

MAJOR RAIL PROJECTS UPDATE

by John Hawkins

The TfL Rail and Underground Panel received a paper with the above name at its meeting on 5 July.

NORTHERN LINE EXTENSION

The extension to Battersea (see *Underground News* February 2011, page 84) seems to be back on track, with the administrators finding a new developer to continue the same Battersea approved scheme. TfL have continued progressing the NLE in the meantime with the aim of finalising consultation and funding by year-end. A Transport and Works Order could be submitted by April 2013, with construction starting in Spring 2016 for completion by 2020.

CROSSRAIL 2

In reviewing route safeguarding for the Chelsea Hackney Line, over a hundred options were considered leading to a revised route known as Crossrail 2 – *Underground News* February 2012, page 67. The more expensive regional scheme is the preferred option, but consideration is being given to providing the shorter metro scheme as an initial phase with later regional connections. The Mayor requested a report by year-end to enable safeguarding to be revised in 2013/14. Powers would not be sought before 2019, with permission expected by 2021 to allow construction to start in 2023 and the line to open by 2033. Construction of the Euston station box would be earlier as part of HS2 works (see below).

HIGH SPEED 2

The Government plans HS2 to reach from London to Birmingham by 2026, and beyond to Leeds and Manchester by 2033. The Mayor is concerned that plans for Euston should include provision for Crossrail 2 and other interchanges. Similarly, Old Oak Common should promote development and interchange including a new station for the West/North London Lines, whilst not prejudicing operation of Crossrail services and its depot. The link between HS2 and HS1 at Camden should not impact on North London Line capacity, and environmental impacts need to be minimised for west London residents.

The HS2 timescale is tight, with the initial design to be finalised by November for environmental assessment by March 2013, and Hybrid Bill submission in October 2013. Passenger interchange at Euston is expected to more than double once HS2 is completed, even though this estimate assumes almost a third of passengers use the Old Oak Common interchange. It is planned that Paddington Crossrail reversers will be extended to Old Oak Common, with provision for extension further westward in the longer term.

TRAMLINK

At the same meeting a paper about Tramlink performance and planning was tabled. The current system opened in May 2000 as a PFI but failed to reach its traffic projections, leading to its takeover by TfL in 2008. Frequencies were increased to four trams an hour, having previously been at times as low as two an hour. Passenger loadings have increased by more than a half over the years whilst kilometres operated have only grown by an eighth. The recent timetable required 22 of the original 24 Bombardier K4000 type trams, but six Stadler Variobahn trams were ordered in 2011 to boost services. The first two were already under construction for Bergen, Norway but were diverted to Croydon and all are now commissioned for a new line 4 between Therapia Lane and Elmers End from 25 June 2012.

A single-track section between Mitcham and Mitcham Junction is being doubled this summer, and plans for a second tram platform at Wimbledon on the site of a four-car stub platform are being developed as part of a wider station redevelopment including a second footbridge. With a further four trams, this will enable a five-minute interval service to be operated on the most crowded section of route.

In the medium term, extensions to Crystal Palace and Sutton are being developed for consideration in the next TfL Business Plan. The Crystal Palace scheme was developed until 2006 when it was abandoned through lack of funding, but it could be fully implemented by 2016 including double-tracking to Beckenham Junction and improved services through the town centre. A further potential extension beyond Beckenham to Bromley is less developed than a route to Sutton via Morden.

DEEP TUBE PROGRAMME

The Finance & Policy Committee discussed the DTP at their 11 July 2012 meeting, considering funding for a feasibility stage to run until December 2012. The TfL Business Planning process should have been concluded by then, allowing further work to be done once upgrade timing and funding has been determined. The procurement and delivery phases of DTP should start in mid-2013, and the line upgrades are currently expected to commence in 2018. The case for the Piccadilly Line is particularly strong, but a conventional train solution is still being compared to the EVO option. The PPP promised the Piccadilly 92 trains and the Bakerloo 42 trains, but numbers may be revised.

The DTP evolved when the collapse of Metronet left LU to develop the Bakerloo upgrade. It was soon decided to link this with the subsequent Central Line upgrade to share development costs, but the absorption of Tube Lines meant that it was also joined by the Piccadilly upgrade. It has now been decided that the Central Line upgrade will be left from the initial programme, although further orders may follow later. The Waterloo & City was a late addition to the DTP, perhaps because with Central Line trains replaced the W&C would otherwise retain non-standard trains. However with the Central Line out of the initial order the W&C remains included, perhaps because its trains are needed for spares.