

Dear Friend



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Welcome to this newsletter. Most importantly, two requests for help:

1. Can you help with a passenger count for EMT services at Luton and Luton Airport Parkway this coming Thursday (1st Feb) early evening?
2. Please lobby your local politicians to object to the EMT service changes.

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EMT trains not stopping at Bedford & Luton in the peak

Since the last newsletter, we have remained in dialogue with East Midlands Trains, and in particular, we and the BCA sent them a joint letter two weeks ago, setting out areas of uncertainty and concern. The letter is on the website: http://aptu.org.uk/pdfs/emt_may2018_sent16Jan.pdf. We are due to meet them again on 21 February.

Critically, I think there is very limited room for manoeuvre now for the May 2018 timetable. There are three core reasons for this:

1. Industry timescales – the May 2018 timetable is now entering its lock down phase.
2. The current response is very much based on predicted outcomes [most notably the reliability of the new May 2018 Thameslink timetable] – arguing that risks should be taken becomes very unappealing to those in the industry making the decisions when there is so much uncertainty.
3. There is no practical opportunity for East Midlands Trains to get extra resource over and above the three ex Grand Central HSTs they have already taken.

The APTU and BCA strategy is therefore based on three components:

1. Assembly of quality data to support our plans – on this, see our request for help below at Luton this coming Thursday.
2. Continuing to lobby for small changes for May. Practically, we are also recognising that it is painful, and unwanted, for travellers travelling south from Bedford and Luton – but that it is a real imposition for travellers who travel to Bedford and Luton from the north, arriving in the am peak, or returning in the pm peak.
3. Seeking change for December 2018 onwards. ‘1’ above becomes in the past; as regards ‘2’, there will be live operational data as the basis for plans; and additional stock becomes more credible (Great Western will be releasing HSTs that do not have a new home).

Wider implications

The changes proposed by EMT will have direct or indirect implications for most stations on the line (southbound in the am peak, northbound in the pm peak), as follows:

1. Bedford and Luton: No EMT peak hour services: Travellers will need to switch to Thameslink (or a bus if going north), with a slower journey – and possibly less comfort. A reduction in the number of services, compared to May 2018 expectations.
2. Luton Airport Parkway: Fewer EMT peak hour services: Some travellers will need to switch to Thameslink, with a slower journey – and possibly less comfort. A reduction in the number of services, compared to May 2018 expectations.
3. Harpenden, Leagrave & Flitwick: Less fast Thameslink services than now – service levels will reduce slightly, with the promised increase in frequency deferred to December 2020 (or later). There will still be a slight increase in seats available as most fast trains will become 12 carriages.

	Morning peak	Evening peak
Harpenden	18 > 17	17 > 15
Leagrave	13 > 12	No change
Flitwick	No change	18 > 15

4. St Albans: There will be the promised increase in capacity – and more seats as well, but it is likely to be more difficult to get a seat at peak times as they may already be occupied by Bedford and Luton travellers displaced from EMT services.
5. Radlett, Elstree & Borehamwood. Mill Hill Broadway, Hendon, Cricklewood, West Hampstead & Kentish Town: There will be no direct impact from these changes; if ‘4’ above means more St Albans travellers continue to use semi-fast services, there will be a reduction in available seat capacity.

As regards seating availability:

- The Bedford Commuters Association counted 1,701 people getting off EMT services at Bedford one Thursday evening.
- The DfT has reported numbers as 1500 at Bedford and 500 at Luton.
- The BCA and APTU both think that numbers are slightly less in the morning, due to difficulties getting a seat on EMT services.
- Thameslink report that the increase in capacity in May is 2,100 at Bedford and 3,000 at Luton (3,400 from December) (morning peak). The extra increase at Luton will be because of there being more semi-fast services – and the 2,100 is the extra seats on fast services.

It therefore seems that:

1. Broadly, fast services will be as crowded as they are today – will most or all of the increased capacity being taken by displaced EMT travellers.
2. There will be increased seating available on semi-fast and all stations services. Whether or not this will actually be taken up by St Albans travellers continuing / switching to semi-fast services remains to be seen; some increase seems a reasonable assumption as there will be a frequency increase, making use of semi-fasts a possibility for more people.
3. **The overall conclusion is that the EMT changes effectively defer the capacity benefits to Thameslink travellers north of the river until December 2020** – albeit with a lesser impact for stations Kentish Town to Radlett inclusive.

Count at Luton and Luton Airport Parkway stations this Thursday

To give a full set of data on impacted travellers, we are planning a count at Luton and Luton Airport Parkway stations this Thursday evening. Whilst, in one sense, we have managed to get enough politicians interested, and there is no meaningful argument about the impact, there are three good reasons to carry out the count:

- We don’t know how the debate will evolve, so we might find ourselves wanting new information at some unknown point in the future. Having a comprehensive data set will help us.

- Whilst in one sense we have until 18 May (the last Thursday off the current service pattern) to do the count, although I wouldn't want to leave it that long as by then people may already have changed their commuting habits (and very practically I start work again next week).
- By gathering data that is specific to the Luton South parliamentary constituency, we will be able to help Gavin Shuker to continue to lobby.

We have permission from Thameslink to do the counts; they have also indicated they may be able to provide Travel Passes as well.

The plan is to count as follows:

- Luton Airport Parkway stops: 16:49 (Nottingham), 18:08 (Derby) and 18:50 (Lincoln).
 - Two people would be good here. Whilst I think one person is enough, it would be good to have someone to talk to. The counters could stand at the south end of platform 4 – or even off platform in the mid-level concourse – the only trains scheduled to stop on this platform at this time are EMT services.
- Luton stops: 16:22 (Corby), 16:53 (Nottingham), 17:40 (Nottingham), 18:22 (Melton Mowbray), 18:50 (Sheffield) and 19:24 (Corby).
 - Three would be needed here; a complication here is that Platform 5 is also an entrance / exit route for Thameslink passengers. Looking at <http://www.chiark.greenend.org.uk/~owend/l/rail/stnpages/luton.html> – in particular <http://www.chiark.greenend.org.uk/~owend/l/rail/stnpages/luton4undercanopy.jpg> (post zooming), there are around 1½ to 2 carriage lengths where those on the platform might be getting on/off an EMT service, or just passing through [note: this is one of two routes to the bus station and town centre]. I would have thought 3 counters would stand :
 - One by the footbridge, to pick up anyone getting on/off their or south thereof
 - One by the pink railings, to pick up anyone getting on/off at their or north thereof
 - One somewhere near the vending machine to do the rest
 - I think we could go up to 4 counters, but beyond that we will start getting in the way.

If you can help for all or some of the time, please let me know – either reply to this email or call me on 07887 628367. If replying by email, let me know the times you can do, any preference as to station and which station you will be travelling from – please include a mobile number.

A tentative plan is for us all to meet at the buffet on platforms 1 and 2 at 4pm and those covering Luton Airport Parkway to catch the 1618 or 1632 to go there.

Getting support from local politicians

Addressing this will require combined effort in particular continued lobbying by local politicians. The Borough of Bedford and Hertfordshire County Council are already active as are some local MPs – in particular, there has been a Westminster Hall debate at the Houses of Parliament, organised by Gavin Shuker, MP for Luton South – see [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-01-23/debates/273DE3CE-218E-4C12-BE5E-E64EE17AFF2D/RailServices\(Bedfordshire\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-01-23/debates/273DE3CE-218E-4C12-BE5E-E64EE17AFF2D/RailServices(Bedfordshire)); his comments were supported by Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) and Mohammad Yasin (Bedford).

Irrespective of whether or not your MP is listed above, I urge you to write to your MP and/or local councillor (please cc APTU) to ask them to lobby for reinstatement. The material immediately above should enable you to localise the impact and the letter we have sent EMT provides a framework / approach to reviewing and making improvements.

If you are after your MPs contact details, they can be found here <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/> and here: <https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/> - most of them will have received our [press release](#). Local Councillor details are here: <https://www.writetothem.com/>.

A bit of context

It is important to remember that there are two issues with the EMT service plan and EMT replacement franchise consultation:

1. As focused upon above, the lack of stops in the peak at Luton and Bedford. This is described as a temporary measure, pending the introduction of Corby electric services. Whilst I don't think there is as yet a cast iron guarantee that the new Corby electric services will make stops at Luton and Bedford, I do think that it is very near certain that they will (eg the Government response in the Westminster Hall debate referred to above included 'a fleet of high-quality electric trains will provide up to 50% more seats in the peak on the fast, direct service between Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough, Bedford, Luton and Luton Airport Parkway, and London St Pancras by December 2020').
 - a. Therefore, whilst we do need to keep an eye on the long term, the chances of reinstatement are very high to definite.
2. The possibility that from December 2020, the only EMT (replacement) services at Luton Airport Parkway, Luton and Bedford will be Corby services. If this happens, there will be an additional change for northbound travellers seeking to go to Market Harborough, Leicester and north thereof. This would be a permanent change.
 - a. The May 2018 EMT timetable is already based around this model, on the basis of 6 trains per hour. For now, the second Corby service does not run, and the stops it would make south of Kettering are made by a Nottingham service.

We don't like either of these proposals, but '1' is worse for a typical APTU member – and happening now, whereas 2 is for later and more uncertain. We won't forget about it, but for now '1' is the focus.

Timetable 2018 latest

There is relatively little breaking news on this. We are expecting the full details of the train service to be available in on-line journey planners from 23 February. I attended a meeting at Hertfordshire County Council last week where GTR gave an update. Their presentation is here: http://aptu.org.uk/pdfs/hcc_thu18jan2018.pdf. The session mainly concentrated on Great Northern as there are more issues there (including the temporary cessation of Hertford Loop services to Stevenage, due to the lack of the planned fifth platform). For the Midland Mainline, coverage dealt with the consequences of the EMT changes and is covered above.

Also of note is that one train a day is regularly being routed via London Bridge – normally the 09:54 from Bedford – 10:33 from St Albans. We continue to lobby for early adoption of public London Bridge stops on at least some trains per day – generally it is in Thameslink's interest to route via London Bridge whenever possible – it is an opportunity to make up time if running late, it avoids congestion on the route via Herne Hill and it keeps drivers knowledge active once they are trained.

New committee members

Thanks to those who have responded – my very next APTU task is to organise an informal meeting (or meetings) for us all to meet – watch out for my 'Doodle' invite.

Regards

Neil

Neil Middleton

28 January 2018