

EPTUG Public Meeting - 22nd June 2004.

London Underground on the spot.

We have 4 guests from London Underground.

- Tim O'Toole - Managing Director
- Bob Thorogood District line general manager
- Mike Challis Piccadilly line general manager
- Jeff Ellis Central line general manager.

The first speaker was Tim O'Toole who has been in the job just one year. His approach was interesting as having come from America he saw that the management structure was wrong. Now each line has it's own general manager (much like he understand LU used to have). They each report to a director who is responsible for ensuring that they have the resources to perform their job. This point about upward delegation shows that a fundamental management problem that occurs quite often is not a problem here. One year into PPP with all it's complex arrangements, it is a very important to get on with it. (Can do management is a plus) Safety, Cleanliness and Reliability are his key aims. Management structure encourages cross-fertilization of ideas. Mentioned that despite ongoing Industrial Relations challenges there have been no strikes so far and was hopeful over proposed one. No conclusions could be drawn about PPP effects but steady improvements should be made. But real improvements are a long way off (2009 Signals on Jubilee, 2014 Signals on District). Paris took 30 years to transform Metro.

Questions were asked about disabled access. And even though access is available on quite a few stations, Time explained that effectively only 5% real access is available when you consider actual Journeys. So he did not hide behind statistics that could make things look better. The disabled access could not be factored into PPP for the reason that it was not quantifiable at the time. Mayor is pushing for a budget to add disabled access to the current PPP plans over the next 15 years to bring accessibility up to 50% where with buses would make the situation a lot better.

Also Ealing Broadway where over 70% users are Tube users. LTUC asked the question about control given ticketing problems. TFL wants control over ticket pricing in the London area anyway. Tim O'Toole emphasised that we need integration with a big "I". London's fares are the highest in the world. Oystercard will improve things but the TOC's who operate the suburban services need to get up to speed as well.

Emphasised the budgets for the Tube were effectively £1b each from fares and grants that then pay costs of £1b each for operation and PPP costs.

Finished off about the importance of keeping communications open.

Mike Challis - Piccadilly line general manager spoke next.

- Importance of reliability as with 3-5 minutes gaps between trains there is not much room to increase capacity.
- Timetable is the bible for 450 driving and 1200 station staff.

Jeff Ellis - Central line general manager spoke next.

- No service for 12 weeks last year.
- 85 trains of which 4 in maintenance, 70 units needed to run service.
- Automatic train system. So driver is there to ensure smooth running and to open doors.
- Unreliable trains had 4000 km between mean failures now up to 7000 km. (Note Singapore 44000 km).
- 1400 staff on Central line.
- Preventative maintenance a big thing and failures discussed daily in order to eliminate.

Bob Thorogood - District line general manager.

- 64 km end to end. 60 stations 77 peak trains. 2 types of Stock.
- Cost £52m per year.
- First section opened 1868 and by 1902 the Upminster line opened.
- Weekend work also involves lifting track to repair drainage in the central area.
- Rebuilds at Fulham Broadway are cheap as they are part of general development.
- Centrally the headway is 2.5 minutes which is tight.
- 25000 km between failures mean that stock is most reliable (but the oldest and more solid) Hopefully another 15 years life.

We then had the General questions.

- Piccadilly ride - MC - eastbound 30 mph restriction between Hammersmith and Acton. More about comfort rather than safety. Overnight work for 8-12 weeks by Metronet to improve ride but LU not happy with results so far. Ideal 45 mph on section. Meeting due (topic appeared in Gazette).
- General questions about why can't Rayners Lane train use slower line to increase H'Row capacity. Rayners Lane passengers (from Uxbridge as well) have a long journey as is to get in. also the timetabling and signalling problems that could occur. Off peak there should be 2 H'row to 1 Rayners Lane train and a one to one at peak.
- Planning for service disruptions. Earls Court control has a real problem in knowing where trains are (old signalling problems well documented). They have increased staff at certain stations to also check which trains are where and to make it easier to manage disruptions. However fixes to signalling are 10-15 years away.

- How about 2-3 trains starting at Northfields during rush hour so that people can get on. This was a general question for several lines. Limits of useable stock and general capacity. District is more heavily used in East and so to run to Northfields would take trains from the East. Piccadilly is busy all the way from H'Row so starting trains from Northfields would mean more congestion for Hounslow and H'row users.
- Out of service DL trains returning to depot from Ealing Broadway. Why can't they stop at Ealing Common so people could at least get off and get a Piccadilly train. Drivers have to check the whole train when it goes out of service. The time taken (4 minutes) would hold up the next Piccadilly train.
- Station announcements re affected as local residents often raise objections to systems. Systems are improving but still objections come in, East Putney for example.
- Station lights at Chiswick Park are museum pieces with no starter motors and so when lights go off an engineer has to jump start them!!
- Refurbishment due at Northfields, Northolt, Greenford over next 2 years and will involve better movement within station and CCTV and clean up of infrastructure of station. Current scoping and definition of jobs being done prior to work schedules being issued to contractors.
- Fare evasion estimated at £56m plus.
- Nature of the tube complicates development. Length and disparate usage of lines for example a train at Epping may have 40 passengers but at Oxford Circus will have 1800. Junctions cause delays and so interlinked lines such as those that go through Earls Court have the potential for chaos when a problem occurs.
- To increase capacity on Central line would require more trains and also more sub-stations for power.
- If Park Royal development expands (as likely to do so) then a new station would require 3 more train sets top maintain timetable.

Conclusion.

London Underground has improved things, is open to examination and are making a big effort. However visible improvements may not be seen for a while. Perhaps things not getting worse is a big plus at this time. The honesty of the team and desire to improve things is most welcome. No hiding behind statistics. I felt the management team through responsible for their own lines were an effective team.

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