



APTU¹ and BCA², Passenger User Groups at the south end of the Midland Mainline have prepared this response to the EMR December 2020 Timetable Consultation. We have split our response comments into four sections:

Section 1: EMR services from Bedford, Luton & Luton Airport Parkway to/from London St Pancras International.

Section 2: EMR services from Bedford, Luton & Luton Airport Parkway to/from the North.

Section 3: Other Comments.

Section 4: Responses to EMR's specific questions.

Section 1 – Bedford, Luton & Luton Airport to/from London St Pancras International

- We welcome the reinstatement of EMR services in both the AM Peak and PM Peak to Bedford, Luton & Luton Airport Parkway and the consequential increase in capacity.
- We welcome the linked reinstatement of EMR peak services between Bedford, Luton & Luton Airport Parkway and Wellingborough, Kettering & Corby.
- Southbound:
 - The time of the first train from Bedford should be around the same as now i.e. 05.38.
 - The time of the last train from Bedford should be later than the present last train at 22.40.
- Northbound
 - The time of the first train from St Pancras should be the same as now i.e. approx. 05.52.
 - The time of the last train from St Pancras should be the same as now at approx. 01.15.
- We strongly support the provision of a consistent half hourly service from first to last train on all days including Peak periods.
- Peak trains need to consist of 12 coaches.
- We are concerned about possible short formations off peak, particularly on Saturday and Sunday. Our experience is that there is very significant demand at these times, and it is essential that (1) sufficient capacity is provided; and (2) that provided capacity is regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to meet demand. We expect this to require 8 car trains, even 12 car trains at times. These reviews are especially required at weekends where it has now become busy on both days.
- The proposed journey time from St Pancras to Bedford is approximately 41/42 minutes. This is up to 7 minutes longer than present, which imposes a significant time penalty on regular passengers (eg over 4½ hours per month for a 5 day a week commuter). Anything that can be done to reduce this increase would be much appreciated; in particular, reviews after 12 months and once the overhead wires south of Bedford are re-rated for 125 miles per hour use should be undertaken to consider options for speed up.
- We note that these services will not call at St Albans. We consider this tolerable for December 2020 but believe that the rationale for this approach needs to be formally validated. APTU believes that EMR should commission or undertake a formal assessment of both the advantages and disadvantages of such calls (considering separately peak and off peak calls, and specific omissions such as evening peak northbound calls). St Albans

¹ APTU (the Association of Public Transport Users) is a Passenger User Group on the Thameslink route for stations between West Hampstead and Harlington inclusive. Their web site is at www.aptu.org.uk.

² BCA (the Bedford Commuters Association) is a Passenger User Group on the Thameslink route for Bedford & Flitwick. Their web site is at www.bedfordcommuters.org.uk.



is, by some way, the station with the highest footfall on the route and thus a potential large market. Some of the disadvantages of such calls are clear, such as longer journeys and reduced comfort / inability to board for longer distance travellers, but there is a need for a formal evaluation and also for the advantages to be properly identified and measured.

- Separately, plans need to include arrangements to allow calling at St Albans to assist Thameslink during periods of significant disruption.

Section 2 – Bedford to/from the North

The BCA and APTU have consistently opposed the decision of the DfT to cut direct Intercity services from Bedford, Luton & Luton Airport Parkway. As a consequence, travellers from these stations will be required to make an additional change at Kettering for services further north. This is unlikely to be cross platform and thus require the use of two stairs or two lifts; there will also be extended journey times (eg up to 20 minutes). For travellers wishing to go to Derby and Sheffield this will mean a further change of train at Leicester. For instance, Harpenden to Derby will now require 3 changes – Luton Airport Parkway (or Luton or Bedford), Kettering & Leicester. We believe that this decision will strongly encourage these travellers to switch to travelling by car (or other alternatives) and consequently lead to a drop in revenue and thus is not in EMR's commercial interests.

We urge EMR to continue to call Intercity services at Bedford, Luton & Luton Airport Parkway because:

- Northbound morning and southbound evening services are important for existing commuters from this area who work in Leicester and in some cases north of Leicester; in particular, we ask that the 5 services set out in the Train Service Requirement that must call at both Leicester and Wellingborough also call at Bedford (“Two services calling at Wellingborough to arrive at Leicester between 07:00 and 08:59 & Three services calling at Wellingborough to depart Leicester between 16:30 and 18:30”).
 - Whilst our preference is for both north and southbound calls, if timetabling practicalities mean that southbound calls are not possible, we believe that providing northbound calls only would still be a material benefit.
- Southbound morning and northbound evening services are important to commuters north of Kettering who work in Bedford, Luton and the surrounding area (including the airport).
- These services are important to both business and leisure travellers wishing to travel to/from this area. We are part of ‘England’s Economic Heartland’, a very substantial economy³ representing almost 10% of the UK population, which will have only one stop for EMR Intercity services at Kettering.
- Calls by long distance services at Luton Airport Parkway are important for travellers using Luton Airport for onward travel. Compared to East Midlands Airport, CAA figures for October 2019 show passenger numbers almost 4 times larger and the number of destinations served being over twice in number – there are significant numbers of East Midlands travellers who might wish to travel from a local Airport but will, in practice, need to use a more distant airport. The imminent arrival of Luton Airport’s DART mass transit service will reduce perceived difficulties and risks of using rail to travel to/from the Airport and this is likely to increase demand.

³ EEH Website: Population 5.1m, 280,000 businesses employing 2.7m, gross added value of £155bn



- It will maintain the number of times travellers will need to change trains and thus encourage / retain existing patronage.

If the decision is to proceed with the cutting of Intercity services from Bedford and Luton, then as a minimum we would expect:

- The connection at Kettering to be same/cross platform interchange where possible; in particular arrangements are put in place to ensure that Leicester trains are diverted via Platforms 1/2 when the lifts are not in operation (or late running services mean very short interchange times) and there are passengers who wish to transfer who cannot use the stairs.
- The connection time to be no longer than 10 minutes at Kettering.
- That procedures prioritise maintaining these connections during times of disruption.
- The time of the First train from Bedford to arrive at the destination station north of Kettering to be about the same as now.
- The time of the Last train from Bedford to arrive at the destination station north of Kettering to be about the same as now.
- The time of the First train to arrive at Bedford from stations north of Kettering to be about the same as now.
- The time of the Last train to arrive at Bedford from stations north of Kettering would be about the same as now.

In the longer term, we believe that Bedford will become an essential commercial destination for EMR Intercity services. This will occur after the start of East West Rail services at Bedford, initially for passengers from Oxford and other destinations to the west; and, ultimately, for passengers from Cambridge and other destinations in the East of England, which can be expected to generate large passenger flows if the number of interchanges is limited. Therefore, we believe EMR should cater for future stops in their Intercity timetable design, and, at the appropriate times during the East West Rail design process, lobby for a new platform at Bedford Midland serving the Up Fast line.

Section 3 – Other Comments

The BCA and APTU wish to emphasise the great importance we attach to this timetable starting on time due to the consequential changes it will have on Thameslink services with changes to their stopping pattern (Thameslink Express Services) which will alleviate the issues at Flitwick, Leagrave and Harpenden resulting from the May 2018 timetable decision by EMT to cease stopping at Bedford and Luton at both AM and PM peak periods.

We note that fares for journeys north from Bedford are expensive (eg Open Single Bedford Wellingborough is 79.6p per mile, whereas Bedford Luton is 51.6p per mile), and are therefore a disincentive to travelling by train. Fare reductions should be considered to stimulate demand in the light of increased capacity; we do not believe cheap advance fares will properly achieve this as the timing, at least, of many of these journeys will very much be 'spur of the moment'. We also believe it appropriate for a temporary discount to be applied until a high portion of the Class 360 Units have refurbished interiors (in a similar manner to the discount available to users of the Wellingborough to Bedford coach).



Section 4 – Response to specific questions

In December 2020, which of the following will be your most commonly used service?	EMR Electrics - to be introduced in December 2020 and serving Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough, Bedford, Luton and Luton Airport Parkway												
Thinking about how the information for the proposals for the December 2020 Timetable have been presented – how satisfied are you with the information provided?	Extremely satisfied												
Which aspects of your journey are the most important to you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Journey times 3 Number of seats provided 1 An even spread of departure times throughout the hour 6 Type of train used for your journey 5 On Train Catering 4 On board facilities such as WiFi, power sockets, passenger information, air conditioning etc 												
EMR Intercity: On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you support the following?:	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Changes to stopping patterns</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Changes to journey times</td> <td style="text-align: right;">4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Introduction of earlier morning services</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Introduction of later evening services</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Additional services</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Extra capacity</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10</td> </tr> </table>	Changes to stopping patterns	1	Changes to journey times	4	Introduction of earlier morning services	10	Introduction of later evening services	10	Additional services	10	Extra capacity	10
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Extra capacity	10												
EMR Intercity: On a scale of 1-10, how much do you support any planned changes to your usual journey?	4												
EMR Electrics: On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you support the following?	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Changes to stopping patterns</td> <td style="text-align: right;">8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Changes to journey times</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Introduction of earlier morning services</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Introduction of later evening services</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Additional services</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Extra capacity</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10</td> </tr> </table>	Changes to stopping patterns	8	Changes to journey times	2	Introduction of earlier morning services	10	Introduction of later evening services	10	Additional services	10	Extra capacity	10
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Arthur Taylor
BCA Chairman

Neil Middleton
APTU Chairman