

28 August 2012

Boris Johnson
Mayor of London
City Hall
The Queens Walk
London SE1 2AA

Dear Mr Johnson

The proposed closure and discontinuance of services to and from Watford station

On 23 February 2012 London Underground Limited initiated the closure process for discontinuance of services to and from Watford station. The Railways Act 2005 requires London Transport Users Committee (also known as London TravelWatch) to consider this proposal and any objections to the proposal.

London TravelWatch is required to report to you (within 6 months of the second round of notices of the closure, i.e. by 2 September 2012) any hardship it considers will be caused by the proposed closure and may propose means of alleviating this hardship.

Our conclusions and recommendations are:

The closure of Watford station will result in hardship to some existing passengers. But this hardship will be largely alleviated by the implementation of the Croyley Rail Link project that will provide two new accessible stations facilitating access to the Metropolitan line. This is predicated on LUL's stated intention that Watford station will not close until the proposed Croyley Rail Link project is operational.

For about half of existing passengers there will be a longer walking journey to the proposed new stations, but this additional walk will be short for most. Only a few existing passengers will have longer than a 15 minute additional journey. For others there will be a shorter walk.

This hardship could be alleviated if there were to be an improvement in the sub-standard walking environment on the routes passengers use to, from and between the existing and new stations. It is therefore recommended that there should be a condition of Transport and Works approval that Hertfordshire County Council should undertake to substantially improve the walking environment. They should include improvements to the pavement condition, pavement widths, the removal of steps by the introduction of dropped kerbs or entry treatments and single stage, direct pedestrian crossing facilities on

pedestrian desire lines. Improvements to the street lighting may also be necessary.

This hardship could be alleviated by improvements to cycling conditions, the remodelling of junctions to improve cycle safety and an investigation of possible new off-road routes.

Although it is recognised that the proposed new stations will be of great benefit to those with mobility impairments, in terms of access, the additional walk to the new stations for this group of passengers will be an additional hardship. This hardship could be alleviated by the continued operation of a bus service between the affected area and the new stations. However, bus services outside of London are not regulated and so are subject to commercial viability and the willingness, or otherwise, of Hertfordshire County Council to subsidise a service. It is therefore recommended that there should be a condition of Transport and Works approval that a bus service (possibly a demand responsive one) operates between the Cassiobury Park area and the new stations for a period of three years to at least allow passengers with mobility impairments to adjust their journey.

There will be a small group of passengers whose closest station, to access the Metropolitan line, will be either Watford High Street or Watford Junction stations. However, the fare from these stations will be higher. These passengers will have the choice of a longer walk to one of the new fare zone 7 stations or pay the additional fare from Watford High Street and Watford Junction stations. The financial hardship could be alleviated by a discretionary fare being agreed, for a limited time period, allowing this small group of passengers to use the Metropolitan line from Watford High Street and Watford Junction stations at London fare zone 7 levels. There are precedents for such schemes. For example a scheme was implemented for passengers who suffered dis-benefit following the closure of the Thameslink service between Farringdon and Moorgate stations.

Although LUL maintained that it would be complicated to set up a scheme London TravelWatch believe that this is an important principle and recommends that for this small group of passengers a compensation scheme should be implemented for a period of three years.

Additionally London TravelWatch believes that there is a business case for a Croxley Rail Link that retains Watford station as part of a split service, albeit with fewer overall benefits than London Underground Limited's preferred option. The Panel recommend to the Transport and Works Act Inspector that he or she consider a trial split service, serving both Watford and Watford Junction stations to determine the real passenger numbers and issues involved with the running of a split service serving both Watford and Watford Junction stations prior to a final decision on the closure of Watford station. The trial could last for two years from the opening of the Croxley Rail Link to 2018 when

the new signalling is due to be completed on the Metropolitan line when there will, presumably, be a major re-timetabling programme.

Attached is our report which describes the process, our considerations, conclusions and recommendations.

I hope that you will find this helpful.

Yours sincerely,

David Leibling, Deputy Chair of London TravelWatch and Chair of the Watford Station Closure Panel