

Our Ref:
Your Ref:

20 April 2006

Derek Twigg MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department for Transport,
76 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DR

Dear Mr Twigg

Proposed closure of the Moorgate to Farringdon branch railway

I refer to your letter of 17 August, which asked London Transport Users Committee (now known as London TravelWatch) to again investigate the issues around the closures associated with the Thameslink 2000 project and to update the report that we produced for the Rail Regulator in 2000.

We have conducted this process in the spirit of the Railways Act 1993.

In accordance with Section 43 (3) (c) of the Railways Act 1993, as amended by Transport Acts 2000 and 2005, please find enclosed the Committee's reports on its hearings into the closure proposals.

I also enclose correspondence from objectors and others who wrote directly to us either on their own initiative or else prompted by us. All this correspondence has been considered by the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Cooke
Chairman

London TravelWatch
Report to the Secretary of State
under Section 43 (3) (c) of the Railways Act 1993, as amended by Transport Act 2000
and 2005

Proposed closure of the Moorgate to Farringdon branch railway

1 Background

London TravelWatch (formally the London Transport Users Committee) has investigated these proposals in 1999 and 2000 and reported on them to the then Rail Regulator on 1 September 2000. In August 2005 we were asked by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State to update these reports with a supplementary report. In doing this we have followed as closely as we can the 1993 Act. We have focussed, primarily, on new issues and changes since our last consideration taking account of the views of passengers who may not have taken part in our previous considerations. This report should be read in conjunction with the Committee's reports it submitted in 2000 as there are cross references to those.

2 The closure proposal

2.1 The closure proposals considered in this report are:

The closure of the Moorgate to Farringdon branch railway a short spur off of the main north to south Thameslink lines.

The closure of services between Moorgate and Farringdon stations,
all after 30 September 2008.

2.2 Please note the Committee has produced, separately, another report on the proposed closures at Kings Cross Thameslink, Blackfriars and London Bridge stations

2.3 The closure proposal is being promoted by Network Rail, the Department for Transport (in its successor role to the Strategic Rail Authority) and Thameslink Rail.

3 Procedural background

3.1 The Railways Act 1993, as amended by the Transport Acts 2000 establishes a procedure to be followed for closure proposals relating to the national rail network.

3.2 In respect of the proposals in question, the Committee is required (under section 43 (3) of the Railways Act 1993 as amended by the Transport Act 2000) to:

a) consider whether or not the proposed closure will cause any hardship;

- b) identify any reasonable means of alleviating any such hardship; and
 - c) prepare, and send to the Secretary of State, a report of the conclusions which it has reached in the discharge of its functions under paragraphs (a) and (b) above.
- 3.3 For the purposes of (b) above, the Committee is required not to conclude that any particular means of alleviating hardship is reasonable unless, balancing the cost to the public purse of employing those means against the benefit of any alleviation thereby secured, the Committee is of the opinion, on the basis of the information supplied to it, that the expenditure involved represents good value for money.
- 3.4 The Committee may, however, do more than is legally required of it. It may, for example, recommend conditions that the Secretary of State should attach to any closure consent; recommend steps that should be taken by operators, Network Rail, the Department for Transport or any other parties; or recommend steps that should be taken by any parties who are found likely to experience hardship.

4 Receipt of representations

- 4.1 Under the statutory closure procedures, objections to the closure proposals are to be sent to the Secretary of State, who must consider them. However, the Secretary of State must also send copies of the objections to the Committee. Because the Committee has a general duty to consider all the information it receives, it ought to consider the objections too.
- 4.2 A period of eight weeks was allowed for objections (extended to nine weeks to include the Christmas period). The Committee took into account all representations received, whether or not they were 'duly made' within the stated time limits.
- 4.3 Representations received up to 13 January 2006 were summarised, and the summary sent to Network Rail, the Department for Transport and Thameslink Rail. This summary and the Network Rail's responses were included in a report to members. We received no response from the Department for Transport, nor Thameslink Rail.
- 4.4 It should be noted that the Department for Transport has recognised that it is acting in a dual role as decision maker and promoter of the closures and has sought to separate its roles. A different section of the Department for Transport is dealing with each function.
- 4.5 The Secretariat has made no administrative distinction between 'duly made' objections and those which arrived after the deadline apart from being short of time to get a written response from Network Rail and the other promoters.
- 4.6 153 representations were made before the Committee report was written, however 18 have been simply requests for information. 83 directly mention Farringdon to Moorgate issues. Objections that arrived after the Sub-committee reports were written were considered at the Sub-committee meeting as detailed below.
- 4.7 All those making representation were invited to attend the Sub-committee's meeting.
- 4.8 The Committee is not bound to take *only* the objections into account when reaching its conclusions; indeed the Committee is under a general duty to take into account all the relevant information it receives. The Committee also considered issues that it has

identified for itself but have not been mentioned in the representations. Members also asked for further information at the Sub-committee meeting.

5 The Committee's consideration of the proposals

- 5.1 As allowed for in statute, and in accordance with the Committee's Rules of Procedure, a Sub-committee was appointed to deal with the Moorgate to Farringdon branch railway closure proposal on behalf of the Committee.
- 5.2 The Sub-committee met at 10:00am on 3 March 2006 at the Museum of London, London Wall, London EC2Y 5HN.
- 5.3 Members of the Sub-committee were supplied with copies of all the representations received.
- 5.4 The Secretariat produced an agenda including notes on how the Sub-committee would conduct the meeting.
- 5.5 The Secretariat produced three further substantive documents, detailing the background and the Sub-committee's duties, reporting new issues raised by objectors and itself and a summary of the issues, conclusions and recommendations taken from the Committee's 2000 report.
- 5.6 The Minutes of the meeting are attached as Annex 1. This report should be read in conjunction with the minutes and with the documents considered by members at the Sub-committee meeting. It should also be read in conjunction with the Committee's 2000 reports.
- 5.7 The Committee has also forwarded to the Secretary of State correspondence that the Sub-committee received directly from objectors.
- 5.8 An audio recording and transcript of the meeting were made.

6 Update on the Issues, Conclusions and Recommendations of the 2000 report

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

6.3 The achievability of 24 trains per hour [Chapter 5]

Previously the Committee had not taken a view on the achievability of 24 trains per hour, but had said that it would accept the Transport and Works (TWA) Inspector's view on this issue. The Inspector has now reported that he believed that "consistent operation of the core at a throughput of 24tph would be achievable".

The Committee has no reason to dispute the Inspector's conclusion that 24 trains per hour is achievable

6.4 Possible design changes [6.3]

Previously the Committee recommended:

Any consent to either closure proposal should be conditional on the TWA powers being granted, and on no changes to the proposal being required that were material to the possible effects of the closures.[6.6]

The Committee withdraws this recommendation. It accepts that although the TWA powers have not yet formerly been granted the Inspector's report has been published and accepted by Government. Only three deficiencies were identified, none of which could reasonably be expected to lead to any significant design changes affecting this closure proposal.

6.5 Ability to get a seat on Thameslink trains in the evening peak [8.7]

Previously the Committee recommended:

Some hardship would be caused during the period from withdrawal of Moorgate branch services to the start of the full Thameslink 2000 service, by virtue of passengers from Moorgate having to stand in the evening peak on very crowded Thameslink trains. [8.13]

The Committee wishes to slightly amend this recommendation to read:

Some hardship might be caused during the period from withdrawal of Moorgate branch services to the start of the full Thameslink 2000 service, by virtue of passengers from Moorgate having to stand in the evening peak on possibly very crowded Thameslink trains.

6.6 Use of LUL trains between Farringdon and Barbican or Moorgate [8.15]

Previously the Committee had been concerned about crowding on Underground services between Farringdon and Moorgate stations, particularly during periods of perturbation and had said:

If passenger levels on LUL trains between Farringdon and Moorgate exceeded LUL's Planning Guideline Capacity, hardship would be caused to passengers on those trains by virtue of the heavily crowded conditions.

Hardship would be caused at times when the LUL service between Farringdon and Moorgate was suspended for short periods, by virtue of the level of crowding that would be experienced by passengers on the trains once the service resumed.

However, we now know that there is to be increased capacity on Underground services between Farringdon and Moorgate stations that will deliver more passenger capacity and as such the Committee wished to restate this concern, but also recognise that there would be increased passenger capacity in the future.

Interchanging with LUL or with the street at Farringdon

6.7 The fact of interchange [8.26]

At the original hearings many passengers told the Committee that interchange was an inconvenience. The report noted:

the Committee believes that interchange *per se* is not an unacceptable or unduly difficult facet of rail travel, and for this reason believes that no hardship would accrue, as a general principle, on that basis.

The Committee continues to support this principle in its considerations.

6.8 A crowded interchange? [8.27]

In the Committee's original consideration, the issue of crowding and interchange at Farringdon station was the Committee's major concern. Several recommendations were made:

Any closure consent should be made conditional on the proposed design of Farringdon station having unreserved support from LUL for a planning period significantly beyond 2011. [8.34]

modelling of Farringdon at the central demand forecast and 20% above

If demand is at or around the level of the Central Demand Forecast, hardship may be caused to any or all passengers using Farringdon station, by virtue of the level of crowding that would be experienced and the effects of managing that crowding. [8.44]

the Committee's views on Farringdon

Hardship would be caused to passengers using Farringdon station, by virtue of the level of crowding at that station that would frequently be caused by delays to the LUL service. [8.52]

There is a substantial likelihood of hardship being caused to passengers using Farringdon station, by virtue of the demand there exceeding the forecast by more than the station can adequately accommodate. The extent and timing of this hardship would depend on the level and distribution of this additional demand, its timing, and the flexibility of the station design. [8.57]

combination of factors

The hardships identified above would be compounded if they occurred in combination. [8.59]

In the Committee's previous consideration the Committee had been concerned that London Underground Limited (the station operator at Farringdon) had not given unreserved support for the station design and its capacity to handle the numbers of passengers expected to use the station. The Committee considered that there may be severe crowding at Farringdon, particularly when train services were delayed. The Committee felt a much more substantial station should be built at Farringdon as part of the Thameslink 2000 project.

However at our recent hearing members were pleased to hear that Railtrack (the predecessor to Network Rail) had responded to these concerns. They had proposed to the original TWA hearing in October 2000 (after publication of the Committee's reports) a new design for the interchange bridge for Farringdon station. This new design would increase the capacity for interchange between platforms.

They also noted and that London Underground Limited are now much more supportive of the proposals in terms of their ability to handle the number of passengers forecast to use the station. The London Underground Limited representative told the hearing: "We are now confident that Farringdon will work".

The Committee is now satisfied that Farringdon station would have the capacity to cater for forecast demand and so were happy to withdraw recommendations [8.34, 8.44, 8.52, 8.57 and 8.59].

6.9 Other factors affecting the station [8.60]

In the 2000 report the Committee was concerned that it had been proposed to remove some of the seating on the platforms at Farringdon in order to increase the space for passengers waiting and circulating. The report said:

Hardship would be caused, particularly to passengers with low-frequency services and to passengers with limited mobility, by the absence of seating at Farringdon station. [8.62]

The Committee remains concerned that seating would be removed in order to increase circulation space in the station. The Committee is concerned regarding the amount of clutter (vending machines in particular) on the station platforms. The Committee wants assurance that unnecessary clutter would be removed in the first instance and seating should be retained if at all possible. The Sub-Committee asked Network Rail to consider this and write to the Committee, but they have said that this is a matter for the Train Operating Company. The Committee wish to retain this recommendation and to ask that a condition be imposed that requires other superfluous clutter to be removed from platforms where necessary to increase capacity before seating is removed.

The Committee amends this recommendation to read:

Hardship would be caused, particularly to passengers with low-frequency services and to passengers with limited mobility, by the absence of seating at Farringdon station. The Secretary of State should apply a condition to insist that unnecessary platform clutter should be removed in the first instance and in preference to the removal of passenger seating.

6.10 Ways of coping with the demand [8.64]

In 2000 the Committee believed that Farringdon station would need to have subsequent works to accommodate additional demand after the original project works. Therefore the Committee recommended:

Hardship would be caused if further rebuilding work were necessary at Farringdon when demand exceeded the ability of the station to cope with it. This is likely to occur. It would be greater hardship than if the work were to be carried out sooner, at the time of the proposed rebuilding. [8.69]

The Committee is now satisfied that Farringdon station would have the capacity to cater for forecast demand and are happy to remove this recommendation.

6.11 Alleviation of hardship [8.71]

The 2000 report said:

The hardship caused by the conditions for passengers using Farringdon station would be substantially alleviated by the adoption of a more fundamental and robust redesign for the station. [To be carried out by Railtrack as a revision to the scheme design.] [8.75]

The Committee believes that there is a major public policy issue about whether transport schemes such as this should be planned on an incremental approach, or whether they should give the longer-term situation more weight. The Committee is firmly in favour of the latter approach, on the basis that (as experience on major rail projects has shown) failure to plan for the long-term is a false economy. [8.76]

The Committee is now satisfied that Farringdon station would have the capacity to cater for forecast demand and so are content to remove recommendation [8.75] and the associated text [8.76]. However, members sought reassurance that the station lifts would be adequate and that Farringdon station would conform with the latest disability discrimination legislation. Network Rail have provided the Committee with assurances that are accepted.

6.12 Use of the LUL route to Moorgate: time penalty [8.77]

In the Committee's original consideration, the issue of crowding and interchange at Farringdon station was the Committee's major concern and this would also have added to journey times. The Committee felt that this was avoidable if Farringdon station was of an adequate design to cater for demand. The report recommended:

Hardship will be caused by virtue of the increased journey time for passengers, particularly to commuters returning to the north in the evening peak. [8.88]

This hardship would be alleviated by the adoption of a more suitably capacious and robust design for the station, as considered above. [8.89]

The Committee is now satisfied that Farringdon station would have the capacity to cater for forecast demand and therefore are happy to remove recommendations [8.88 and 8.89].

6.13 Fares [8.90]

In our previous considerations the Committee agreed with objectors that passengers should not have to pay additional fares because of the closure of their services and recommended that there should be a condition imposed to protect existing passengers to protect the ticket price they pay. The Committee recommended:

Any closure consent should be made conditional on no fares for any journey rising through the need to use the Underground rather than Thameslink to reach (or start from) Barbican or Moorgate. [8.93]

Any closure consent should be made conditional on any current users of the Moorgate branch who originate from points north, and for whom City Thameslink, Blackfriars and London Bridge would be reasonable alternatives, being able to have their ticket prices to those stations protected (for a limited period) from any increase in fares to those stations, compared to fares to Barbican or Moorgate. [8.94]

The Committee wish to retain recommendations [8.93 and 8.94], but also to modify [8.94] to take out any reference to a time limit. The new recommendation is amended to remove '(for a limited period)' and read:

Any closure consent should be made conditional on any current users of the Moorgate branch who originate from points north, and for whom City Thameslink, Blackfriars and London Bridge would be reasonable alternatives, being able to have their ticket prices to those stations protected from any increase in fares to those stations, compared to fares to Barbican or Moorgate.

6.14 Accessibility [8.95]

In 2000 the Committee said:

The Committee believes that the step-free nature of Farringdon, albeit by a rather long and circuitous route for some movements, will mitigate this problem. There would be inconvenience, but no hardship. However, it is a further reason why a more fundamental rebuilding of Farringdon station is desirable. [8.97]

The issue of accessibility was reviewed by the Committee in the light of new disability discrimination legislation. Network Rail were asked to confirm that the station design complied with new standards. Network Rail confirmed that this was the case and that the capacity of the lifts proposed were of adequate size.

6.15 Conclusion on the closure proposal as a whole [8.98]

The 2000 reports main conclusion again referred to the inadequacies of the station design insofar as its ability to cope with forecast passenger demand. The report recommended:

Any closure consent should be made conditional on Farringdon station being rebuilt to a design that addresses, to the Regulator's satisfaction, the hardships likely to be caused by the closure and the requirements of a railway designed for the future. [8.102]

The Committee is now satisfied that Farringdon station would have the capacity to cater for forecast demand and therefore are happy to remove recommendation [8.102].

6.16 Safeguarding the corridor [8.1-3]

In our 2000 report our main concern was to ensure the track bed between Farringdon and Moorgate stations remained within the railway industry. The report recommended:

Any closure consent should be made conditional on the vacated trackbed remaining within the railway industry, for future transport use as necessary. [8.102]

To take account of the objection from London Underground Limited the Committee agreed to retain this recommendation and add an additional recommendation to ensure that access to the abandoned track bed was secured both at the stations and

more widely. The quality of the works at the stations should be of a high quality. The Committee is clear that wooden hoardings, or similar, would not be an appropriate long term solution. It is recommended that an additional condition be made:

Any closure consent should be made conditional on Network Rail implementing works to secure access to the vacated track bed both at the stations and elsewhere to prevent unauthorised access. The designs and materials etc to implement this condition should be of a high quality and be to the satisfaction of London Underground Limited, particularly at their Moorgate and Barbican stations.

The Committee noted that part of the track bed may be required as a temporary construction site for the Crossrail project.

6.17 Conclusions and recommendations: assuming that the 24 trains per hour service is not now achievable. [Chapter 9]

The 2000 report recommended:

Any closure consent should be made conditional on the TWA inspector being satisfied that the proposed 24 trains per hour service is likely to be achieved in practice. [9.9]

This recommendation is withdrawn – see paragraph 6.3.

6.18 Conclusions and recommendations: disruption during works [Chapter 10]

The 2000 report made five recommendations regarding the disruption that would be caused by construction works:

Hardship would be caused to the displaced Moorgate passengers between the closure date and the introduction of Thameslink 2000 services, by virtue of having to interchange at Farringdon with construction work in progress, without the benefit of the improved facilities there, and without the benefit of the more comfortable Thameslink service by way of compensation. [10.8]

Hardship would be caused to the other users of Farringdon station between the closure date and the introduction of Thameslink 2000 services, by virtue of having the displaced Moorgate passengers additionally using the station with construction work in progress, without the benefit of the improved facilities there, and without the benefit of the more comfortable Thameslink service by way of compensation. [10.9]

Particular hardship would be caused to
(a) the displaced Moorgate passengers, and
(b) the other users of Farringdon station,
if any part of the SPMR blockade occurs after the closure took place. This would be due to the extra pressure on the station during that period. [10.10]

The hardship would be ameliorated by planning in order to mitigate the disruption as far as reasonably possible. The planning should take place before construction works begin, in order to avoid problems rather than treat them reactively once they happen. [To be carried out by Railtrack and the

train and station operators concerned, at an early stage in the detailed planning of the works.][10.11]

Any closure consent should be made conditional on the Regulator being satisfied that an adequate strategy is in place to manage passenger flows at Farringdon, and passengers who could usefully avoid the area, during the various stages of construction work and the different train service patterns at various stages. This strategy should particularly address passenger information, accessibility, personal security, staffing and ticketing issues. [10.12]

The Committee still supports these recommendations, but now believes the final recommendation (reworded to take account of the changes in the responsibilities in the railway industry) would be sufficient. The Committee therefore withdraws recommendations [10.8, 10.9, 10.10, 10.11 and 10.12] and recommends:

Any closure consent should be made conditional on the Secretary of State being satisfied that an adequate strategy is in place to manage passenger flows at Farringdon station, and passengers who could usefully avoid the area, during the various stages of construction work and the different train service patterns at various stages. This strategy should particularly address passenger information, accessibility, personal security, staffing and ticketing issues.

6.19 Conclusions and recommendations: possible economic hardship [Chapter 11]

The Committee is content to leave the text that referred to possible economic hardship in the report without further comment.

6.20 Advertising of the closure proposals [Chapter 12]

The 2000 report recommended:

The current requirements for publicising closure proposals are inadequate. The industry and its regulators should consider how to improve on them – or, at least, improve on the steps taken in practice. [12.5]

The Committee was again disappointed regarding this aspect of the process. Particularly as a previous Department for Transport Minister had responded to concerns of the Committee following his receipt of the Committee's report into the Sheepcote Lane Curve closure proposal and had proposed that the Committee work with the Strategic Rail Authority to make improvement to the language and content of closure notices.

The Committee maintains that recommendation 12.5 should be retained and acted upon by all concerned in the industry.

7 Further new issues

- 7.1 The Committee supports the five recommendations of the City of London in its objection letter. In particular it supports the request that a condition be attached, should the closure proceed, that the Thameslink 2000 project be fully implemented.

- 7.2 The Committee wanted to ensure that the condition applied both to the infrastructure and the level of service and capacity as currently proposed in the central area. The Committee defines the central area as from St Pancras station to London Bridge / Elephant and Castle stations.
- 7.3 Three of the five recommendations are considered elsewhere in this report and so are not repeated here.
- 7.4 The Committee recommends:
- i) That consent for closures be made conditional upon the TWA order being made and funding identified to implement the full Thameslink 2000 project, Both infrastructure and the level of the level of service and capacity as currently proposed in the central area.**
 - ii) That consent for the closures be conditional upon the Moorgate branch not being closed until the necessary additional infrastructure is in place to allow those trains which currently terminate at Moorgate to pass south of Farringdon station to alternative destinations. This infrastructure to include enhanced power supply south of Farringdon station and increased functionality at Elephant and Castle station.**

Brian Cooke
Chairman

Rufus Barnes
Chief Executive