

Transport Watch – July 2008

Big improvements to many of the “E” routes have been promised by London Buses and, if all goes well, these improvements will be introduced by spring next year. Two of the routes, the E2 and the E8 will be operated by double deck vehicles providing much needed extra capacity whilst the E3 will enjoy the benefit of larger single deck vehicles on that route. Other routes such as the E5 and the E7 will see earlier journeys on Sunday mornings. However the good news is tinged with some not so good news, frequencies on some of the routes receiving larger vehicles will operate at a slightly reduced frequency.

London Buses have also announced that they propose providing a much needed link from Ealing Broadway to the fast expanding Chiswick Office Park by extending route E10 via Gunnersbury Avenue and Bollo Lane. This will enable commuters from the Thames Valley to leave the cars at home and use bus and train to reach work. Ealing’s Passenger Transport Users Group has been pressing for this link for some time and congratulates TfL Buses for its introduction though it regrets that their request for other new route extensions, such as diverting the E5 to serve the new health centre in Southall or extending the E2 to serve the busy Sky TV Complex at Gillette Corner have been refused.

The Circle Line will disappear from the London Underground maps at the end of next year if planned changes by LUL proceed. The Circle Line will be replaced by an alteration to the Hammersmith and City Line. Under the plan 12 trains per hour, as opposed to the present 7 trains an hour will depart from Hammersmith to Liverpool Street via Edgware Road. Then 6 of the trains will proceed via Tower Hill and Victoria to Edgware Road where they will terminate and return via Victoria and Tower Hill back to Hammersmith. Meanwhile the other 6 Hammersmith and City Line trains will proceed to Plaistow or Barking. Members of EPTUG will be able to learn more about these changes in the next edition of the Group’s magazine “Platform” due in the autumn.

Congratulations to First Great Western who are installing and testing Oyster Card readers at all its London stations ahead of most of the other operators and well ahead of the TfL imposed deadline. The facility which is already available to travellers between Paddington, Ealing Broadway and Greenford Stations will reduce queues at ticket counters and will cap the daily London travel spend of many.

London Buses looks set to go ahead and remove the distinction between “compulsory” and “request” stops following consultations with passengers and passenger groups. Notices announcing the change will start appearing soon but the wise passenger should assume that the change is already in force and that all stops are “request only” stops. They have also confirmed that “Hail and Ride” sections of routes will also change to fixed stops, claiming 88% of respondents in a recent survey were in favour of the change. One benefit of fixed stopping places is that same level access for wheelchair users can be provided.

There are only a few days left to make Transport for London aware of your views about the proposed new bus route 228 and changes to the existing route 316, both passing through the White City and the Ladbrooke Grove areas. If you need to know

more contact London Buses without delay and make sure you tell EPTUG of any concerns you may have by ringing 020 8998 0999 being sure to add your name and phone number when you do.

The ticket office near platform 9 at Paddington is being used less and less as more and more passengers buy tickets on line or use season tickets or Oysters. Now First Great Western have applied for permission to remove the facility and to use the site for a bank of ticket machines. They claim that less than 4% of the tickets sold at the office could not be issued by the new machines and there is of course a fully manned ticket office adjacent to platform 1.

Passengers waiting at Castle Bar and other stations along the Greenford Branch may rub their eyes in disbelief as brightly coloured Virgin trains heading for Birmingham or Euston glide through the station without stopping. But no, it is not a case of the drivers losing their way but a clever plan enabling passengers travelling to and from Britain's second city to avoid the engineering blockade on the West Coast Mainline near Rugby and avoiding the dreaded rail replacement buses. EPTUG's concern however is to ensure that pressure on the line does not lead to last minute cancellations or delays to our much needed service. (Incidentally, did you know Brunel originally intended his London to Bristol Line to terminate at Euston where the London to Birmingham Railway Company had already started operating successfully).

Even the most ardent supporters of public transport accept that at times a journey by car is the only practical alternative. But taxing and insuring a car and finding somewhere to park it when not in use is getting more and more expensive and more difficult. That is perhaps why car clubs are catching on in a big way and many residents of Ealing have already decided not to waste money buying a car simply for the odd occasion but instead have opted to join one of the local car clubs. Now those clubs are reporting record usage and are looking to expand into more sites within the borough, especially Greenford and Southall. Find out more by calling 0845 330 1234 or via www.citycarclub.co.uk.

London Underground is advising tube passengers to carry bottles of water with them when travelling in hot weather and to get off the train if feeling unwell and avoid pulling the alarm between stations. When passengers are taken ill on board and trains are held it results in other trains being held in the hot tunnels and, with no air passing through, even more distressed passengers falling ill and, when trains start to move again, even more overcrowding as delayed passengers attempt to board. For their part the Underground is placing industrial fan units at stations where space permits and investing in new air conditioned trains for the future.

Our two local stations on the London Overground, Acton Central and South Acton, are amongst several stations which have been awarded "safe station" status by the Department for Transport. London Overground, part of TfL, pledged to improved station security when they took over the line from Silverlink last November. London Underground have also recently reported good news on the crime front, an 11% drop in crime.