

Dear Member

In this newsletter we want to update you on various matters associated with the timetable changes on 22 March. We have been invited to a FCC / Network Rail Stakeholder event next Monday and will issue another newsletter after that.



A reminder

The Moorgate branch will close after service on Friday 20 March, and the terminating platforms (from the south) at Blackfriars will also close. From Monday 23 March, our Thameslink service will be:

- Bedford <> Brighton (*As now*)
- Luton / St Albans <> Wimbledon Loop (*As now*)
- Kentish Town <> Sevenoaks (peak services to/from Bedford) - Monday to Friday only
- Bedford <> Kent (3 morning services from Ashford, Bearsted and Rochester to Bedford, 3 evening services to Ashford & Gillingham (2)).

In broad terms, services that previously went to/from Moorgate will now go to/from Sevenoaks or Elephant & Castle. The timetable north of Farringdon is very similar to the one currently in place.

Rolling stock

You may well have read in the newspapers that there have been significant delays on the delivery of the new “class 377” units to First Capital Connect.

The situation is best summed up in the FCC press release: <http://www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/Main.php?sEvent=News&sFileName=News.php&id=146>.

There has been a large reshuffling of trains around the Train Operating Companies to replace the units not delivered by Bombardier. In particular:

- London Midland (Euston Services) are loaning Southern 10 units for their Milton Keynes to Clapham Junction / East Croydon service.
- Southern can then release 377s to FCC for the Bedford to Brighton route.
- South Eastern are providing 4 units for the Orpington / Sevenoaks service (these are third rail only, so these trains will terminate at City Thameslink).
- FCC’s Great Northern route is providing a pair of 317s. In the morning peak, these are not scheduled to run and will be deployed on an Elephant & Castle service if there are too many other units unavailable. Because these units cannot run to City Thameslink and because of the crowded platforms at Farringdon, it is likely that this service will terminate at St Pancras. In the evening, they will form a 18:16 from Farringdon to Bedford.
- The 319 refurbishment programme has been suspended.

Other key factors to be borne in mind include:

- There will be a significant reduction in spare units (from a planned 10 to 3). This will increase the risk of short formed and cancelled services - many units are running on unfamiliar infrastructure. Should there have to be regular cancellations / short formations, we have asked FCC to pre-publicise this so we can all plan our days (as far as this is possible) to avoid them.
- We asked if the 317s could run to/from Moorgate and we understand that this would contradict government instructions that the official close date of Barbican & Moorgate Thameslink is to be 20 March.
- Farringdon station is likely to become very crowded and my recommendation to you is to travel on to City Thameslink if possible.

Why were there delays on the 377s?

My scrutiny of the transport press often gives the credit crunch as the cause of the delays in the 377s. Some of Bombardier's suppliers have gone out of business, and they have either not been able to replace them or it has taken time to do so. This has been so much of a problem that in a handful of cases, Bombardier had to buy the supplier to ensure that parts would be available. In particular, problems with the interiors are mentioned as an issue.

FCC received their first 377 on 27 February, and (I believe) their second yesterday. They are then expecting to receive about 1 a week.

Will they be using 377s on my train?

The answer to this one is "I don't know", however, I calculate that there will be around 12 available and 6 will be needed for the long distance services from Kent. Therefore, I think that, at least in the early days, they will be making relatively rare appearances on our peak services. The best chance may be mid day Brighton Bedford services.

And then there were none?

The plan above assumes FCC will have available 3 new 377s. They received one some time ago, and might have received the second today, but we hear both have to go back to Derby (where they are built) for modifications - so under two weeks before the new service, it is quite possible that FCC will have no 377s - we will ask next week at the Stakeholder briefing.

Blackfriars Underground

Blackfriars underground station closed on 2 March. Any feedback on the best alternate routes for members who previously switched to the Circle / District line there would be appreciated - in particular suggestions on the best way to get to Canary Wharf would be appreciated by some members.

Weekend services

Please note the following variations from the standard no central London service:

- Saturday 14 March: No service south of Hendon before 07:30
- Sunday 15 March: No service south of Hendon all day: installing a second footbridge at West Hampstead (this will have lifts and exit mid platform to the west). On this day, there is also engineering work meaning bus replacement on the Great Northern route north of Welwyn Garden City, so this is likely to be just as bad. London Midland's web site says there will be a normal service on this line (but, so far as I am aware, FCC tickets will not be valid).
- Sunday 22 March: Cross London service
- Saturday 28 March: No service south of Hendon before 07:30
- Sunday 29 March: No service south of Hendon all day (as 15 March)
- Sunday 5 April: Cross London service
- Friday 10 April (Good Friday): No central London service
- Monday 13 April (Easter Monday): No central London service

Neil Middleton
11 March 2009