



Kent Community Rail Partnership



South East Region – Franchise Renewal (December 2018)

Kent Community Rail Partnership Comments.

23rd May 2017

The context: Both lines (Medway Valley Line and SwaleRail) are in areas which have plans for major housing developments which will put increasing pressure on local transport infrastructure and services (over 80,000 houses across our current “areas”). The franchise renewal must take account of this growing need and indeed new communities.

1. Service Frequency and Connections.

a. Reliability –

- i. No longer miss out intermediate station stops as a means of catching up delays (and/or review monitoring & penalty process which measures punctuality based on time of arrival at final station).

b. Connections (General)

- i. We believe that effective connection times are critical to maintaining and increasing usage of our lines, particularly as they are very frequently used as part of a longer journey. As far as possible connections should be within a 5 to 15 minute window. Too often connections are 3 minutes or less, leading passengers to seeing their chosen train departing just as they arrive at a station. This is a significant deterrent to using the train in preference to other means of travel. This is of course exacerbated when the service itself is not sufficiently frequent (e.g. one train per hour).

c. Medway Valley Line (Strood to Tonbridge)

- i. Introduce half-hourly direct service along whole line (Tonbridge to Strood).
- ii. Introduce direct services at all times (remove need to change at Paddock Wood in rush-hour)
- iii. Extension to Hoo Peninsula to support significant proposed housing growth (6,000+ homes).
- iv. Connections:
 1. Strood to High Speed towards London. Maximum gap of 15 minutes
 2. Improve connections to Medway Towns from MVL. Maximum gap of 15 minutes.
 3. Connections to Medway Valley Line from Gillingham direction frequently too short. Need at least 5 minutes to change platforms at Strood.
 4. Additional Station? Tovil Halt in Maidstone to encourage commuters to switch away from cars for local journeys in Maidstone.

5. Additional Station? – Medway Valley Leisure Park (between Strood & Cuxton).

d. SwaleRail Line (Sittingbourne to Sheerness)

- i. Maintain current weekly half-hourly service (or reduce journey times by 2-3 minutes as before)
 - ii. Introduce more direct services to London terminals
 - iii. Sittingbourne to London should have a shorter journey time (around 60 minutes)
 - iv. Sheerness to London should have a shorter journey time (around 75 minutes)
 - v. Weekends: Increase frequency on Summer Sundays and Bank holidays to encourage tourist visits (i.e. a thirty minute service). Tourism development is critical to Sheppey's success.
 - vi. Connections:
 1. better connections to SwaleRail from Sittingbourne
 2. Improve connections to bus services to encourage rail usage, especially from east Sheppey (including for prison visitors), potentially more services to Swale station (note – there are no good bus services to Maidstone).
 - vii. Additional service at 22:55 from Sittingbourne to Sheerness (for shift workers & to encourage evenings out)
 - viii. Three carriage trains (minimum).
 - ix. Newington & Teynham seeking quicker and half-hour frequency service to London, remove 40+ minute gaps in morning peak.
 - x. Senior Rail Cards to be valid on 8:51 from Sheerness for local journeys & to Canterbury & beyond.
 - xi. Sheerness train at 08:00 on Sundays to run in service as in the past.
 - xii. Car Parking – more capacity at Queenborough and Swale stations to discourage people from driving into Sittingbourne (park & ride concept).
- e. Metro Rail type service covering Teynham to Newington with new halts at Bapchild and Bobbing/Grove Park/The Meads and/or triangular service between Teynham, Newington and Sheerness including these new halts (potentially delivered by a new local franchise?)
- f. Reinstate the closed railheads at Sheerness docks and steelworks?

2. Ticketing

- a. Smart Ticketing, OYSTER on cards. This is essential (check SEFT – South East Fast Ticketing)
- b. New on-board ticket machine (especially for Revenue collection teams)

NB. Many of the stations are UNMANNED (eleven out of 19)

- c. Ticket Barriers to be considered at all stations to increase revenue. More frequent on-train ticket checks required.
- d. Still need to be able to accept CASH (Access for all)
- e. "Carnets" (ability to buy a batch of, say, ten tickets in advance at an advantageous price) to accommodate the huge growth in people working flexible work patterns.
- f. Ticket Offices
 - i. support re-opening or ticket sales by retailers, manning by volunteers. SPECIFY Offices to open 15 minutes before first train and until last train
- g. Clarify position re. cash payments and new ticket machines
- h. Freedom pass or similar? Passes to encourage travel, especially off-peak (elderly) and young people (under 16 with a smart card in peak times), combined rail and bus

tickets/passes on SwaleRail. Trains still too expensive for many families and individuals compared to car travel.

3. Support for Community Rail

- a. Commit to funding of the Partnership for the length of the Franchise, with mid-term review of financial requirements.
- b. Continue the excellent levels of participation shown by Southeastern (attending meetings, events etc...)
- c. Commit to funding additional Partnerships:
 - i. Formalise the Partnership's work on the Sittingbourne – Canterbury East – Dover route (potentially extending to Deal) to create a new Partnership line, spreading Community Rail's reach to include the eastern part of Kent.
 - ii. Apprentices - share them with Kent CRP?
 - iii. Work experience opportunities
- d. Social Value Act. Support Station Adoption throughout the network, with simple processes for new adopters.
- e. Funding of line guides for Community Rail lines.

4. Station Improvements – General (a separate document is attached as Appendix 1 with station specific requests).

- a. Ensure all stations have adequate seating and shelters
- b. Covered cycle parking and "Access for All" to be implemented at all stations.
- c. Toilets to remain open whilst trains are running (with hot water, driers and baby change facilities).
- d. There are a number of disused station buildings on the line and the Partnership is very keen to see these brought back to life.
- e. Ensure that one person has clear responsibility for each station at all times.
- f. Cleanliness of stations to be maintained.
- g. Ensure rubbish on tracks and around stations & car parks is regularly cleared.
- h. Remote access to CCTV on Medway Valley Line stations from Maidstone West station

5. Passenger Information

- a. Improved accuracy (announcements are sometimes incorrect)
- b. Trains which split en-route. Show clearly the destination of each carriage.
- c. Services to Sheerness to be shown at Victoria station
- d. BTP emergency text number to be promoted

6. Access Improvements

- a. Access to Stations – DDA compliance for all stations.
- b. Support the prioritisation of lifts at Maidstone West
- c. Cycle and walking access
 - i. Ensure safe and easy access.
 - ii. Build on the current walks and maps
 - iii. Increased cycle storage at stations in line with growth trends
- d. Demonstrate commitment to an Active Travel Strategy
- e. Space for cycles on trains
- f. Teynham & Newington require disabled access

7. Rolling Stock improvements

- a. Maintain Good standard of cleanliness on trains
- b. Add wi-fi
- c. Introduce air conditioning on all trains

8. Engineering Works - Timing and management

- a. Rail Replacement Buses
 - i. Clear(er) signage on all stations (and notify when Train services are reinstated!).
 - ii. Drivers to know the replacement routes OR use Rail staff to guide/accompany them?
 - iii. Buses are frequently too small and infrequent with poor connections to rail services (and are timetabled to miss connections).
 - iv. Allow cycles on rail replacement buses.
- b. Avoid engineering works during pre-Christmas and summer holidays (impact on tourism, especially for Sheppey)
- c. Demonstrate understanding of specific nature of MVL and SwaleRail lines (i.e. not typical mainline commuter routes).

9. Wishlist

- a. Gatwick Service - consistent demand from customers and businesses for a service from Ashford and/or Maidstone.
- b. Extension of MVL from Strood to Hoo Peninsula
- c. WIFI on Trains and Stations

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