

Dear Member



In this newsletter we want to give you a further update on various matters associated with the timetable changes on 22 March - in particular, we wanted to give you feedback from a FCC / Network Rail Stakeholder event on Monday.

Key messages

The key messages are (detail below):

1. City Thameslink is the preferred destination - both Farringdon and Blackfriars will be problematic. Moorgate and Barbican tickets are already valid at City Thameslink.
2. Farringdon is expected to get very crowded from Monday 23rd with additional passengers changing.
3. Building works start at Blackfriars this weekend, existing exits will close.
4. Reliability will be an issue in the next couple of months.
5. Today, FCC's only 377 ran for the first time in revenue earning service; FCC are due to get a second on Saturday.
6. There will be a final commemorative service from Moorgate this Friday at 19:54.
7. Getting to Canary Wharf.
8. Major incident arrangements will change.
9. The key reason for the closure of Moorgate this weekend is the Blackfriars re-build.
10. Stakeholder presentation.
11. An appeal - for hints & tips.

We hope to organise a meeting with FCC and Network Rail in June, details to follow.

We will write again with more updates

City Thameslink

FCC strongly emphasised the benefits of switching to City Thameslink from Monday, pointing out the possibly overcrowding issues at Farringdon and building work at Blackfriars. *I endorse this recommendation - in particular, I think it is a good choice if you can walk (or take the bus) to most final destinations.*

Although City Thameslink does not offer Underground connections, there are a wide variety of bus services running east<>west from both the Ludgate Hill and Holborn Viaduct exits.

Barbican and Moorgate tickets are valid to City Thameslink (an 'official' FCC concession) - they do not operate the barriers so just show your ticket to the revenue protection staff at the barriers (I have a Moorgate ticket and use the Ludgate Hill exit - it is a long time since my ticket was questioned).

Farringdon

Travellers to Barbican and Moorgate will have to change at Farringdon, considerably increasing interchange traffic. To ease this, the following has or will shortly happen:

1. The second footbridge at the middle of the station will fully open this weekend
2. Additional customer information screens are scheduled to go at the St Pancras end of platform 4 this weekend or early next week.
3. Awnings have been erected at the St Pancras end of platform 4
4. It will be possible to exit direct to Turnmill Street from the middle footbridge in about 6 months time.

Blackfriars

Building works start “full throttle” at Blackfriars from this weekend, with the terminating platforms blocked by hoardings. There will be a new entry / exit to platform 5 from the riverside walk and it will not be possible to access the pedestrian underpass under Blackfriars Road from the station.

Reliability will be problematic

A combination of borrowed 377s, new 377s and low spare stock levels are likely to lead to reliability issues including short formations. The new service plan offers an increase in 8 car services, so this means that initial reductions are, in practice an inability to provide more seats, rather than a reduction from existing capacity.

The 377 saga

As has been widely reported, Bombardier have let us and FCC down; rather than 23 trains, FCC have 1 and hope for a second on Saturday. FCC commented that the delays were down to bad management (eg wrong drawings sent to the suppliers of the interior) and the credit crunch (suppliers going out of business). Somewhat depressingly, the 3 that were delivered have had to go back for remedial work.

The plan envisages that 1 a week will now be delivered to allow the stock borrowing arrangements, which currently have a life of 12 weeks from 22 March to stop. Whilst I can just about believe that Bombardier can deliver one a week once they get going, the “jury is out” as to when the 1 week deliveries can be sustained.

I caught a comment on today’s FCC Open forum which said that their one 377 was in revenue earning service today for the first time, so that is definitely good news.

Final services from Moorgate

There will be a special additional train from Moorgate to mark the end of service. Thus the final 3 services will be as follows:

- Last scheduled departure - 19:06 to Bedford
- Last scheduled arrival - 19:41 from Luton (starts 18:44)
- Last (additional, commemorative service) - 19:54 to Kentish Town

FCC have said that the final service will be an 8 car train, with commemorative tickets (free, donations to Railway Children invited). First come, first served. There is to be no flash photography tomorrow evening at Moorgate since this will be distracting to train and underground drivers (see http://www.thameslinkprogramme.co.uk/news/news_items/view/18).

Major incidents

The current major incident plan often splits the service into two - north & south, with the north service being Bedford <> Moorgate. We have been told that new contingency plans have been developed. We do not yet have them, but have been promised that an outline will be published, so we have at least some ideas what we need to do to find the train service.

In theory, Moorgate could still be used if they run the service in two halves, but even if the trains actually go there, I suspect passenger will not be allowed on.

I have made it clear that there would be much passenger dissatisfaction if services from the north terminated at St Pancras (combination of wide platforms there + expected congestion at Farringdon).

Getting to Canary Wharf

In our last email, we asked for other suggestions on how to get to Canary Wharf and received these 'lateral thoughts':

- Change at City Thameslink and get buses 45, 63 or 100 to Southwark LUL and get the Jubilee line from there (or walk on a nice day!).
- Change at City Thameslink, exit at Holborn Viaduct end and get buses 8,25 or 242 to Bank or 521 to Monument and take the DLR from there
- Change at City Thameslink, exit at Ludgate Hill end and get buses 11,23,26 or 76 to Bank or 15 or 17 to Monument and take the DLR from there
- Change at Elephant & Castle and take the Northern Line to London Bridge and get the Jubilee line from there
- Take the Thames Clipper fast ferry from Blackfriars Pier (peak hours only). A member comments: "In my experience it is fast, clean, pretty reliable and not fazed by weather conditions. It is also fair to say that it does occasionally have unexplained gaps in the service (no worse than any other public transport)". Personally, I only travel to Canary Wharf very occasionally, but it is my preferred option - with apologies to FCC, a coffee and a Thames view certainly beats a 319 (or even a 377!). More details at <http://www.thamesclippers.com/>. A monthly season ticket is £100 - about £30 more than a TravelCard add on.

Why close Moorgate now?

The building work at Farringdon will not sever the link to Moorgate for at least 6 months. The main reason for the closure now is the closure of the Blackfriars terminating

platforms. The Sevenoaks trains need to go somewhere else, and the only practical answer is Thameslink north stations.

Stakeholder presentations

We have received and uploaded the Network Rail and FCC presentations at Monday's stakeholder presentation (see FCC page 17 onwards for current items). We have asked for, but are yet to receive the Network Rail presentation. Please visit <http://www.nlks.btinternet.co.uk/aptu/useful.html>.

An appeal – for hints & tips

Please do send any useful information, good travel routes etc to share with your fellow members.

Neil Middleton
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