

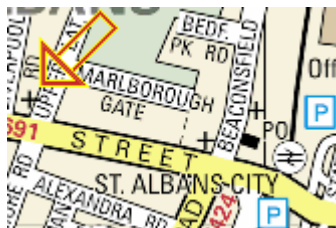
Dear Member

We've various items for you this time:

Reminder - Annual meeting with First Capital Connect

This year this will be Thursday 24th April at 7:30pm at the Friend's Meeting House, St Albans (Upper Lattimore Road, St Albans -

<http://www.streetmap.co.uk/streetmap.dll?G2M?X=515213&Y=207209&A=Y&Z=1>.



As always, if you have specific questions, then please let us have them in advance (preferably by 10 April, so FCC have time for research, should this be needed).

At this stage, a prime focus will be the timetable changes that will take place in December 2008 when the Moorgate branch is scheduled to close. Around this time, FCC are also due to get some additional rolling stock. Based on "round one" comments, we're also going to ask them to talk about the Customer Information System changes.

Travelling to our Annual meeting

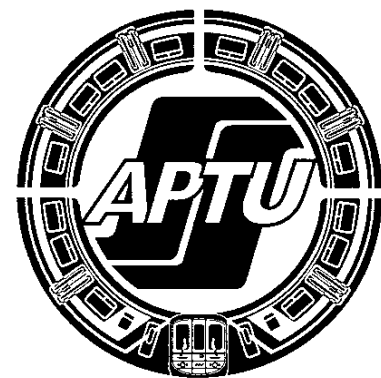
If your ticket does not include St Albans City as an allowable destination, FCC have kindly provided us with free travel - just print off page 1 of this newsletter and bring it with you to show at the barrier (it is important that you include the logo).

Email address

Do we have your email address? If you are receiving this newsletter in hard copy format, we really would appreciate an email address if you have one - it is much less time consuming for us and means you get the news quicker. Rest assured, we do not give our member's email addresses to third parties. Please send us an email at malcolm.howe@aptu.org.uk

Treasurer's Note – Subscriptions

I would like to remind members that all subscriptions are due on 1 April and would appreciate payment as soon as possible.



The FCC/APTU meeting on 24 April would be a convenient opportunity.

Obviously if you have set up a standing order or have paid in advance, then thank you for doing so and please ignore this reminder. Subscription rates remain at £3.00 per person or £5.00 for two members at the same address.

In addition there are several members who have not paid their subscription for last year. If this applies and you receive newsletters by post then a reminder is enclosed. If by email then a separate reminder will be sent to you.

Thank you

Malcolm Howe
149 Crabtree Lane
Harpenden, AL5 5RD

Building Works at St Albans City station

By Adrian Slimmon

The new multi story car park situated on the south side of the railway bridge is due to open on 15 April. There will be 813 parking spaces in the building for the use of commuters and other rail travellers. This is a net gain of 163 spaces when the adjacent open car park is closed for development.

Work is in progress for installing lifts to all platforms at the station. It is expected that these will be in operation at the end of October this year.

Work was completed last year to improve the layout of the bus bays at the railway station, making it easier for longer buses to pull up to the kerb at the bus stops.

First Group comment / fare evasion

In their last comment to the London Stock Exchange First Group had this to say "The Group's rail division has performed strongly with full year passenger revenue growth in excess of 10%..... During the year we progressed our revenue

protection programme for First Capital Connect and we have now almost completed the programme of automatic ticket gate installation at key stations across the network.” Some media comments have suggested that the revenue protection programme was a significant contributor to this revenue growth, but it is not clear from the announcement what portion is real growth vs previously ticketless travel.

For more information, see

<http://www.firstgroup.com/corpfirst/announcestory.php?id=362>.

Class 319 train units on the Thameslink route

By Adrian Slimmon

From 86 four car units of this class, there are 78[‡] available for First Capital Connect to run our train services. 66 are leased to FCC from Porterbrook, the company that own the trains (known in railway jargon as a “ROSCO” - Rolling stock Company). 12 are sub leased from Southern Railway. The remaining 8 are currently leased to Southern Railway for their own use, but it is expected that FCC will have use of these 8 by the end of the year.

As at 12th March, 26 units had been refreshed. This has improved the ambience inside the carriages with brighter lighting, more comfortable seats and more accessible baggage space amongst other improvements. A new livery has been applied to the outside identifying them as FCC services using First Group house colours.

Thirteen units have had the new livery applied but have not yet been refreshed inside. There are 28 units still with the old Thameslink dark blue livery and two units with Thameslink mark 2 livery - silver and blue. Eight trains are green and white (Southern’s livery) and one is dressed in blue with yellow doors.

‡ There are four class 317 units to help out in the peaks on the north side of the Thameslink route

Central London ticket inter-changeability

In our last newsletter, I commented as follows:

I’ve recently experienced a few problems presenting my Moorgate ticket at City Thameslink; as a result of

this I have again emailed and spoken to the relevant FCC contacts and they tell me staff have been re-briefed that Moorgate tickets are valid here (and at other stations). The situation remains the same the other way round, so City Thameslink / London Thameslink tickets are not valid at Moorgate (indeed, my Moorgate ticket is not even valid for exit at Barbican). Arrangements beyond December 2008 are unclear and we are following this up with FCC.

I’ve since discussed the situation with FCC and believe ticket validity (when travelling from the north) to be as follows:

- “London Terminals” - St Pancras only
- “London Thameslink” - Farringdon, City Thameslink, Blackfriars, London Bridge, Elephant & Castle, St Pancras (not Moorgate or Barbican)
- “Barbican” - Barbican, Farringdon & St Pancras - and, by FCC concession, City Thameslink
- “Moorgate” - Moorgate, Farringdon & St Pancras - and, by FCC concession, City Thameslink

I am told that this concession does not appear in the National Fares Manual, and I suspect part of the reason that the barrier staff at City Thameslink “forget” is that someone refers to manual, finds nothing and concludes they are not acceptable. Please note that I am advised that this concession is for City Thameslink only and does not apply at Blackfriars or elsewhere.

I am also told that Moorgate & Barbican tickets are currently planned to be valid until January 2011 (being the last day of validity, not last issue date). My belief is that the primary decision makers on this are a combination of the Department for Transport and Transport for London.

If you will be affected by an increase in the cost of travel at that time, I would appreciate an email to that effect. I also suggest you write to your MP.

Improvements at West Hampstead

We’ve received details of the proposals for improvements here. The commentary is:

- “Wide pavement along the west side of West End Lane
- New entrance plus new pedestrian bridge, stairs and lift access to the First Capital Connect Thameslink station
- Modified entrance to the North London line station including the installation of lifts
- Improved road crossing to the LUL station
- Two associated mixed use developments to both contribute to the improved public realm and to add cash benefit to the interchange scheme”

The new station is due to be completed by the end of 2011 and include step free access, cycle parking and ticket barriers.

German train travels

By Justin Wickens

I was fortunate enough to recently enjoy a 3 month secondment to Frankfurt. This city is a great base for travelling with direct trains to many other European cities as far afield as Moscow.

As a committed environmentalist all my journeys to/from London were made by train. With the full introduction of the high speed line from St Pancras International to the channel coast I was able to arrive in Frankfurt in under 6 hours with one change at Brussels. When I arrived I made use of a 10 days in 22 days unlimited travel InterRail ticket and on my departure I made use of a 5 days in 10 days unlimited travel InterRail ticket taking the opportunity to go exploring my first few and last weekends. My travels took me to Austria, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Poland and Switzerland. Currently the prices (if aged 26 or over - less if

you're younger) are £281 and £195 respectively but are subject to Euro/Sterling exchange rates.

When I had nothing better to do on a Saturday I made use of the SchonesWochendticket whereby up to 5 people could travel across the whole of Germany (except on Inter City trains) for €35 (£27.50). I went to Hannover, Leipzig and Munich amongst other destinations.

Timekeeping on German trains is extremely variable - I travelled on one service that was 2 hours late. There is the occasional cancellation and Inter City Expresses (the German TGV equivalent) are frequently substituted by locomotive hauled trains.

In the city of Frankfurt itself I bought a Monatskarte (analogous to a London travelcard) for my commuting and leisure travel, which was available up to about 10 kilometres from the city centre. This monthly ticket cost a little under €70 (£55.00) and enabled somebody to travel with you after 19h00 or at weekends for no cost. However there is a severe run down of tram/U-Bahn frequencies in the late evening (both my local services reduced to every 20 minutes). For those of you who remember my enthusiasm for Routemasters you may be interested to know that one of the Underground lines converted to being a non-accessible tram on the surface as the platform folds down into a set of steps for street access.

FCC performance statistics

The latest set we have received from FCC can be read here:

http://www.nlks.btinternet.co.uk/aptu/fcc_performanceupdateperiod12.pdf.

Neil Middleton