

## TRANSPORT WATCH – MARCH 2008

The busy route 297 running from Ealing to Willesden via Perivale could be one of the next London routes to operate around the clock, 24 hours a day, if their proposals are accepted. At the same time the N11 service be diverted along the Uxbridge Road to end at Ealing Broadway, a move which it is hoped would aid reliability. The plan would of course mean no night bus along part of Argyle Road and a third night service along part of the Uxbridge Road. Let us know what you think by leaving a message on 020 8998 0999 no later than the end of March. The changes will, if adopted, commence in December.

This month sees the big test of public transport in the west of the Borough as Terminal 5 opens and overnight thousands of workers change their commuting habits. London Buses feel confident that following months of meticulous planning and studying that they have got it right but even they are saying they are willing to be flexible if it appears that they have got it wrong.

The opening of the new terminal will see the demise of the route 435 from Southall to the Cargo Centre via Cranford and its replacement by the new route 482 which will follow route H32 to Hounslow West before diverting off the Airport's southern side.

This month is also the month when Freedom Passes are renewed and if your turn on the roster has not already been reached then you should be calling at the Post Office without delay. If you have received your new pass you will immediately notice a difference. This is because from the first of next month the passes can be used for off peak travel on local buses across the UK.

Chiltern Railways have been called to task over the condition of lighting at Sudbury and Harrow Road Station. One recent passenger visitor there complained that the station approach was badly lit, with only one dim lamp near the subway entrance and much peripheral lighting provided by the large illuminated advertising hoardings also being defective. Sudbury Hill Harrow Station comes in for similar criticism but Chiltern have promised to respond quickly and remedy the defects without delay.

The busy route 282 linking Mount Vernon Hospital via Northolt and Greenford to Ealing Hospital is not to get any improved frequency or increased capacity. London Buses have reviewed the route but feel that the present service level is sufficient to meet current needs. Better news though for route 92, which also serves the hospital. Because of increased usage this route will see a better Saturday service and improved evening frequencies through the week.

Southall commuters will also benefit from a new direct link to the Piccadilly Line and to South West Trains running into Clapham and Waterloo, as well as enabling more Southall bus commuters to reach jobs on the Great West Road. Following lengthy campaigning by Ealing Passenger Transport Users Groups and others over many years the 195 route will, from 19<sup>th</sup> April, be extended from Ealing Hospital via Boston Manor Road and terminate in Half Acre at Brentford. But London Buses say the service from Southall will no longer enter the Hospital grounds, something which EPTUG feels strongly should be maintained.

First Great Western have been busy with the paint brush smartening up its stations across the borough and certainly on a bright spring day the stations all look a lot nicer. Now they want to turn the paint brushes loose inside the trains refreshing and refurbishing the 1992 fleet of “Turbo” trains. First Great Western have set aside a total of £6.1m to “light refresh” the trains. But, say user groups along the line, “please hold on, the trains are destined to remain in use at least until the end of the present franchise some 7 years away and they will, by then, be in urgent need of smartening up. Please leave refurbishment for a little longer”. Seems you can’t win when running a railway.

London Overground claim that since they took over the North London Line in November and introduced Oyster Cards and platform staff at its stations throughout the working day, that passenger numbers have risen substantially. But not to be outdone the Piccadilly Line managers say that their line is used for 680,000 trips a day compared with 540,000 trips a day a mere 18 months ago. No wonder you can never get a seat.

Will rude surly transport staff ever be a thing of the past? Every operator tries to remove the problem but it seems most passengers are not convinced that the results are good. First Great Western are the latest to re-enter the fray and have announced a £4m enhanced customer service package for its front line staff. They have also announced, (again), a £7m investment to enhance the Customer Information System which might of course do more to diminish the interface with rude surly front line staff than the re-training package.

Hidden gems of yesteryear lie hidden at the London’s Transport museum overflow site opposite Acton Town Station. The museum overflow, though not generally open to the public, will be open on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> March providing those who hanker after yesteryear to wallow in a haven of nostalgia. And, to add to their pleasure there will also be a large number of model railways running as well as opportunities to purchase souvenirs and mementoes.

Looking to the future however, London Assembly members, Richard Barnes and Angie Bray have together with EPTUG won confirmation that Ealing Broadway Station will be redeveloped before Crossrail starts operations, and it will be fully accessible. However London Underground say they are still not prepared to re-open the former District Railway entrance. They say to do so is not cost effective and they remain prepared to rely upon the Crossrail led changes to solve the problem. But their refusal met with widespread hostility when it was announced at a private meeting and they have been told once again to must reconsider their decision both on existing safety grounds and to ease pressure on the main exit whilst reconstruction of the station takes place. The fight is hotting up. Tell the Gazette and EPTUG what you think they should do.

Network Rail meanwhile have confirmed that the arch over platforms 9 to 12 is to be rebuilt at a cost of £40 million. Work is to start as early as November this year and be completed by 2010 at which time, Network Rail say, it will match the grandeur of Brunel’s famous and much admired arch.