

Station reopening campaign takes off

Lea Bridge station on the line between Stratford and Tottenham Hale may rise again. Closed since July 1985, it is now the focus of a growing campaign for reopening.

The context is improving access between Waltham Forest and Stratford with the new Westfield centre, and the prospect of improved Lea Valley line services in just five years' time.

Network Rail's London & South East Route Utilisation Strategy, just published, identifies the clear and pressing need for infrastructure investment to increase track capacity in the Lea Valley north from Stratford and Tottenham Hale for extra local train services to meet rising demand. In the wake of London's riots there is additional funding available to support economic regeneration in the Tottenham and Enfield areas. Specifically, the Stratford City development generated Section 106 funds for 'the Chingford Link Project' which can include reopening Lea Bridge station, and the approximately £5m apparently available may be near enough to do the job.

All these factors combine to generate a gathering groundswell of support for a probably unique opportunity to fill a gap in Waltham Forest's access to rail transport. An 'arc of access' already exists from Leyton tube station to the east to Blackhorse Road tube and mainline stations to the north, via Leytonstone and Leytonstone High Road, Leyton Midland Road, Walthamstow Central and Queen's Road, Wood Street, and St James Street stations. Three very high frequency bus services along Lea Bridge Road (48/55/56) extend the walk-up catchment area of the reopened station further into the Clapton area of Hackney and the Whipps Cross area of Waltham Forest.

Contrastingly, bus links between Walthamstow and either Stratford or Tottenham Hale are limited and slow, and links from Clapton to those two key destinations and interchanges are no better. Users

of bus routes 69, 158, 230, and 257 will bear witness. Future journey times to Stratford and Tottenham Hale from the catchment of the reopened Lea Bridge station would be halved. From this December's timetable change the Monday-Saturday service, the service likely to greet a reopened station, will become two trains per hour all day rather than the present weekday peak hours only with just an hourly service at all other times. Then with a four trains per hour available at the reopened station in the relatively near future, an attractive proposi-

tion develops for residents and businesses in the area as well as visitors to it.

The tasks ahead now include developing a detailed and credible prospectus for the station reopening, and to convince the 'movers and shakers' that now is the time to grasp the opportunity of a combination of favourable circumstances to make this happen. Some have dared to suggest that 2014 is a workable target date for the reopening of Lea Bridge station.

Roger Blake



Lea Bridge station - in need of some TLC

