

Indicative Thameslink timetable specification

Current planning assumptions affecting Cannon Street services

The Thameslink programme comprises £5.5bn of investment and will offer more trains and better journeys for passengers on the Thameslink route running north-south through London. Specifically, this includes new rolling stock; improved performance through better infrastructure reliability and track layouts; and new stations at London Bridge and Blackfriars. The Kent RUS (established Spring 2010) published an indicative timetable specification following the completion of the programme, which has attracted a great deal of interest from stakeholders.

The timetable proposal was developed in order to maximise the overall benefits to Thameslink and non-Thameslink services. In considering future Thameslink route destinations, it was critical to understand that any new trains would be diversions of current services as existing capacity constraints outside the core area would apply and it is unlikely that any additional train paths can be robustly timetabled.

The aim of the Thameslink service specification is the need to maximise capacity into and through London Bridge. The RUS considered the capacity limit to be 86 trains per hour (tph) split across the terminating and through platforms on the Central and Eastern sides of the station. Thameslink services contribute 18tph of the overall quantum through the station. Additionally, the service specification includes 6tph Thameslink via Elephant and Castle which are not routed via London Bridge.

In considering the potential destinations of the 24tph Thameslink services, it was established that a 2tph or 4tph service pattern was required to tie into frequencies from the Brighton, East Coast and Midland Main lines. The 3tph repeating pattern currently in operation on the Kent suburban area would not integrate robustly with Thameslink without reducing overall capacity. Further information on the relevant timetable constraints can be found in the South London RUS – paragraph 9.4.5.

The frequency of the current Cannon Street main line trains aligns with the Thameslink service pattern. Based on the aim of maximising overall capacity, the indicative service specification published in the South London RUS substituted these services with Thameslink trains. This was taken as the base planning assumption published in the Kent RUS.

A further key issue has been incorporated into the base planning assumption. The Department for Transport is procuring fixed formation rolling stock (i.e. single units that cannot be split) for the Thameslink network, comprising of 12-car and some 8-car trains. The current assumed service specification for Thameslink trains on the Kent network is as follows:

- 2tph Maidstone East – all day (8-car)
- 2tph Paddock Wood – peak only (12-car)
- 2tph Tunbridge Wells – peak only (12-car)

The assumptions on allocation of the rolling stock follow the aim of maximising overall capacity given the constraints imposed by existing infrastructure. By providing 12-car services through the Tonbridge corridor a significant amount of additional capacity can be provided on this route. However, this is to the detriment of stations south of Tunbridge Wells, where 12-car operation is not available due to existing power supply limitations. Enhanced power supply to provide 12-car operation beyond Tunbridge Wells would require significant additional investment. The Maidstone East route has been favoured for 8-car operation as this conforms to the current route capability, which due to various constraints, cannot be improved cost effectively.

As noted above, the Kent RUS has used the assumed service specification as the base planning assumption for the Thameslink timetable. We are working with the DfT and other industry stakeholders to develop this timetable, which will be implemented following the

completion of the Thameslink programme. The current Southeastern franchise is due to end in 2014 and will be consulting on the future timetable specification at some point in the future.

Construction programme

One of the key elements of the Thameslink programme will be the reconstruction of London Bridge station, which will provide a reconfigured layout and wider and straighter platforms. Work is due to start at some stage after the Olympics/Paralympics and will cause a degree of disruption over a period of time. A phased approach to the construction is planned with work moving from one side of the station to the other. This will mean that an initial phase would see Charing Cross trains unable to stop at London Bridge, followed by a second phase when Cannon Street trains do not stop there. The construction strategy is under development between ourselves, the DfT and other stakeholders and will be communicated at the appropriate juncture.

Further information:

Kent RUS & South London RUS
<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/asp/4449.aspx>

Thameslink Programme
<http://www.thameslinkprogramme.co.uk/>