



Dear Member

## Index

ANNUAL MEETING WITH FCC – DATE FOR YOUR DIARY	1
EASTER TRAVEL UPDATE	1
ST ALBANS STATION FOOTBRIDGE IMPROVEMENTS	2
ELSTREE & BOREHAMWOOD FOOTBRIDGE WORKS STARTING	2
PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEMS AT LUTON AND LEAGRAVE (AND A GENERAL COMMENT)	3
LEAGRAVE – OTHER UPDATES	4
FCC AND NETWORK RAIL UPDATE TO ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL	4
THE FRANCHISE – 2015 ONWARDS	5
FCC STAKEHOLDER UPDATES	5
<i>Period 11 (6 January – 2 February)</i>	5
<i>Period 12 (3 February – 2 March)</i>	6
<i>Improving Performance</i>	6
CYCLING UPDATE	7
CONTACTING THE BTP BY TEXT	7
ANNUAL SEASON TICKET COSTS COMPARED	7
RADLETT STRATEGIC FREIGHT INTERCHANGE	8
THAMESLINK PROGRAMME	8

## Annual meeting with FCC – date for your diary

**The annual meeting with FCC management will be at 7:30pm on Monday 10 June at the Friend’s Meeting House in St Albans.** We also expect to have attendance from Network Rail management. More details nearer the time (including the chance to submit questions in advance).

## Easter travel update

There will be no services through the Thameslink Core throughout the Easter Weekend. **At times, St Pancras will not be served.** The basic arrangement is as follows:

- Friday, Saturday and Monday from 1:30pm:
  - Bedford, all stations to St Albans: 2 trains per hour terminating at St Pancras
  - Bedford, all stations to St Albans and Elstree & Borehamwood: 2 trains per hour terminating at West Hampstead Thameslink
  - St Albans & all stations to Cricklewood: 2 trains per hour, terminating at West Hampstead Thameslink
- Sunday and Monday until 1:30pm
  - Bedford, all stations to St Albans and Elstree & Borehamwood: 2 trains per hour terminating at West Hampstead Thameslink
  - St Albans & all stations to Cricklewood: 2 trains per hour, terminating at West Hampstead Thameslink
  - *Note: all East Midlands Train services will be terminating at West Hampstead as well, so it is likely to be very busy*
- No service to Kentish town throughout



Tickets will be valid on the Underground and London buses and this is generally the recommended option, there will also be Rail Replacement buses.

FCC have prepared a poster which is being displayed at Stations, it can be viewed here:

<http://www.aptu.org.uk/pdfs/thameslinkalterationseaster2013.pdf>.

Finally, anyone thinking of switching to the GN route needs to be aware there is a very limited service on Easter Sunday.

## St Albans station footbridge improvements

FCC have advised of improvement works:

- We are pleased to announce that Network Rail will be refurbishing St Albans platform footbridge from 1 April, creating a safer, smarter crossing in keeping with the rest of the station that benefitted from a £5m upgrade in 2009.
- The footbridge is in a poor state of repair. It leaks, puddles form and the floor is uneven. Water has penetrated the lift and this contributes to reliability issues. It perhaps won't come as any surprise that the footbridge has been the subject of several complaints to us in recent years.
- So it is with great pleasure that we can confirm that, as part of our Better Stations For You initiative, work will begin at the start of April on a complete refurbishment. For approximately half a year, Network Rail's principal contractors May Gurney will be stripping out the side panels, renewing the roof and putting in a new non-slip floor as well as new and brighter lighting. The stair nosings will be replaced and new low and high level hand rails will be installed that are compliant with the latest disability legislation. The entire bridge will then be repainted.
- The contractors will be setting up a site compound in the Ridgmont Road car park, taking up 13 spaces, but we believe there is spare capacity to accommodate this.
- Passengers will see scaffolding going up on the platforms around the base of the bridge. This will reduce platform space but we have duplicated the effect in a trial and the platforms remain safe to use. We will also employ additional staff to ask people not to stand at the base of the bridge at the busiest times of the day so that other passengers can more easily walk through.
- Other than this, there should be no impact for people using the station because physical work that would reduce circulation space on the bridge will be carried out only between 0000 and 0500 hours.
- We are keeping people informed through letters to you, leaflets, posters and messages to the local media as well as a page on our website. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

## Elstree & Borehamwood footbridge works starting

We have received this update from FCC:

Work is about to start on a new Access-for-All footbridge at Elstree & Borehamwood station. As it is likely that you will receive questions about this work, I would like to take the opportunity to brief you on the new bridge and the construction work.

The new bridge will allow less mobile passengers, including people in wheelchairs, those with baby buggies and anyone with heavy luggage, free access to all platforms at station via



new lifts to all platforms. There are plans to retain the existing footbridge, which will make it easier for passengers to pass through the station.

Work will begin on 25 March, when contractors will erect a works compound in the station forecourt car park. The main station car park will be relined to allow for three disabled parking bays to be relocated and to optimise the number of parking spaces available to our customers. On 2 April, work will begin on the construction of the bridge. Areas of all three platforms will be hoarded off from public view. We have gone to every effort to ensure that passengers will not be affected by the loss of this platform space.

Initial construction work will be focused preparing the area for the new bridge. A number of utilities cables need to be moved and foundations for the bridge need to be constructed. The majority of this work will be carried out during the day with little disruption to passengers at the stations.

Once preparation work is complete, prefabricated sections of the bridge will be lifted into place by a crane. As this work cannot safely be completed while trains are running, it will be carried out at night on weekends. During this work, the crane will operate from the works compound and no additional station car park closures are planned.

The project is due to be completed in spring 2014. I have attached an image of the planned bridge which is indicative of the overall structure and design.



First Capital Connect and Network Rail have gone to every effort to ensure that our passengers and local residents have been informed about the project and potential disruption. During the planning work, local residents were consulted regarding the potential noise disruption and exhibitions showcasing the bridge were held in a local community centre and in the station itself.

In the last week, leaflets have been delivered to residents in the local area to inform them that the work is due to begin and to alert them to potential noise disruption. Posters are being displayed at the station and in the car park. We will be making additional efforts to alert customers to the weekend work later in the project. We will also be regularly updating key stakeholders on progress on the works.

## Public address systems at Luton and Leagrave (and a general comment)

We have received this update:

- **Luton Station**

The PA here is life expired, the Thameslink Programme [TLP] simply added in more speakers without thinking about the overall PA system as whole, the speaker cabling is nearly 20 years old. We are looking to completely replace the PA at Luton with a new system which will be of the same standard as Bedford's recent new one, zoned announcements, induction loops, concurrent announcements, roaming mics etc. We are applying for NSIP [National Station Improvement Plan monies from the DfT] funding for this. It is worth noting though that there are dynamic ambient noise sensors installed on platform 1/2 at Luton. Under the planning application made by Network Rail for the platform extensions there was a noise abatement order imposed on the PA due to the



residents of Midland Road who live in the flats near to the platform extensions. So the PA volume in this area will be lower than elsewhere.

- **Leagrave Station**

Leagrave has had a new PA installed as part of the TLP, this has not yet been handed back to FCC, due to numerous snagging issues with the PA One of those snags is speakers not working, I will speak to the TL outer projects team to see where they are with resolving the issues.

- **Generally**

Across all FCC stations there will always be a sound quality difference between the automatic train running announcements, local station announcements and those made by SDC and broadcast. This is mainly because the automatic announcements are professionally recorded in a studio with a high quality professional microphone and sound system, compressed and cleaned up before being used. The local announcements and SDC ones are live recordings made adhoc in an environment that isn't the best (in a control room or SDC) the sound pressure levels are awful with background noise etc, also the staff all have different microphone skills and are rushed whereas in a studio, time can be taken to speak correctly and clearly.

## Leagrave – other updates

We followed up other issues raised by a member and have received these comments:

- **Cycle parking:** In relation to cycle parking, we successfully bid for £61,700 contribution from the DfT towards 84 additional cycle spaces on the west side of Leagrave station. We plan to replace the existing cycle parking there and also create a new cycle parking compound. Additionally new cycle parking for 20 cycles will be introduced on the east side of the station, making around 104 new spaces in all. We hope to complete these works by the end of July.
- **Faulty drain in west side car park entrance:** The blocked drain has been reported [to Network Rail] and the cause is being investigated.
- **Barriers on platforms 2/3:** [These] had been erected in error and were rapidly removed!

## FCC and Network Rail update to St Albans District Council

Approximately every 6 months, FCC and Network Rail give an update to St Albans Council. The latest session took place on 5 March. The presentation used is available here:

[http://www.aptu.org.uk/pdfs/stalbansdc\\_fccnr\\_presentation20130305.pdf](http://www.aptu.org.uk/pdfs/stalbansdc_fccnr_presentation20130305.pdf). Of particular note:

- Slides 10 – 15 on the Radlett incident
- Slides 21 – 23 on the planned double deck car park at Harpenden (also slide 33 re more cycle parking)

Although not covered in the printed material:

- FCC emphasised that DelayRepay is the DfT chosen method and in their contract. FCC said that they had compared their arrangement with other TOCs using DelayRepay and that it was more generous for season ticket holders than others – they allowed for holidays and did not assume weekend travel – at least one TOC assumes travel 52 weeks a year and 1



weekend trip a month. I got the distinct feeling that this was an FCC decision, rather than differing franchise terms.

- Neal Lawson confirmed he would be around for some time.

## The Franchise – 2015 onwards

The Thameslink consortium has received a reply to questions they posed to the Department for Transport. Here are a couple of useful extracts:

- The key differences between what we have termed a ‘management-style’ contract (MC) and what, in railway parlance, is termed a ‘franchise’ are (a) under an MC the Government retains most or all of the revenue risk, and (b) the operator is contracted to undertake specific additional tasks – in this case all the relevant preparations for the introduction of the enhanced Thameslink service in 2018.
- ..... the long-term Thameslink train service specification will include the retention of the Wimbledon Loop services as well as two trains an hour to/from Sevenoaks via the Catford Loop and two trains per peak hour to/from Maidstone East. This means that the trains that will use Blackfriars Bays will be the peak only additional services that today run from a number of origins, including Rochester, Orpington and Beckenham Junction; plus any additional services specified (and funded) by third parties, such as TfL.
- ... throughout [the London Bridge blockade] period, a two trains per hour service, as a minimum, will be maintained between Brighton and St Pancras International as well as two trains per hour between Brighton and London Bridge.
- We do not expect any of the existing Thameslink or Southern services to be transferred to London Overground.
- It is still the intention that the full Thameslink Programme frequency of 24 trains per high peak hour in each direction through the Thameslink core will be achieved by December 2018 – and also that Crossrail will be running 24 trains per high peak hour by December 2019.

In particular:

- The reply highlights that many of the special peak hour services from the ‘other’ current south of the River destinations such as Rochester will not operate north of Blackfriars. If this is an issue for you, please let us know.
- The ‘Rumour mill’ suggests that 2 trains per hour from Thameslink north might terminate at Three Bridges – I guess the commercial goal is Gatwick Airport, and the extension to Three Bridges is a capacity issue.

## FCC Stakeholder updates

### Period 11 (6 January – 2 February)

During Period 11, FCC routes were affected by winter conditions, combined with several operational incidents. This has meant that despite conditions not warranting the implementation of our winter resilience timetable, we have ended the period behind our targeted public performance measure (PPM). We achieved a PPM of 81.01% across the FCC network.





On the Thameslink route, customers were faced with delays due to the failure of a Network Rail de-icing train and a First Capital Connect unit on the Brighton mainline leading to considerable delays on two separate days. Ice on the Wimbledon loop, a track circuit failure near London Bridge and point failure at Elephant & Castle also resulted in delays. The PPM for the Thameslink route was 80.09%, below our target of 89.91%.

During Period 11, 43% delays fell within the purview of Network Rail, 41% originated with FCC and 16% were due to other train operating companies.

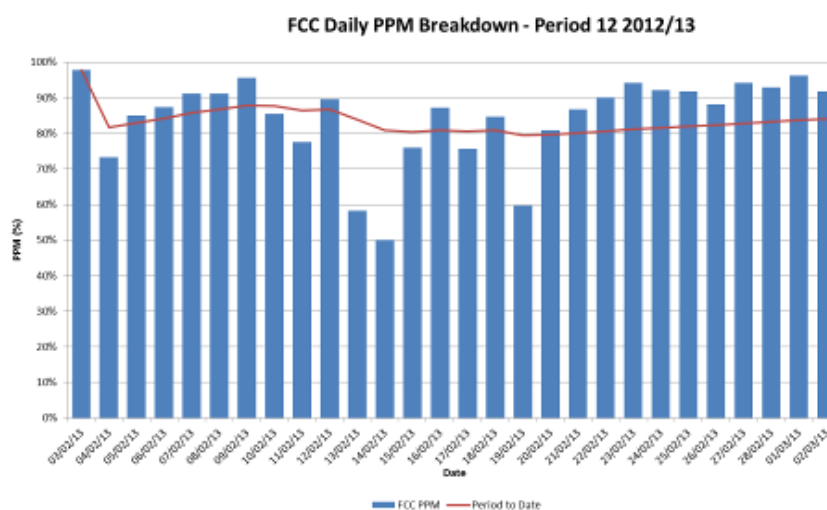
### Period 12 (3 February – 2 March)

Operating conditions have remained difficult during Period 12, with thousands of customers facing disruption due to two major infrastructure failures and several more localised problems.

The Thameslink route was severely disrupted by the collapse of a kilometre of overhead cable near Radlett. Damage was extensive, with supporting structures and cables crossing all four tracks damaged. Repair work took five days, with disruption to passengers throughout during the first three. Intermittent power supply failures near Purley which lasted for three days also resulted in delays across the whole of the route.

This month, 74% of delays were attributable to Network Rail causes. We are actively working with Network Rail to help them reduce the number of infrastructure failures.

Despite achieving our public performance measure (PPM) target of 90.48% on a number of days, we were unable to achieve the target for the period due to the negative impact of the infrastructure failures. As a result, overall PPM for this period was 84.01%.



The Period 12 Newsletter also had this to say:

### Improving Performance

To help improve these performance figures, a number of changes are planned to increase the reliability of our services. We are undertaking a review of our engineering processes and comparing our practises to those of other train operators and engineering firms. This helps us to make sure we are using industry best practise in maintenance.

We are strengthening our supply lines so that we have the major components we need to hand and can get failed trains back in to service more quickly. We will also be looking at how successful our winterisation programme was and further changes we can make to keep trains running no matter how bad the weather is.

Network Rail are also making improvements which will help our services. Minor modifications are to be made to bridges on the Thameslink route to help reduce wear on overhead cables.

More rigorous inspections will be carried out after power failures to allow potentially damaged areas of cable to be identified and repaired before they break.



## Cycling update

FCC have updated us as follows:

**1000 new cycle spaces to be created!** First Capital Connect has secured funding to create more than 1000 new cycle parking spaces at four key stations. Luton, Leagrave, Harpenden and Hatfield will all receive new two-tier cycle racks, protected by weather shelters and CCTV cameras.

- At Luton, 288 new spaces will be created to the south of the station.
- Racks at Leagrave will be replaced, with 88 new spaces being created.
- Cycle parking at Harpenden will be doubled, with 300 new spaces at the north end of the eastern car park.
- Hatfield station is to receive a 350 space cycle park.

The bulk of the funding for these improvements has come from the Department for Transport, with contributions from Hertfordshire County Council, Luton Borough Council and First Capital Connect.

## Contacting the BTP by text

The British Transport Police has launched a non emergency text number: 61016. More information is at [http://www.btp.police.uk/we\\_get\\_the\\_message.aspx](http://www.btp.police.uk/we_get_the_message.aspx). This includes this:

Text 61016 (or call 0800 40 50 40) when you want to contact us about an issue that doesn't require an emergency response. For example, you can text when:

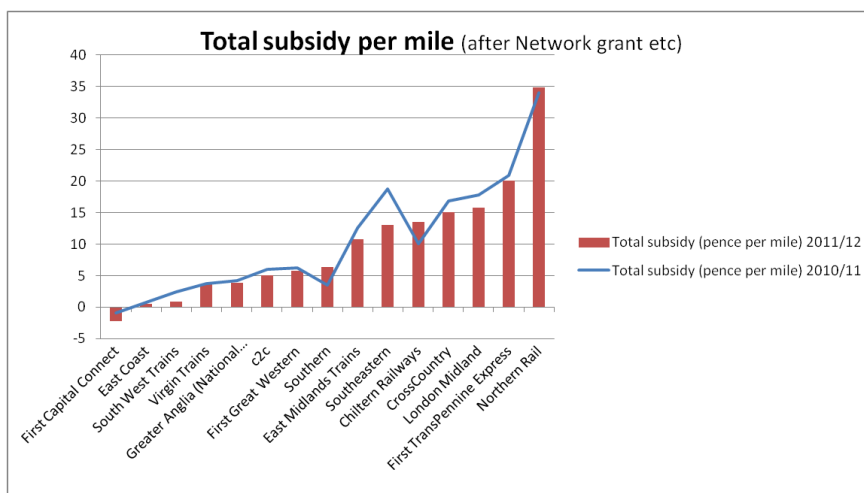
- You want to tell about an incident that has already happened
- You want to tell us about issues affecting your rail journey or your local station
- You have a general police enquiry

If your enquiry concerns buses or roads, you can contact local police anywhere in the country by dialling 101.

**When to call 999:** Always dial 999 when you need an urgent police response such as: A crime is happening, Someone suspected of a crime is nearby or Someone is injured, being threatened or in danger

## Annual season ticket costs compared

Although it is somewhat old news now, this BBC News article (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-19914219>) does highlight a somewhat dubious "privilege" for FCC travellers: Using the only operator where, taking all factors into account, a net contribution to the Government

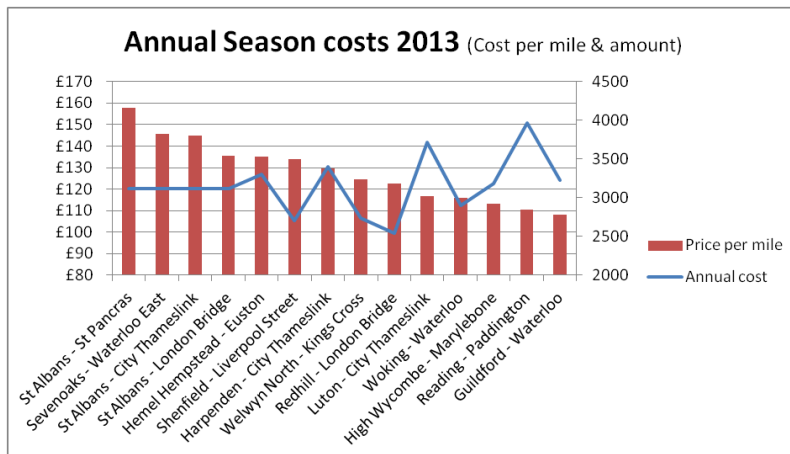




is made. Each FCC user contributed 2.2p per mile (or 47p for a Journey from St Albans to City Thameslink) in 2011/12. The nearest ‘competitor’ is East Coast at a subsidy of 0.5p per mile.

There is some correlation between annual season ticket costs and total subsidy, but a couple of matters are of note:

- The choice of destination for ‘London Thameslink’ has a significant impact on the price per mile of your ticket.
- Southeastern has both a high ticket price and a high subsidy.
- South West Trains has both a low ticket price and a low subsidy.
- The subsidy for London Midland is not comparable with those for operators in London and the South East as it has extensive operations in the West Midlands and in the North West.
- Chiltern has a low ticket price and a high subsidy.



It does seem clear that FCC, in particular the Thameslink route are a significant contributor to that 2.2pence per mile average contribution to the Government.

Based on single station samples, there isn't really enough data, so I will be looking to extend my analysis a bit further.

### Radlett Strategic Freight Interchange

This rumbles on; St Albans District Council has applied for a judicial review and Hertfordshire County Council have applied for an extension to 30 June as regards the Secretary of State's final decision (and the developer has objected) – more at [http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/planning/rail\\_freight\\_interchange.aspx](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/planning/rail_freight_interchange.aspx).

### Thameslink Programme

There is not a lot to report this time, but you may find this an interesting read: <http://www.londonreconnections.com/2013/postscript-thameslink-and-the-transport-committee/>.

Regards

*Neil*

Neil Middleton  
24 March 2013