

Press Release

11 December 2017



Passenger User Groups on Thameslink north say “We are being short changed by the Thameslink Programme May 2018 timetable because East Midlands Trains are not meeting their fair share of train capacity for peak hour travellers”

APTU¹ and BCA², the Passenger User Groups on the Thameslink north route call upon East Midlands Trains to continue to meet their fair share of train capacity for peak hour travellers in the May 2018 timetable.

From 20 May 2018, [East Midlands Trains plan to stop calling at Bedford and Luton](#) during peak service times. For locals working in London, this will result in:

- More crowded trains and more standing for Thameslink users as capacity provided by EMT will no longer be available – this will impact all stations (see table below).
- Fewer trains than expected at Bedford, Flitwick, Leagrave and Harpenden.
- Increased journey times for the fastest trains to/from Luton and Bedford – the new St Albans, Luton & Bedford only services from Thameslink will take longer than an EMT service.

In addition, this change will have a big impact on those who commute by train to Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire from Wellingborough and further north - they will now have to take a two coaches each day if they work conventional hours. This will have an impact on the economic vibrancy of the area.

Local commuters have suffered from the impact of the Thameslink Programme construction works since 2009, most recently with regular delays, no trains to London Bridge, slower journeys to East Croydon and Gatwick Airport and regular weekend engineering works. May 2018 was going to be when the benefit started to be delivered - something that we now think most local train users will have to wait for until December 2020 (see note 1).

This is despite East Midlands Trains being allowed to hire 3 additional high speed trains to handle the impact of the increases in Thameslink services from May. The May timetable means that just over one more fast Thameslink train will run per hour – but East Midlands Trains are withdrawing around two stops per hour from Bedford and around one stop per hour from Luton.

Neil Middleton, Chairman of APTU, said “Whilst we know that the extra fast train per hour for Thameslink will have some impact on East Midlands Trains, we are baffled as to why, even after an increase in the fleet size of three, there is still insufficient capacity to call at Bedford and Luton in peak hours”.

Arthur Taylor, Chairman of BCA, said “This is very disappointing. Local train users have put up with the downsides of the Thameslink Programme construction works - more delayed trains, slower journeys for those travelling to East Croydon and Gatwick, and no services to London Bridge. Now we discover that none of us will get the full benefit, probably until December 2020”.

Neil Middleton, Chairman of APTU, went on to comment “There is now going to be a lot more standing on Thameslink trains due to all seats being taken than we expected. In the evening, this will affect travellers to all stations; in the morning this is most likely to affect stations such as Harpenden, St Albans & Mill Hill Broadway” (see note 2).

APTU & BCA would like to see:

1. The retention of East Midlands Trains peak hour services serving Bedford & Luton. Even if it makes sense for certain trains not to call, making a simple ‘All Current / None at all’ decision is inappropriate.
2. A detailed explanation, complete with detailed timetables and capacity impact analysis, from East Midlands Trains as to why there will be insufficient capacity to stop at Bedford and Luton in peak hours.
 - a. This should include confirmation that all of the existing fleet and the additional 3 services will remain deployed on the Midland Main Line.
3. The removal of first class from Thameslink trains in peak hours to increase seating capacity for the typical Thameslink traveller – the vast majority of who use Standard Class tickets. Low usage of first class seating is routine on Thameslink trains north of St Pancras.

Media questions should be addressed to Neil Middleton (APTU Chairman) on 07887 628367 or Arthur Taylor (BCA Chairman) on 07850 730092.

Note 1: When electric services commence to Corby, we expect these to call at Bedford and Luton. The overhead wires are expected to be energised by May 2020; there will then need to time for driver training etc; additionally there are no clear, public plans for the provision of trains to provide these services as yet; we therefore consider December 2020 to be a realistic start date.

Note 2: Government targets are that no passenger should stand for more than 20 minutes – this will apply to St Albans & Harpenden travellers.

Impact per station

Current East Midlands Trains arrivals / departures

	Bedford	Luton	Luton Airport Parkway <i>No change</i>
Arrivals St Pancras 0700-1000	6	4	4
Departures St Pancras 1600-1900	7	5	3

(Benchmark is the service we were expecting in May 2018, after the recently announced phased introduction of the Thameslink Programme service increases)

	Reduction in services	Reduction in capacity & increased standing	
Bedford	Y	Y	No EMT services
Flitwick	Y	Y	
Harlington		Y	
Leagrave	Y	Y	
Luton		Y	No EMT services
Luton Airport Parkway	Y	Y	
Harpenden	Y	Y	
St Albans City		Y	
Radlett			
Elstree & Borehamwood			Capacity reduction because St Albans travellers switch to slower services
Mill Hill Broadway			
Hendon		Y	
Cricklewood			
West Hampstead			
Thameslink			
Kentish Town			

About us:

1. APTU (the Association of Public Transport Users) is the 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 the Passenger User Group on the Thameslink route for Bedford & Flitwick. Their web site is at www.bedfordcommuters.org.uk.

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