

THE EAST LONDON LINE EXTENSION PROJECT

After being talked about for so many years, the East London Line Extension Project (ELLP) is now set to become a reality. Back in 1988 when the individual 'Line General Manager' concept was created by London Underground, replacing the 'Divisional' structure (four groups of lines), the then new General Manager for the East London Line was confident that the proposed scheme was "just around the corner", having been first seriously proposed in 1985. Sadly, that General Manager did not stay with London Underground long enough to see the project kick off – many years later. (The creation of a General Manager for the East London Line caused a bit of consternation at the time.

With its offices soon established at Shadwell, it was soon recognised that the line employed more managers than they operated trains!). From 1991, the management of the East London Line has been tacked on to the Jubilee Line but, more recently, broke away from the Jubilee and instead combined with the Waterloo & City Line. The management of the East London and Waterloo & City lines today still exceeds the number of trains scheduled for service on both lines (six and four respectively) although each line has its own identity and line colour. Prior to becoming a 'line' in its own right it had traditionally and unassumedly been part of the Metropolitan Line, having carried that line's colour until 1988, when it became 'orange' (some publicity at the time made references to the Tango orange drink!), as did the Hammersmith & City Line, which became a sort of salmon pink.

Perhaps the real commitment to the East London Line Extension was dogged by the usual "who is going to pay for it" and although some preliminary work was undertaken, it wasn't until 16 November 2004 that it was announced that the project had formally been transferred from the Strategic Rail Authority to Transport for London, allowing phase I of the project to be delivered as part of the TfL five-year investment programme unveiled by the Mayor of London previously on 12 October 2004.

As a complete project, the East London Line Extension will include the upgrade of the East London Line itself (save for the short section to Shoreditch, which has already closed – q.v.) with a northern extension to Highbury & Islington and southern extensions to West Croydon, Crystal Palace and Clapham Junction, becoming a Metro-style of service throughout. Previous speculation about the line being transferred to Network Rail is now in doubt – watch this space!

The ELLP will be constructed in two stages, the first comprising –

- Extension of the line at the north end to Dalston Junction.
- Extension of the line at the south end to Crystal Palace and West Croydon.

This first stage is expected to be completed by June 2010 which, according to current publicity, "will be in good time to support the 2012 Olympic Games".

PHASE I

At the northern end, the new extension will join the existing East London Line just south of LU's Shoreditch station, which closed permanently at the close of traffic on 9 June 2006, to enable the new connection to be built. At this point, the new connection will rise sharply onto a new viaduct on the northern part of the former Bishopsgate Goods Yard, crossing Shoreditch High Street before joining the disused Kingsland Viaduct and heading northwards to Dalston Junction, which was the route for North London trains into Broad Street until it closed at the end of service on 27 June 1986. Broad Street station itself closed in that year and was soon demolished to make way for the Broadgate development which was subsequently built on the site. Although Broad Street station was at one time home to several suburban rail services, coming into its own during rush hours, it latterly became a shadow of its former self, with the d.c. peak-hours only 'Watford' electric service the last to use it – Richmond services were serving North Woolwich by then.

Returning now to the extensions, the Kingsland viaduct is being rebuilt, with some 21 bridges having to be refurbished or replaced. The northern extension will have a new station at Shoreditch High Street (which will be open throughout the day on a daily basis) as a replacement for the now-closed London Underground station (which was open only during rush hours Monday to Friday and Sundays until 15.00). The new station will be slightly to the west of the former station. Other new stations will be at Hoxton, Haggerston and Dalston Junction. There were previously stations at Shoreditch and Haggerston, but these were closed in 1940 because of wartime bomb damage and were never reopened – the station sites survived, in part at least, until the mid-1970s. The site of the old Shoreditch station is a little further south of the new station at Hoxton, while the new station at Haggerston will be immediately to the north of the old station – in fact the northern tip of the old station at Lee Street will be the south end of the new station. The original station at Dalston Junction, which at one time comprised six platforms, finally closed as a two-platform station in June 1986. The new station will be close to the junction with the Kingsland Road and Dalston Lane.

At the southern end, a 'western' extension will run from south of Surrey Quays to join the existing South London Line between South Bermondsey and Queen's Road Peckham. This will require new track to be constructed, partly on what was an East London Line freight train route connection and was fully signalled to London Transport standards (see diagram on page 61 of *Underground News* No.293, May 1986). The new link will run at surface level along the western side of the Silwood Triangle, across Surrey Canal Road (where a new station will be provided), through the western edge of Bridge House Meadow, over the eastern end of Hornshay Street, joining the existing Network Rail infrastructure at Wagner Street. In addition to the new station already mentioned, the second phase service will call at all stations from Queen's Road Peckham to Clapham Junction.

This phase of the project will introduce a further four trains per hour along the East

London Line, giving 16tph (every 3½-4 minutes) between Dalston Junction and Surrey Quays. It is not yet clear how much of the 16tph service will continue beyond Dalston Junction towards Highbury (or even beyond), but some must surely turn back at Dalston Junction.

TRAINS

It is reported that four-car trains will operate on the extended East London Line, which will mean that none of the existing LU stations will have to be lengthened. Apart from Canada Water, however, which was built for four-car trains, all existing East London stations can (if all the physical barriers and OPO clutter was moved) berth six-car trains, as they did up to the time the Hammersmith & City Line service was withdrawn from the ELL in 1939. Previous reports suggested that Wapping and Rotherhithe stations may have to close because they would be inadequate for the new service, but this has since been confirmed as not happening.

A number of options for rolling stock on the extended East London Line are currently under consideration. A total of 19 four-car trains will be required for the first stage with a further 11 units for the second stage, making 30 in all.

The contract for ELLP rolling stock is expected to be awarded during this summer 2006. Three of the four interested suppliers are offering new build stock – Siemens (Germany), Bombardier (Canada) and Hitachi (Japan). The fourth supplier, Portabrook (UK) is offering 'cascaded' stock.

The railway press has recently speculated that the unpopular class 458 Juniper EMUs currently working on South West Trains could be a contender for the East London Line, but this has apparently now been ruled out. Furthermore, when the project was first being talked about 20 years ago, a new maintenance depot was proposed at Silwood Street. There has been no suggestion in recent times of this being pursued, although some of the press literature suggests some sort of facility "at New Cross Gate" – is this the same thing? Perhaps as one of the services (to West Croydon) will pass the large Selhurst depot, this would be adequate? Silwood was dead but now seems to be a distant possibility. The rethink has come about as a result of the North London Railway scheme. The ELLX Environmental Statement dated November 1993 is still current and mentions Silwood.

Although the LU station at Shoreditch has already closed (q.v.) it will also be necessary for the East London Line to close in its entirety to replace track and signalling. This is thought to be from late-2007 or early-2008, at which time the four-car units of A60 stock will return to the Metropolitan Line for good, giving it a full fleet of trains, and only 1½ trains short of what was originally provided in 1961-63. This is indeed a creditable achievement, especially to the builders of the time – the erstwhile Cravens of Sheffield.

Once funding becomes available for stage II (maybe in the TfL Spending Review in 2006 or 2008) and the project is completed, it would be possible to operate a Clapham Junction to Clapham Junction 'circle' service, by integrating the present

Clapham – Willesden service into the North London Line and extending it to Highbury, and then as stage II from there to Clapham Junction via the East London and South London lines. A complete and continuous ‘circle’ wouldn’t be possible without major work, as the two ends of the service would terminate far apart at the opposite sides of Clapham Junction station. Other suggested options have included a New Cross to Queen’s Park via South Hampstead service and 4tph via the East London Line to Willesden Junction. But with all the alternative routes available, the service variations and possibilities are endless – we just have to wait and see!



Two versions of the same sign above the stairway to the East London Line from the eastbound platform at Whitechapel as seen on 7 June 2006 (*Top*) and 28 June 2006 (*Lower*). The “Quays” of Surrey Quays is a sticker over “Docks” which has survived since the 1989 renaming. Note that reference to Shoreditch has been blanked out on the lower photo. All this will become history once the East London Extension opens in 2010 – even for the first stage. Can anyone date this sign? – the ‘+’ sign in “New +” was used as an abbreviation and was sometimes seen on LT signage relating to Charing Cross and King’s Cross.

Photos: Kim Rennie (Top) and Brian Hardy (Lower)