He also pointed out that the original Blackwall Tunnel with its sudden bends and narrow dimensions is inadequate for modern standards and causes horrendous delays for the buses on route 108 which use it.

### Lessons from the Croydon tram crash

That somebody should be called to account for the death of seven people in the Croydon tram crash of November 2016 is indisputable. Whether the chief culprit should be Alfred Dorris, the driver, is not so clear. He has now been acquitted of the charge of failing to take reasonable care at work. Understandably relatives of those who died were disappointed at the verdict but the trial hid the real failings of TfL and Tram Operations Ltd who have now between them been fined £14m.

This was not the first time that drivers had taken this sharp 90° turn above the 20km/h limit. Although the turn is immediately after a tunnel in which the maximum permitted speed is 80km/h warning signs were inadequate and there was no system alerting drivers to over-speeding. There was no automatic braking system although, in 2019, it was an-

nounced that such a system would be fitted at vulnerable sites.

A possible factor was driver fatigue exacerbated by the alleged onerous shift patterns. An in-cab driver protection device that detects and prevents fatigue and distraction has been trialled and is now fitted to all of the network's trams despite initial misgivings by ASLEF, the drivers' union.

### DLR to Thamesmead

The proposed extension of Docklands Light Railway under the Thames to Thamesmead is progressing with an outline business case having been submitted to the government in June.

The proposal is for a line to branch off from the Beckton line just after Gallions Reach. The first stop would be at Beckton Riverside where a major housing development is planned alongside Gallions Reach Shopping Park and on the site of a former gas works. 38,600 new homes are planned and 55,800 new jobs.

The line would then continue under the river to a stop at Thamesmead town centre where a 197-acre undeveloped site west of the town centre known as Thamesmead Waterfront has 1.2 miles of Thames frontage and, together with derelict land between here and Woolwich Arsenal, is a major site for future homes.

Although this line would hugely improve transport links for Thamesmead connections to the north it would still leave unsatisfactory links to nearby areas and particularly to the tantalisingly close Elizabeth Line. A bus rapid-transit route is therefore being proposed linking Thamesmead with the Elizabeth Line stations at Abbey Wood and Woolwich using dedicated infrastructure.