

London and South East Branch

Please Reply to: 26 Millway,
Mill Hill,
London,
NW7 3RB

Richard Gusanie
Executive, Track Access
Office of Rail Regulation
One Kemble Street
London
WC2B 4AN

30th September 2008

Dear Mr. Gusanie,

North London Railway Track Access Option application

I refer to the letter plus attachments submitted to you by TfL on 11th August 2008 regarding the de-scoping of their s.18 application for the NLR TAO.

Railfuture is very dismayed that further reductions are now proposed by TfL and NR. The original s.18 application by TfL contained a balanced and realistic proposal for improvements. However, it was, in itself, scaled down from the original concept in that it did not contain a through service from the Barking – Gospel Oak line nor did it allude to any prospects of a service via Primrose Hill. Both of these elements were contained in the adopted Cross London RUS.

Whilst TfL maintain that adopting this reduction in capacity does not preclude future provision of the full scheme, we are of the opinion that to preserve the severe capacity limitations between Camden Road East and West Junctions will undermine the overall level of improvement for passenger services and, particularly the increasing strategic freight traffic. We would, therefore, look to TfL/NR to offer some positive reassurance that the full scheme will be actively pursued with a view to early implementation during CP4.

The junction layout at Camden Road has always been viewed as a severe limitation. The original proposal to provide what amounted to a 4 track layout east from Camden Road West Junction was the best that could be achieved given the geographically constrained location and the traffic demand level.

We are alarmed that this situation seems to have arisen through an apparent major miscalculation of the extent of the costs and risks associated with the replacement of Bridges 71, 83 and 94. We would question the realism and effectiveness of the assessments, cost, risk and structural, carried out up to GRIP stage 3 – the level achieved at submission of the original TAO.

TfL have stated that as a result of this de-scoping, the off peak service will be reduced from 8 tph to 6 tph and that this level of service remains consistent with the Cross London RUS. However, if consistency with the RUS is considered so vital, then so would be the provision of a through service from the Gospel Oak line and the provision of a service via Primrose Hill. We seem to have developing a situation where consistency with the RUS is only felt to be important when it suits the operator. Such an attitude, should it be permitted to continue, would have the effect of undermining the credibility of the entire RUS process.

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We are very concerned that this de-scoping will have a detrimental effect on the ability of the North London Line to support the transport strategy for London 2012 and for its legacy commitment. For example, will freight traffic be suspended during key dates in the Olympic calendar to allow a full peak service to operate all day? We also have severe reservations about the implications for strategic freight services. A prime example is the imminent growth in cross London traffic resulting from the development of the new London Gateway port facilities at Shellhaven.

In order to ameliorate the effect on passenger services, we would like to offer a proposal that would preserve the off peak level of service contained in the original TAO application. TfL have stated that the new signalling will retain the ability to support the originally proposed headways. This would indicate that the capacity will remain to operate 8 tph in the off peak. Therefore, we propose that the 2 tph (in both peak and off peak) originally destined to reverse at Camden Road be routed via the Primrose Hill link line and be reversed in the bay platform at Willesden Junction (Low Level). This would preserve the originally proposed all day service level over the core North London Line between Stratford and Camden Road, plus providing a service (as envisaged in the Cross London RUS) between Stratford and Queen's Park. We do, of course, acknowledge that this proposal will have some modest resource implications.

It has been most evident during the current blockade that the diversion of services via Primrose Hill has been a success. The direct link, without necessity to change trains, provided between Willesden Junction, Queen's Park, Kilburn High Road, South Hampstead, Camden Road and stations east to Highbury and Stratford has restored a long absent (and much needed) connection and provides much more effectively for the commuting requirements of many individuals giving convenient and more direct access to the City, East London and the Docklands.

Yours sincerely,



Keith Dyll
Chairman, London & South East Branch
(020) 8959 7147

Copy to:

TfL - London Overground – Andrew McIntosh
Network Rail – Phil Heath
Network Rail – Trevor Cordrey
ODA – Hugh Sumner