

**East Customer Panel Meeting  
Novotel, Reading  
1700-2000  
09.10.2008**

Malcolm Edge, Chair, welcomed all to the meeting and advised of any apologies. First Great Western was represented by Directors and Senior Managers, including James Burt (Customer Services Director), Richard Rowland (Regional Manager, East) and Sean McBroom (Station Manager, Reading). Network Rail & London TravelWatch also attended.

**Projects – Network Rail (NR) and FGW**

Richard Cole, Network Rail (R.C) delivered a presentation on future projects affecting FGW, these being the Reading re-development, CrossRail and the Cotswolds redoubling.

R.C explained that there is quite a lot of work ahead on the Reading redevelopment but NR and FGW have been working together to create a number of ideas on how to move this forward. There will be a new part of Reading station, situated to the north and services will have separate entries to the station. NR will not close the railway whilst the work is being carried out and a long blockade is not an option. There will be the occasional weekend work but there will be separate construction for each line. Access to the station from the north side has not yet been finalised. The platforms at Reading station will be renovated however they will not be completely gutted as this does not form part of the redevelopment – NR are in talks with Reading Borough Council to see if this is something it would like to get involved in. Various members asked supplementary questions

- 1) How would the Cross Country trains to Gatwick going to be diverted? R.C replied that the Cross Country franchise requirement to run services to Gatwick and Brighton ends in December 2008. Unfortunately not able to give a full answer as this is a question for DfT and Cross Country.
- 2) Would Cross Country trains be able to use the underpass? He confirmed that this would not be a problem; the underpass will be able to take Cross Country trains, HST's and freight trains.
- 3) How will Reading cope with the Slough trains? R.C replied that the Slough trains will come through on the North side platforms and will flow through to Oxford.
- 4) Will Reading station be IEP (Intercity Express Programme) linked? R.C confirmed that yes, it would
- 5) Will the possible change in government affect Reading redevelopment? R.C stressed that the work will go ahead regardless of a change in government. The work at Reading station is government funded and will go ahead,

The member for Bicester asked if R.C had an update on the Oxford – Bicester route, and the proposal to send trains directly into the North Bay platforms? R.C explained that there have been signalling problems due to cabling difficulties. **Post meeting update: FGW has reviewed the documents from NR on the Oxford works and creating a route which gives direct access to the Bicester Branch rather than having to traverse the main lines is part of the outputs**

**Environmental Strategy**

PowerPoint presentation delivered by Andrew Griffiths, Head of Environment Strategy & Sustainability (A.G) He explained that FGW will start to introduce a more effective way of driving, in particular between London and Bristol, to try and increase coasting into stations e.g. Reading, and avoiding waiting outside platforms at Paddington. We should try to be as efficient as possible. The new carriage washers will recycle the water used to clean the carriages.

A member asked if anything could be done about the diesel emissions when a train is waiting at stations? A.G replied that unfortunately there is no simple solution to this problem.

Another member gave a couple of suggestions - could you put Photo Voltaics (PVs) aka solar panels, on the top of trains? Could you develop the garden landscaping at stations? Could on board catering use recycled packaging for all of the food?

A.G agreed, stating these were very interesting points. Nick Hebborn, the Head of On-Board services is very interested in using recycled products and he is looking into this. Am unsure how the development of landscaping would benefit stations but would be keen to discuss outside of the meeting?

The member for Oxford asked if FGW could turn out the lights out at each station after the last train has departed? A.G confirmed that this procedure is already in place, however you need to take into consideration that other trains may still be running on that line and a platform may be used for emergency evacuation

The representative of London TravelWatch, Libby Kemp asked if a rack / compartment could be placed at the end of each carriage to collect newspapers? A.G replied that this is something that TransPennine Express has already put into action and yes, FGW could also action.

### **FGW Business Update**

Richard Rowland (R.R) delivered a PowerPoint presentation which included the following key areas and messages:

#### **Performance**

- London Thames Valley best since 1994
  - Relief lines upgrade completed August 2008
  - Tactical timetable changes
- 0730 Oxford - Paddington
- December 2008 timetable
  - Performance based changes in Thames Valley

#### **Customer First training programme**

- Programme timescales
  - Senior manager introduction complete
  - Managers: Nov 08 – Jan 09
  - Paddington Gateline: Jan 09 – Apr 09
  - LTV area completed: Autumn 09
- Modern training area in Paddington under construction

#### **December 2008 timetable**

- Two key elements
  - Performance based timetable
  - Relief line retimings
- Enhancements
  - Oxford – Bicester
  - Twyford – Henley
  - Slough – Windsor
  - 0803 Paddington – Maidenhead
  - Extra service to/ from Hereford
- Team in place managing delivery

A member asked if the contracted colleagues, especially revenue staff, be placed on the 'putting customer first' programme? R.R confirmed that most of the revenue staff are now 'in-house' and FGW will be taking over all of the contracts, so yes they will go through the programme.

A member asked in strengthening / refreshing the turbo fleet will there be any effects to the peak time services and the timetable? R.R replied that there will be some changes in the timetable to allow for this, however we want to get the refresh completed as soon as possible

The Chair closed the meeting, thanking all for attending and for their contributions.

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**Date of next meeting – Wednesday 14 January 2009, Reading**