

Dear Member



This newsletter is mainly about the current driver shortage, but also picks up a number of other items.

Multiple email addresses

Our e-newsletter goes to a mixture of work and home email addresses. I am happy to send this to both a home and a work email address if you would like this. Just send an email to aptumail@aptu.org.uk (due to the time and cost of posting paper newsletters, we only send these to a single address).

The current driver shortage

The first point is that we have received another stakeholder communication from FCC today. This has been uploaded to our web site and is available here:

http://www.btinternet.com/~nlks/aptu/pdfs/fcc_letter_13november2009.pdf. Probably the most important “new” item to note is that Delay Repay claims are based on the old, not the temporary, time timetable. This extract and other practical extracts that you may have missed are here:

- Customers who have been delayed by thirty minutes or longer can claim compensation via the usual Delay Repay process. I would like to assure you that compensation will be made in line with the usual timetable, not the revised timetable. Further information can be found via our website: www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/delayrepay
- First class has also been declassified on the Thameslink route to maximise capacity
- The following Ticket acceptance agreements have been put in place to help customers complete their journey:-
 - London buses and all London Underground lines via any reasonable route.
 - Inter-available ticket arrangements already exist between the Thameslink and Great Northern routes and with East Midlands Trains between London and Bedford.
 - South West Trains via any reasonable route.
 - Southern via any reasonable route.
- To further assist customers with their journey plans, we have arranged for car park season ticket holders to use FCC car parks on our Great Northern route at no additional cost, providing customers with additional travel options. (*APTU observation: Some car parks, including Stevenage are not owned by FCC; free parking is not available at these locations*).

Delay Repay

In my view the Delay Repay arrangements are not suitable for recompensing commuters and other peak hour travellers for the sort of problems we currently face - which are typically show themselves as very crowded trains and delays of 10 - 25 minutes. My next APTU activity will be to write to FCC to formally seek additional compensation. I will start with FCC, but will follow this up as necessary with London Travelwatch, Passenger Focus etc.

In the mean time, I recommend you keep expired tickets.

Media attention

I have been interviewed 3 times on the radio about the lack of service:

- On Radio 5 at lunchtime (1:40pm) on Thursday 12th November with Simon Mayo - this one also involved Larry Heyman.
- On Radio 5 late at night (about 11:20pm) on Thursday 12th November with Richard Bacon - this one also involved Tony Mills from Modern Railways.
- On Radio London at 8:10am on Friday 13th November with Joanne Good and Paul Ross - the introduction for this one was a recording of an interview with Larry.

Should you wish to listen to them, they all are currently available on BBC's iPlayer.

In all cases, my message has been about get us accurate information so we can plan our journeys properly and appeals to both the unions and FCC to resume normal working as soon as possible. The Thursday late night slot also dealt with national fares issues and the complexity of the national ticketing arrangements.

I would like to record our thanks to Arthur Taylor at BCA who put Radio 5 in contact with me (they wanted to speak to a regular commuter).

Other media items include:

- Rail News (“Thameslink in tatters, as ASLEF ballots for strike and MD is replaced”): <http://tiny.cc/0s5WZ>.
- Herts Advertiser (“Insider speaks out”): <http://tiny.cc/TwccN>.

My understanding of the situation

- First and foremost, I do not have an “inside track” on when we might see a return to rest day working. FCC report “We continue to engage in constructive dialogue with ASLEF and are hopeful of an early resolution.”, however, I have nothing that allows me to convert this to a tentative date.
- I have heard that the issue is hitting Thameslink much more than Great Northern because more GN drivers are still working rest days.
- Larry Heyman has provided me with a schedule showing the temporary timetable service reductions as a percentage:

	Southbound	Northbound
Morning peak	-33%	-33%
Day time	-50%	-50%
Evening peak	-33%	-45%
Late evening	-10%	-25%
TOTAL	-38%	-38%
(Weekends	No change	No change)

(the variation in late evening is because the frequency in the standard timetable reduces much later going north; the temporary timetable adopts the southbound frequency earlier in the evening).

- I have asked why there are so many cancellations (c 38% of services), but no analysis to support this was available. I will ask for more information.

Making the best of it

For me, at least, life has been a bit better since the temporary timetable came in to force. By choosing to travel, as far as possible, when there is a cluster of running services, I have not had

to wait too long and have managed to get a seat. I have come to the conclusion that in the evening it is essential to look at National Rail's Live Departure Boards before I leave the office and select a train based on what is reported running or not on those pages.

The temporary timetable is currently accessible direct from [FCC's home page](#). The web site currently confirms that the standard timetable remains in operation at weekends.

Please let us know of very overcrowded services or 4 car formations, particularly if there are not problems elsewhere on the route at that time.

I'd also like feedback of particularly bad information on the Train Indicators. Members have reported a number of instances when they have let the first service at the platform go (eg all stations, or very crowded) on the basis that the next one (eg fast) looks a better option. Only after the first one has gone is the second one cancelled, heavily delayed, 4 cars only, turned into an all-stations etc.

Please send through to me specific details so we can take this up with FCC.

Other news – Network Rail station survey

London Travelwatch have sent us this:

Dear All,

Please find below a link to a survey being conducted by PwC on behalf of Network Rail. It asks a lot of questions about what people want in the future from stations, but importantly it also gives the opportunity to comment on individual stations. This I think will be very useful – particularly if a wide range of people answer the survey, and if enough people comment on the smaller stations e.g. Clapham High Street it will strengthen the case for investment at these locations. Feel free to circulate the link.

Yours sincerely
Tim Bellenger
Director, Research and Development

London TravelWatch, 6 Middle Street, London EC1A 7JA

The press release itself can be found at <http://tiny.cc/2OEpy> and the survey at <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/actionstations>.

East Midlands RUS (Rail Utilisation Survey)

Life as normal continues and one deadline that has recently come and gone was that for commenting on the Network Rail East Midlands RUS. In Network Rail geography, the East Midlands includes London Blackfriars. This comment is not just a cheap joke - it is the inclusion of the Midland Main Line (“MML”) in this particular RUS that also includes Blackfriars (ie it is “Gateway to the South”).

As far as the MML south of Bedford is concerned, the RUS acknowledges the Thameslink Programme as the main driver. We wrote and commented on the RUS, with what was basically a repeat of our comments to the Radlett (Helioslough) SRFI Planning Inquiry. Our email is available at

http://www.btinternet.com/~nlks/aptu/pdfs/eastmidlands_rus_12november2009.pdf

Regards

Neil

Neil Middleton
10 November 2009