

<p>London TravelWatch</p> <p>Proposed closure of King's Cross Thameslink station and parts of the railway network at Blackfriars station and London Bridge station.</p>	
<p>Minutes of the Sub-committee held on 7 March 2006 at Museum of London, London Wall, London, EC2Y 5HN at 13:30pm</p>	

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Minutes of the King's Cross Thameslink station and parts of the railway network at Blackfriars station and London Bridge station closures Sub-committee: held on 7 March 2006 at Museum of London, London Wall, London, EC2Y 5HN at 13:30pm

Present

Katrina Hide	Chairman of the Sub-committee
Charlie King	Member of the Sub-committee
Gail Engert	Member of the Sub-committee
Rufus Barnes	London TravelWatch, Chief Executive
Vincent Stops	London TravelWatch, Streets and Surface Transport Policy Officer
Mark Papworth	Network Rail
Roger Cooper	Network Rail
Phil McKenna	London Underground Limited
Peter Nelson	Network Rail
Neil Anderson	London Borough of Hackney
Norman Wimbourne	Member of the public

Plus others in the public gallery

1. Chairman's opening remarks

- 1.1 The Chairman opened the meeting at 13:30pm by introducing the Sub-committee and Officers. She told the meeting that London TravelWatch had been asked by the Department for Transport to produce a supplementary report to update the original report it produced into these closure proposals in 2000. The Chairman emphasised that the hearing related to the closures and was not to be a re-run of the Transport and Works Act (TWA) process.
- 1.2 The Chairman asked that it be recorded that member, Gail Engert, was a councillor on the London Borough of Haringey Council.
- 1.3 The Chairman asked Network Rail to start the meeting with their presentation.

2. Presentation from Network Rail

- 2.1 Mr Papworth introduced himself as an employee of Network Rail responsible for the development and promotion of the Thameslink 2000 project. He introduced his team: Roger Cooper also from Network Rail's Thameslink 2000 project team and Phil McKenna from London Underground Limited.
- 2.2 Mr Cooper addressed the Sub-committee. Bringing members up to date on the procedural and other developments since the Committee had last considered this issue in 2000.
- 2.3 He outlined the support that the project had received from the TWA Inspector and from the Secretary of State, but also the three 'deficiencies' referred to in the Inspector's report.

- 2.4 He described the project and its objectives, which remained broadly the same as they were in 2000.
- 2.5 To address the three 'deficiencies' identified by the TWA Inspector the London Bridge 'Masterplan' has been adopted by the project and new planning applications had been applied for at Borough Market and Blackfriars station.
- 2.6 These had all been considered at the recently closed TWA inquiry.
- 2.7 Mr Cooper went on to assure members that although it was for Government to decide how Thameslink 2000 would be financed Network Rail is able to fund it themselves through borrowings.
- 2.8 He then outlined the principal features of the project:
- 24 trains per hour through the core area, 18 via London Bridge station.
 - mostly 12 carriage trains.
 - a connection to the East Coast Main Line.
 - The removal of bottlenecks that cause reliability problems.
 - a new station at King's Cross.
 - a rebuilt station at Blackfriars and a re-modelled bridge.
 - a rebuilt London Bridge station.
- 2.9 He described why King's Cross Thameslink station needed to close:
- It was recognised as a sub-standard station with no opportunity to extend the platforms to take 12 carriages
 - the platforms are narrow, there is a lack of fire escapes and it is not Disability Discrimination Act compliant.
 - A new station at St Pancras Midland Road would call into question the need to continue to operate King's Cross Thameslink station.
 - Network Rail doubted whether they would get dispensation from Her Majesties Railway Inspectorate to operate with selective door opening.
 - Operating King's Cross Thameslink station as well as the new St Pancras Midland Road station would compromise their ability to run 24 trains per hour as they planned.
- 2.10 Mr Cooper described the access arrangements to the Underground, the locality and interchange with bus services.
- 2.11 If closure is allowed Network Rail would want to retain emergency access as would London Underground Limited. It would, in principle, be possible to retain the street level entrance to King's Cross Thameslink station as a passenger entrance to the Underground.
- 2.12 Phil McKenna of London Underground Limited said that they were keen to have the possibility of an entrance at Pentonville Road, but that they would have to conduct passenger counts, which they were doing that day. He noted that at present neither London Underground Limited, nor Transport for London had a budget for any of the works that would be necessary.

- 2.13 London Underground Limited stated that they supported the Committee's recommendation in its 2000 report regarding access to the Underground via the pedestrian subway from Pentonville Road.
- 2.14 Mr Cooper then moved on to describe the proposals at Blackfriars station. Both the Network Rail and Underground stations would be virtually rebuilt to include step free access. The platforms on Blackfriars bridge would be extended across the river and a new station entrance built on the south bank of the river Thames.
- 2.15 The three terminating platforms would be reduced to two and relocated to the west of the station. The two through platforms would be relocated to the east side of the station. This would maintain operational capacity, but remove the bottleneck created by the 'at-grade' junction south of Blackfriars station for Thameslink services via London Bridge.
- 2.16 Mr Papworth described the proposals for London Bridge station. Instead of the six existing through platforms there would be nine. Instead of the nine terminating platforms there would be six.
- 2.17 There will be an additional pair of tracks through the Borough Market area so separating Charing Cross trains from Thameslink trains.
- 2.18 Additionally Network Rail now propose to build London Bridge 'Masterplan', which essentially rebuilds London Bridge station and locates the entrances, interchange and concourse areas at street level, below the existing station and connecting all platforms via a mezzanine level.
- 2.19 Mr Papworth then described how the track layout around London Bridge would be simplified and streamlined. He described the layout of the proposed design for London Bridge station and how passengers would access the various platforms.
- 2.20 Mr Papworth outlined the economic case for the Thameslink 2000 project. Network Rail now believed the case for Thameslink 2000 is stronger than in 2000 and the cost to benefit ratio had improved on the basis of their new analysis.

3 Public contributions

- 3.1 Members of the public were invited to speak. The Sub-committee heard first from Mr Wimbourne, a member of the public.
- 3.2 Mr Wimbourne made suggestions for alternative railway projects; expressed concern about the closure of the Metropolitan Spur railway line and suggested that there was a need for more capacity at Blackfriars station.
- 3.3 The Chief Executive told the Sub-committee that since the Metropolitan Spur had no scheduled passenger train services its closure was not covered by the closure legislation.
- 3.3 Mr Anderson of the London Borough of Hackney made three points:
- i) The London Borough of Hackney was concerned regarding the loss of a very efficient interchange between bus routes from Hackney and King's Cross Thameslink station;

- ii) His council wished to see the retention of King's Cross Thameslink station after the opening of St Pancras Midland Road station;
- iii) They sought mitigation of the increased walking distances by the provision of much better information.

4 Response by Network Rail and London Underground to points raised by the public and in discussion with members.

- i) Network Rail told the Sub-committee that it was also their understanding that the closure of the Metropolitan Spur was a minor closure;
- ii) They believed the capacity of the platforms they were proposing for Blackfriars was appropriate for the number of trains that would use the station in the future as a result of the Thameslink 2000 project and existing services.

4.1 Responding to members questions, Paul Fleet, of Network Rail told members that it would not be possible to retain the Metropolitan Spur.

4.2 The Chief Executive asked why the crossover arrangement, south of Blackfriars had been left as it was now. He suggested that as the orientation of the terminating and through lines had been reversed then it may be helpful, in terms of managing train failure etc, to have additional crossovers that allowed terminating trains to be diverted onto the through lines.

4.3 Network Rail responded that there is in fact no room to install such additional crossovers which are particularly problematical to install on elevated steel sections of railway.

5 Late objections

5.1 The Secretariat was asked to report any late objection letters it had received that members were unaware of.

5.2 The Secretariat also explained that there had been a misunderstanding by some objectors regarding the King's Cross Thameslink station closure. Some objectors had not understood that a replacement station (St Pancras Midland Road) was proposed. The Secretariat had written to all these objectors to clarify the position and invite further comment.

5.3 Members were content that these letters raised no new points.

5.4 The Secretariat also distributed a letter from Network Rail providing a late response to some of the points raised by the Committee and objectors.

6 Sub-committee Document B: Background to the closure, the Committee's duties, procedure and closure notices

6.1 The Secretariat then took members through Document B which described the background to the closure, the Committee's duties, procedure and closure notices.

7 Sub-committee Document C: Issues raised by objectors and the Committee

- 7.1 The Secretariat took members through Document C. This outlined the issues raised by objectors and the Committee and reported Network Rail's responses to the summary of these issues which the Secretariat had produced.
- 7.2 The Secretariat apologised that paragraph 2.3 (and later paragraph 8.2) of paper C had been mistakenly inserted. Members were asked to ignore these.
- 7.3 Members were informed that London Underground Limited was undertaking counts of passenger numbers using the Pentonville road subway entrance to the Underground.
- 7.4 Members asked if the survey results could be made available promptly to inform members regarding their recommendation about the subway entrance.
- 7.5 Paul Fleet, of Network Rail, told members about the issue of the uni-directional section of track between Blackfriars station and London Bridge station. Network Rail believed that effectively replacing this with two tracks, although uni-directionally signalled would be satisfactory to operate the railway even in the event of a breakdown. To install bi-directional signalling would not be good value for money. Members accepted this.
- 7.6 Members considered that there were no new issues relating to London Blackfriars and London Bridge stations.
- 7.7 Members were advised by the Chief Executive that the new St Pancras Midland Road station was being built under powers in the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Act and as such details of the design are outwith consideration under this closure process.

8 Consideration of the 2000 Committee report into the King's Cross Thameslink station closure

8.1 It should be noted that in the Committee's considerations in 1999 and 2000 two separate Sub-committees dealt with these closures and produced separate reports. One considered the King's Cross Thameslink station closure, the other considered the closure of parts of the network at London Bridge and Blackfriars stations.

8.2 Members considered each of the issues, conclusions and recommendations made in the 2000 reports and decided whether to vary, delete or retain them. Please note: The numbers in the text in square [] brackets refer to the headings and paragraphs in the original 2000 reports that were discussed by members. Paragraphs and headings taken from the 2000 reports are inset.

8.3 Importance of one or other station being available [5.2]

Members wished to retain the Committee's recommendation [5.3] in its 2000 report requiring St Pancras Midland Road to be opened simultaneously (or before) the closure of King's Cross Thameslink station.

8.4 Adequacy of the SPMR box [5.6]

Members supported the retention of this commentary.

8.5 Alternative schemes [5.7]

Members supported the retention of this commentary.

8.6 Interchange: general comments [5.8]

The Committee accepted that their broad location had been approved by Parliament under the CTRL Act, and hence that they should be taken as a given.[5.8]

Members supported the retention of this commentary.

8.7 Interchange with other national rail network services [5.9]

There would be no hardship to these passengers. [5.9]

Members supported the retention of this commentary.

8.8 Access from easterly areas; Ease of interchange with LUL; Interchange with Euston Road and buses [5.10 to 5.25]

Members discussed recommendations [5.11,5.13,5.16,5.22 and 5.25] and agreed that all these were still pertinent and should therefore be retained.

8.9 The mall [5.28]

The Committee noted that access to the station mall would be restricted at night and so decided to retain recommendation [5.32].

8.10 Utility of the Pentonville Road entrance to the Underground [5.33]

London Underground Limited emphasised that they did not have the funding to modify King's Cross Thameslink station to Underground only use and that funding would be subject to Department for Transport agreement.

Members felt that the Pentonville Road subway entrance was particularly important for passengers and should be retained.

8.11 Retention of KXT [5.41]

Members felt that now the St Pancras Midland Road station box had been built, the fitting out of the station was progressing and passenger usage increasing recommendation [5.52] regarding the retention of King's Cross Thameslink station should be deleted.

8.12 Accessibility of SPMR [5.54]

The Committee noted, and welcomed, the assurance given by Railtrack that SPMR will be fully accessible. [5.54]

Members supported the retention of this commentary, but asked that the wording be brought up to date.

8.13 Implications for other stations [5.55]

The Committee was concerned to ensure that London Underground Limited could handle any such extra traffic that might occur. London Underground

Limited did not foresee capacity problems at any stations as a direct result solely of the closure of King's Cross Thameslink station [5.57]

Members supported the retention of this commentary.

8.14 Disruption during the blockade [5.58]

Members looked at recommendations [5.61, 5.63, 5.65, 5.68, 5.69, 5.73, 5.76, 5.77, 5.78, 5.80, 5.81 5.83 5.84] which dealt with the recent blockade associated with the construction of the St Pancras Midland Road station box. Members recognised that the recommendation had been overtaken by events as the station box had now been constructed.

Members considered the further works necessary to fit the station out. Although it was not a Network Rail project, Network Rail advised that they did not think these further works would require any blockade.

Members therefore agreed to delete recommendations [5.61, 5.63, 5.65, 5.68, 5.69, 5.71, 5.73, 5.76, 5.77, 5.78, 5.80, 5.81 5.83 5.84].

8.15 Revised arrangements after closure [5.85]

Members considered recommendation [5.86] regarding the operational responsibilities of London Underground Limited and Network Rail. Members believed this was still relevant, but that a new recommendation should be made combining this with the recommendation [5.40] regarding the Pentonville Road subway access to the Underground.

8.16 Ticketing arrangements [5.87]

Members believed that fares and ticketing arrangements should remain as if there had been no change of location of the King's Cross Thameslink station from Pentonville Road to Midland Road. Recommendation [5.88] should be retained.

8.17 Advertising of the closure proposals [6]

The Committee agreed that it should again comment about the poor quality of the closure notices as noted in Document B. The Chief Executive expressed particular disappointment that previous progress on this issue with the Strategic Rail Authority had been set aside by the Department for Transport. He noted the irony that this progress had followed a review proposed by a previous Transport Minister.

9 Consideration of the 2000 Committee report into the proposed closures of parts of the network at Blackfriars and London Bridge stations

9.1 The achievability of 24 trains per hour [5]

Members noted that the TWA Inspector had now reported and that he had considered operating 24 trains per hour was practicable; they concluded that the Committee had no reason to dispute this.

9.2 Possible design changes [6.5]

Members agreed that because the TWA Inspector had now reported and Government had indicated support for his conclusions then recommendation [6.8] should be deleted.

9.3 Costs of extra platforms (at Blackfriars) [6.9]

Members supported the retention of this commentary

A) Assuming that the 24tph service is achievable

9.4 Ability of the remaining terminating platforms to cope with the proposed timetable [6.11]

The Committee concluded that the terminating capacity would be adequate, and thus no hardship would arise from this issue. [6.14]

Members supported the retention of this commentary

9.5 Ability of the remaining terminating platforms to cope with disruption [6.15]

Members supported the retention of this commentary

9.6 Potential benefits of running more trains to Blackfriars during disruption [6.19]

Members accepted the view of Network Rail that the Committee's previous suggestion to implement bi-directional signalling between London Bridge and Blackfriars stations would not be good value for money and so proposed that recommendations [6.22, 6.23] be deleted.

9.7 Potential future changes in the relative balance of services between the two routes south of Blackfriars [6.24]

Members supported the retention of this commentary

9.8 Potential extra train services into London Bridge from the south [6.33]

The Committee concluded that there would be no hardship arising from this issue. [6.34]

Members supported the retention of this commentary

9.9 C Implications of arriving at different platforms at London Bridge [6.50]

Members welcomed London Bridge 'Masterplan'. It would much improve passenger interchange between terminating and through platforms.

9.10 D Disruption during works [6.53]

Members felt that recommendations [6.57, 6.58, 6.59, 6.61, 6.62], that dealt with disruption during works at Blackfriars station should be retained.

10 Further member discussion and Chairman's closing remarks

- 10.1 Members discussed the late objection from London Underground Limited regarding the access to the Underground via the Pentonville Road subway. Members assured themselves that they had dealt with this when looking at the previous recommendations regarding this issue [recorded as minute 8.10 above].
- 10.2 Members finally agreed to ask the Secretariat to produce a report and minutes which members would hopefully agree by correspondence, though a further meeting, may be necessary.