

EAST LONDON LINE POST-CLOSURE NOTES – 1

by John Thomason

The end of London Underground services on the East London Line has been reported earlier (in *Underground News*, February 2008).

During January car line diagrams on double-ended A Stock units were to be replaced with all Metropolitan Line diagrams and the twin line names at the bottom of casement windows were with "Metropolitan Line" names, as on single-ended units. By the end of the month it appeared that few, if any, had been done.

The following notes are a local resident's observations of what has occurred since closure and how alternative provision is working. When there is more to report then it will be reported.

STATIONS POST-CLOSURE

By 23 December 2007, access to the East London Line platforms at Canada Water had been barred with metal fencing. Fencing had also been erected along the length of the platforms to guard the tracks. All signage relating to the East London Line had been removed or obscured and the relevant escalators closed. By early January the temporary fencing at platform level had been replaced with custom-built dark blue hoardings. "Building site security" was much in evidence at this and other East London Line stations.

A visit to Whitechapel showed that similar hoardings had been installed and that the signage had suffered the same fate as that at Canada Water

Rotherhithe station had been securely boarded up and stripped of (external) signage with no obvious sign that it was a station. The *Big Issue* vendor abandoned his pitch and relocated to the local shopping centre. By 26 December the poster frames had been reinstated outside the station, showing a network map, timetable information (now outdated and removed by mid-January) together with the continuing your journey poster for Shoreditch! By 10 January, Rotherhithe booking hall had been stripped of everything except the UTS gates and floor to ceiling hoarding could be seen at the top of the escalators. Two cabinets of what appeared to be electrical switchgear had been installed.

Surrey Quays station was stripped of signage but still looked like a station, the booking hall being clearly visible from outside but most of the furniture had been stripped out.

Shadwell and Wapping station interiors are clearly visible from the street and ground floor facilities had been largely stripped out by mid-January.

UTS ticket machines and gates were being removed in late January from Shadwell, Wapping, Rotherhithe and Surrey Quays

The relevant platforms at New Cross and New Cross Gate were still accessible but (apart from slowly rusting rails) there was little evidence that the service no longer ran. "National Rail" platform signage was still present at New Cross although Oyster Card readers at New Cross Gate had been covered with "do not use" tape. Some Underground roundels had been masked.

By mid-January Canada Water station had become very busy at morning peak hours with extra passengers joining the system there rather than via ELL stations elsewhere. The ELC buses were heavily loaded and additional passengers were

evident on other bus routes. The 381/C10 were concentrating Rotherhithe peninsular travellers on Canada Water, rather than Canada Water, Rotherhithe and Surrey Quays, during the morning peak. Evening peak patterns of travel have always been different and little change was observed.

REPLACEMENT BUSES

Travellers between New Cross Gate and Canada Water can use the ELC service. The bus is routed New Cross Gate stop M, New Cross stop V, Deptford Broadway, Deptford Church Street, Creek Road, Evelyn Street, Rotherhithe Old Road, Surrey Quays stop S, Lower Road, Canada Water bus station stop D, returning via stop A (not B2 as in the information booklet – see below), stop K within Surrey Quays Shopping Centre, stop W at New Cross and stop O at New Cross Gate. Intriguingly the bus stop decals for ELC refer to Overground replacement service. New Cross Gate booking hall displays a poster size ELC panel timetable. ELC buses always seem to have a reasonable load and this increases significantly at peak hours. Journeys from New Cross Gate are scheduled to take 18 minutes and in the reverse direction 19 minutes. During peak hours these times are frequently exceeded and there are extended intervals between buses. Your reporter took 33 minutes from Canada Water to New Cross one wet evening rush hour. Long-term road works to replace water mains cause frequent delays to smooth operation.

The ELP serves Rotherhithe and operates on a circular route: Canada Water Bus Station stop B2, Surrey Quays Road, Redriff Road, Salter Road, Brunel Road stop X, Culling Circus, Lower Road, Canada Water Bus Station stop D. A quirk of the ELP service is that the stop served is not outside Rotherhithe station but at Rotherhithe Tunnel. The stop is temporarily without post and flag causing additional confusion to those unfamiliar with the area. Three consecutive ELP buses were seen on Sunday 23 December, each with zero passengers! On New Year's night the ELP did not run but was replaced by extending route ELC to Rotherhithe between 01.10 and 06.10. This may have been done to obviate potential difficulties with the planning consent for Canada Water bus station that prohibits buses during the small hours. **ELP** is for Rotherhithe **P**eninsular, which the bus circumnavigates. The running time is 8 minutes to Rotherhithe and 4 minutes return. By early January most ELP drivers were in fact setting down at the stop opposite Rotherhithe station, before calling at stop X. Very few join the bus at stop X to travel to Canada Water. The post and flag were restored by 15 January and the ELP decal also refers to Overground replacement service.

The ELW service is provided to link Whitechapel with Shadwell and Wapping. The route is Whitechapel Station stop A, Whitechapel Road, New Road, Commercial Road, Sutton Street, Cable Street, Shadwell Station stop A, Cable Street, Dock Street, The Highway, Wapping Lane, Prusom Street stop SB. Returning from Wapping Station stop A, Wapping High Street, Wapping Lane, The Highway, King David Lane, Cable Street, Shadwell Station stop A, Cable Street, Cannon Street Road, New Road, Whitechapel Road, Whitechapel Station stop B where connection is made with ELS to Shoreditch. Yes, the same stop at Shadwell is used both north and southbound. The running time is 15 minutes and Whitechapel booking hall had a poster-sized ELW panel timetable on display. ELW decals are conspicuous by their absence from bus stops although timetables are displayed at all relevant stops.

No service is provided to connect Rotherhithe with Wapping – use of the Jubilee line and DLR is suggested.

Buses are in the operator's normal red livery but the external advertising panels proclaim London Underground Rail Replacement Bus Service with an impression of a class 378 train, all in Overground colours. Many of the drivers seem to be "agency" staff without uniforms. Interiors contain appropriate bus route maps (ELC, ELP and ELW), a central area Underground map and a "How to make complaints about Overground services" poster.

PASSENGER INFORMATION AND FACILITIES

A comprehensive booklet *All change on the East London Line* was distributed in September 2007 (dated August 2007) but was superseded by a reissue flashed "November 2007 Update". The changes concerned bus frequencies, ticket shop outlets and bus stop locations.

During the previous closure it was possible to obtain a supplementary ticket to enable travellers to make their journey via zone 1 (London Bridge main line etc.) whilst holding travelcard zone 2 but not zone 1 validity. The concession has not been made available during this closure. *(It is known that during the previous closure some passengers were quick to take advantage to travel to London Bridge without paying for zone 1).* I assume that passengers from Kent etc. now change at Greenwich/Lewisham for DLR services to gain access to Canary Wharf rather than New Cross and ELL. Those travelling from Surrey/Croydon etc. via New Cross Gate don't have a quick alternative, unless holding zone 1 validity.

Customer Information Assistants were located at East London Line stations and related bus stops to distribute information, answer questions and give directions. It was not always obvious who they were, nor where they were located, despite being equipped with a parka, blue hi-vi TfL woolly hat and cell phone. Most also carried golf umbrellas in inclement weather but these did not seem to be official issue. It is understood that they will be withdrawn on 6 February 2008. Southeastern trains has supplied some of their Meteor staff to assist with passenger liaison at New Cross Gate.

Your reporter took a round trip from Rotherhithe to Wapping by the 'alternative route' (ELP/Canada Water/Jubilee Line/Canary Wharf/DLR/Shadwell/ELW). It took 97 minutes! I asked the driver of the ELP bus how busy she had been and I was told that I was her first passenger today – it was her 11th trip. On the return I was one of two. The ELW bus was very much busier with people who had clearly been shopping at Sainsbury's Whitechapel and the local market mostly travelling to Shadwell. Your writer knows of several people who commuted between Rotherhithe and Wapping but have found the new arrangements impracticable. A group of school children now use a 7-seat car service (through the Rotherhithe Tunnel) and one lady has changed her job.

No arrangements are made for ticket issue at Surrey Quays or Wapping, intending passengers are directed to local Ticket Shops and Oyster. Drivers of replacement buses seem to have mixed attitudes to touching in with Oyster. The charge for the journey is £0.00 (as on the ELS) so just using replacement buses can give a free ride, *providing that the Oyster card has sufficient credit to make a zone 2 Underground journey.* If there is insufficient credit then the ticket is rejected despite the nil fare. At least that is what I heard when the person in front of me had a red light on the reader.

Bus stopping arrangements at Canada Water were changed to coincide with the closure of the East London Line. London Buses produced a revised spider map

leaflet (TFL12227.12.07) to reflect these changes. Although the ELP and ELC are not on the bus spider map a “route diagram” and times of first and last buses are included.

I am surprised that posters have not been displayed at closed stations with basic information relating to the station being closed with a local map of bus stops and ticket shop outlets. I would also have expected that Underground tickets would have been accepted for sensible local journeys on local buses. Use of the 225 between Canada Water and New Cross is an obvious possibility as is 100 from Wapping to Liverpool Street and D3 from Wapping to Whitechapel; however correct fare charging (with PAYG) could be a problem.

New Year travel around the wider system saw many East London Line closure posters at important nodes and announcements were heard at various distant stations. Stocks of *All change on the East London Line* were widely distributed.

On 5 January 2008 the Jubilee Line was closed between Bond Street and Stratford. Two bus replacement services were provided between Canada Water and Bank, and between North Greenwich and Stratford. No provision was made for travel Canada Water/Canary Wharf/North Greenwich hence the alternative route to cross the river from Wapping to Rotherhithe becoming unavailable. This situation was not helped by *Metro* (4 January 2008) stating that the replacement bus service operated between Bank and Canary Wharf. Fortunately on the day a comprehensive set of suggested routes was written up on a white board at Canada Water. It is not known what provision of local travel information was made at the other two stations affected or if any arrangements were made for Oyster card users to be charged the correct fare for their journey. A further Jubilee Line closure on 19 January saw better information displayed and this time *Metro* got it right.

Tower Hamlets council were aware that residents in the south of the borough would now have very poor links to Surrey Quays shopping centre and so the following (edited) press release appeared:

“Shopping bus to Surrey Quays

“During the closure [of the ELL] Tower Hamlets Council will operate a bus service for residents between Wapping and Surrey Quays Shopping Centre. This link will start on Monday 7 January 2008 and operate Monday to Fridays. There will be two morning and two afternoon journeys (in each direction), running until the extended East London Line reopens in June 2010.

“A bus will leave Wapping (opposite the station at the bus stop [C] on the northern kerb) at 10.30, 11.30, 13.30 and 14.30 and return from Surrey Quays Shopping Centre (Bay adjacent to the taxi pick-up point) at 11.00, 12.00, 14.00 and 15.00.

“The service will be exclusive to and free for local residents who will be given a permit to travel for the life of the service on production of a utility bill or similar proof of residence on the bus during their first trip.

“All vehicles will be fully accessible with space for a wheelchair and an attendant will be provided to help all passengers”.

Your reporter attempted to sign up for this service but was told (very politely) to come back with a utility bill bearing a Tower Hamlets address. It clearly provides a service for shoppers living in the Wapping area wishing to reach Tesco rather than use the local Waitrose. Usage was building up well by late January. A colourful A5 leaflet promoting the service has been seen but supplies seem to be difficult to find. It is

understood that Southwark Regeneration are keen to have a similar or joint service but as ever funding might be a problem ... watch this space.

Poster and pocket maps of the Tube network as well as the London Connections map and car line diagrams were reissued to reflect the closure of the East London Line and show the bus replacement services. The Freedom Pass website has had the validity diagram similarly amended.

In late January very large posters, mounted on boards appeared at key locations explaining what was going on. An impression of a class 378 train together with general information about the future trains and services are displayed.

ENGINEERING WORK

It was seen during the run-up to closure that everything on the East London Line that could be stripped out as surplus to requirements has been labelled with redundant tags incorporating reference numbers. Perhaps this will prevent situations such as that at the previous closure when the removal of the signal main caused the pumps at Rotherhithe to cease operating with consequent flooding.

It is worth recording the various works carried out at the turn of the year. The ELL was decommissioned in four stages according to Traffic Circulars 51 (2007), 52/1 and 2 (2008):

- Stage 1 was implemented on the night of 22 December 2007 and involved the taking out of use of the route *from* the District *to* the ELL.
- Stage 2 on 24 December involved isolation of the AC signal main, air main, DC traction supply on the ELL and isolation of DC power to St. Mary's Curve.
- Stage 3a on the night of 27 December saw the removal of the signalling interface between the District line and ELL.
- Stage 3b on the night of 28 December saw the final removal of signalling through St Mary's Curve.
- Stage 4 carried out on night of Saturday 12 January 2008 saw the segregation of the ELL with the construction of a hoarding erected in the tunnel some 50 metres to the east of St Mary's Junction. The redundant point work was to be removed at a later date.

It was noted during this period that signal department equipment and other redundant assets were being recovered at many outdoor locations.

A diagram of the Shoreditch area appears on <http://londonconnections.blogspot.com> (navigate to Saturday 19 January 2008). This gathers together much interesting material relating to the route from north-west of Whitechapel station to the former Broad Street viaduct.

A routine visit to the ELLX phase two alignment on 21 January revealed that the two sidings recently laid to form a run-round loop, had now been connected to the northbound East London Line just to the south of Surrey Quays station using the Deptford Road Junction site (removed in the 1950s) which gave freight train access from the South London Line at Old Kent Road (LBSCR) and New Cross Gate sidings. A clear view of final adjustment to gauge of the point work and screwing down the chairs followed by ballasting was possible from Trundleys Road footbridge. The sidings contained a road-rail ballast hopper, a Rushton diesel, three bogie wagons and the four Clayton battery-electric locomotives used on the Waterloo and City refurbishment (see *Underground News* No.534, June 2006). Spare battery packs were stored beyond the buffer stop. Further along the route a team of

surveyors was working on recording the alignment and clearances of the arches through which phase two will pass. It seems that phase two may now go ahead more quickly than originally suggested so that capacity can be released at London Bridge (main line) to facilitate other work. Construction and setting-out work was observed for the new depot but I wonder if it has enough capacity. There has been a suggestion that some new trains could be stabled at "The former New Cross depot". With that, we wait and see!