

**GATCOM**

**23<sup>RD</sup> JULY 2009**

**SUSSEX ROUTE UTILISATION STRATEGY (RUS) CONSULTATION DRAFT**

**REPORT BY SECRETARIAT**

**SUMMARY**

This report provides details of Network Rail's draft Sussex Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) which is currently subject to formal consultation. The deadline for responses is 21<sup>st</sup> August. Details are also given about the draft Kent RUS which has also been subject to formal consultation (paragraphs 2.10 and 3.8 refer). GATCOM is asked to consider the draft Sussex RUS insofar as it relates to services to and from Gatwick Airport and is recommended to agree the suggested form of response set out in Appendix 1. GATCOM is also recommended to submit a response to the draft Kent RUS.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 On 26th May Network Rail published for consultation the draft Sussex Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS). The draft RUS sets out the strategic vision for the future of the Brighton Main Line into London Victoria, London Bridge and Blackfriars, as well as West and East Coastway routes. It considers future service patterns, capacity issues, rail freight, engineering and the strategic development of the Sussex rail network and contains detailed recommendations for the next decade. The deadline for responses is 21st August.

1.2 A link to Network Rail's document<sup>1</sup> was circulated to all members, nominated substitutes and members of the Passenger Advisory Group on 11<sup>th</sup> June with a request that comments be submitted to the Secretariat so that they could be taken into consideration in the preparation of GATCOM's response. The GATCOM Steering Group considered the initial draft form of response at its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> July and its comments together with those received from members have been taken into consideration in the preparation of the suggested form of response set out in Appendix 1.

1.3 Members should note that Network Rail has also published for consultation the draft Kent RUS. This is also relevant in the consideration of Gatwick services to/from areas in Kent. The deadline for responses to that RUS consultation is 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2009.

1.4 GATCOM is asked to consider and agree the suggested form of response.

**2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 The Executive Summary of the draft Strategy is attached at Appendix 2. The aim of the Sussex RUS is to identify a strategy for accommodating growing demand on the railway, in a manner that is deliverable, affordable and consistent with performance and safety improvements. It considers demand, resulting strategic gaps and proposed interventions to a long-term timescale of 2019 covering the rail industry's regulatory control periods 4 (CP4) covering the period 2009-2014 and 5 (CP5) covering the period 2014-2019. It also includes consideration of options for the longer-term up to 30 years.

<sup>1</sup> The consultation document can be found at:

<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browseDirectory.aspx?dir=\RUS%20Documents\Route%20Utilisation%20Strategie\Sussex&pageid=4449&root=\RUS%20Documents\Route%20Utilisation%20Strategies>

2.3 The scope of the Sussex RUS includes all services from London Victoria, London Blackfriars and London Bridge which operate on the Brighton Main Line through East Croydon and on to:

- Brighton (via Gatwick Airport)
- Bognor Regis/Littlehampton
- Portsmouth/Southampton (via Arundel or Hove)
- Seaford
- Eastbourne
- Tonbridge
- Reigate

2.4 It also includes services operating to and from Brighton, to and from the West Coastway (Portsmouth/Southampton, Littlehampton and Bognor Regis) and the East Coastway (Seaford, Eastbourne and Ashford) lines.

2.5 Network Rail has undertaken modelling work and this was based on the assumption that improvements to be completed during Network Rail's CP4 will be delivered (this includes Gatwick Airport station improvements that will deliver track layout enhancements and an additional platform 7) and taken into account in all future scenarios.

2.6 A key finding of the Sussex RUS modelling work is that peak capacity on services into London Victoria and London Bridge through the Brighton Main Line/East Croydon corridor is expected to be reached between 2019 and 2023. The issue of meeting current future predicted demand growth is the key overriding issue for the Sussex RUS. In this regard, Network Rail working with core rail industry stakeholders has identified specific strategic gaps and resulting options/recommendations within the Sussex RUS. The RUS considers strategic gaps 'where the current or future railway system does not or will not meet the requirements that will be placed upon it, unless intervening action is taken'.

2.7 Eight strategic gaps have been identified through demand modelling, including forecasts of future local population and employment growth, and future car ownership and fuel costs. In terms of strategic gaps with specific relevance for Gatwick, these are Gap A, Gap C and Gap E (see section 5 of the Executive Summary at Appendix 2).

2.8 In respect of the Brighton Main Line (BML) corridor commuting, the RUS recommends selected peak lengthening of services (up to 12-car) where appropriate and a small number of additional peak hour services for BML commuting corridors. The RUS also states that 'Further work on the case for inserting Clapham Junction stops into one or more existing peak Gatwick Express services will be undertaken prior to the publication of the Final RUS'. It should be noted that the insertion of a stop at East Croydon was a recommendation of the Brighton Main Line RUS but has not to date been implemented.

2.9 For the North Downs Line/Redhill/Gatwick Airport, the RUS states that a case exists for some targeted lengthening of peak services on the North Downs/Redhill route, however a case cannot be established at this stage for extension of the second train in each hour on the North Downs line through to Gatwick Airport.

2.10 As regards the draft Kent RUS, the issue of particular relevance is the Redhill – Tonbridge route. In response to stakeholder requests, the Kent RUS considers possible options for increasing off-peak frequencies on routes not involving London. The specific routes considered were Ashford – Hastings, Maidstone – Tonbridge and Redhill – Tonbridge. Paragraph 7.3.15 of the Kent RUS states:

"A common observation is that there are limited rail links between Kent and Gatwick Airport. In most cases such journeys require a change of train, so the majority of passengers currently travel via London. There is only limited use made of the two alternative routes from Kent, via Godstone or Bexhill. Furthermore, due

to the low usage the previously existing direct trains from the Tonbridge line to Gatwick were removed in December 2008, so passengers on this route now need to change at Redhill. Large numbers of journeys to the airport are, however, made by means of the M25/M23 motorway route, demonstrating that significant overall demand does exist."

However, Network Rail has stated that analysis has shown that the Kent RUS is unable to recommend increasing service levels on any of these routes, since there is insufficient demand to justify the additional operating costs. The recommendations of the Kent RUS therefore need to be taken into account in the consideration of GATCOM's response to the draft Sussex RUS.

### **3. COMMENTS**

3.1 The complexity of balancing the needs of all rail users and the need to tackle the problem of congestion on the rail network and overcrowding on trains is acknowledged. The longer-term focus of the Sussex RUS to the 30-year horizon, particularly given the demand predictions that peak train capacity will be reached between 2019 and 2023 is to be commended and the consideration of issues such as a possible new line into central London are welcomed. However, it is essential that there is early planning for this and Network Rail should be urged to begin this planning now. The London and South East RUS will therefore also be an important component in this early planning as it will need to set out the issues and potential options, and the major levels of investment, planning and construction considerations that will be required to cater for future rail travel demand.

3.2 The draft Sussex RUS acknowledges that Gatwick Airport is a key generator of rail journeys in the RUS area with around 25% of the surface access journeys to the airport per annum made by rail. It also notes that the most intensive flight arrivals period at Gatwick is during the morning peak and the majority of rail journeys are to and from London but with significant flows also from destinations accessed via the North Downs route, the Brighton Main Line and the Arun Valley Line. The Gatwick Interim Master Plan and the Gatwick Surface Access Strategy have been considered in the future planning context along with the regional plans for the South East and London, the recommendations of the Eddington Transport Study and the wider intentions of local planning authorities.

3.3 There are aspects of the draft Strategy that are to be welcomed as they will be advantageous to Gatwick passengers and staff. However, there are also many aspects that are cause for concern as they possibly degrade a number of the services at Gatwick, in particular the dedicated Gatwick Express service. Any degrading of services at Gatwick will have a significant impact on Gatwick Airport Limited's ability to achieve its surface access targets in respect of encouraging passengers and staff to make greater use of the rail network to access the airport.

3.4 Following the December 2008 timetable changes, there has been a reduction in the number of East Croydon and Clapham Junction interchange opportunities available for Brighton Main Line (BML) commuters and this has been noted in the draft Strategy. Network Rail is proposing further work to investigate the case for insertion of a Clapham Junction stop into one existing peak Gatwick Express service prior to the publication of the Final RUS. Furthermore it should be noted that if 15 to 20 per cent of Brighton Main Line commuters are identified from the further modelling work to require interchange at Clapham Junction, a case is likely to exist to insert this stop within peak Gatwick Express services. It is suggested that GATCOM objects to this proposal.

3.5 The document acknowledges that although there is not yet a settled picture of the impact of the December 2008 timetable changes it states that there is initial evidence that

the changes have had a desired effect of freeing up seats for commuters to Victoria from south of Gatwick who were previously standing. However, although highlighted in GAP A as a future potential issue for passengers boarding trains as they arrive at Gatwick because of crowding, it does not acknowledge that this is already occurring on peak hour Gatwick Express services and passengers now experience a much degraded service often with standing room only available for Gatwick passengers. Inserting a further stop at either Clapham Junction or East Croydon would further exacerbate the crowding issues north, and possibly south, of Gatwick as it would be a more attractive service for commuters wishing to use those stations as an interchange. It is suggested that GATCOM highlights this as a major area of concern.

3.6 Network Rail has stated that it will work in CP4 (now-2014) with the Southern franchisee to ensure that airport passengers are appropriately catered for during the commuter peaks. Passenger Focus has recently published its National Passenger Survey results for Spring 2009 and the Secretariat has been supplied with the results of the survey in respect of the Gatwick Express service. However, the results do not reveal any deterioration in passenger satisfaction levels in respect of the Gatwick Express service but it appears that only 8% of the respondents to the survey travelled at peak time and it does not indicate whether this was the morning or evening peak. The Secretariat has requested a more detailed breakdown of the results from Passenger Focus to obtain a true picture of passenger satisfaction levels during the peak time services. Once the additional information is obtained, it is suggested that the Passenger Advisory Group has further discussions with Southern to seek improvements to the current situation and, in particular to urge them to consider the use of alternative rolling stock on the peak hour Gatwick Express services (the Class 442 trains currently used are not appropriate for airport passengers due to the single width external doors of the carriages and the insufficient luggage capacity).

3.7 The GATCOM Steering Group considered in detail the proposals contained in the draft Sussex RUS and suggested that in the response to Network Rail the future growth of Gatwick and the sub-region in terms of air passengers, airport staff and other travellers using Gatwick as an interchange be emphasised. The Group believed it important to put into context the importance of preserving and enhancing rail services to/from the airport, particularly in respect of developing and promoting rail links to the east and west of the airport, and the benefits that would bring to not only commuters and air passengers but also the environmental benefits (such as reductions in air pollution) of encouraging a modal shift in the number of passengers and staff using public transport to access the airport.

3.8 The Group also felt that Network Rail needed to take a broader look at the rail network in the South East region particularly as there was great potential to improve the modal shift from other areas. In this respect, the outcome of Network Rail's consultation on the draft Kent RUS is important to Gatwick as Kent is a large part of Gatwick's catchment area. However, there are limited rail links between Kent and Gatwick Airport and more needs to be done to encourage air passengers from areas in Kent to access the airport by public transport. Network Rail acknowledges that there are large numbers of journeys to the airport from areas in Kent by private car using the M25/M23 route, which demonstrates that there is a significant overall demand. However the potential of the Redhill – Tonbridge Line in particular is not being realised in either the Sussex or Kent RUS. It is therefore suggested that Network Rail be urged to further consider the potential of this Line in both strategies and to recognise that if train operators enhanced and better promoted the services, particularly in the early morning, demand would increase.

3.9 The suggested form of response set out in Appendix 1 takes into account the comments above.

## **RECOMMENDED**

That:

- (1) the suggested form of response set out in Appendix 1 be agreed and submitted to Network Rail as GATCOM's response to the draft Sussex RUS consultation;
- (2) GATCOM responds to Network Rail's consultation on the draft Kent RUS urging the need to re-consider the potential of the Redhill –Tonbridge Line; and
- (3) the Passenger Advisory Group has further discussions with Southern to seek improvements to the current journey experience for passengers using the peak hour Gatwick Express service and, in particular, to urge Southern to consider the use of alternative rolling stock on the peak hour Gatwick Express services.

Paula Street  
Secretariat

**SUGGESTED FORM OF RESPONSE TO NETWORK RAIL'S SUSSEX RUS CONSULTATION**

**Overall**

- The improvements to services serving Gatwick Airport be welcomed, particularly the positive impact of the Thameslink Programme and the train lengthening schemes.
- Express disappointment that the opportunity has not been taken to consider in greater detail the potential of the whole timetable across the RUS area.
- Request a broader examination of the rail network across the South East region with the aim of improving east – west links across the region. This needs to be taken into account in not only the Sussex RUS but also the Kent RUS and the forthcoming draft London and South East RUS.
- Highlight the importance of Gatwick both regionally and nationally as an international interchange and the forecast growth of the airport and the region.

**Gatwick Express**

- Express major concern that the quality and integrity of the dedicated Gatwick Express service is again under threat.
- Support the retention of a dedicated, non-stop airport express service between Gatwick and London Victoria. This premium service is also of significant importance to the economy of the Gatwick Diamond by providing a dedicated fast link for business commuters, both for those making connecting air journeys, and for those business commuters requiring a fast link to London or to the Gatwick Diamond area.
- Object to proposals involving the insertion of a stop at either Clapham Junction or East Croydon within any Gatwick Express service, as it is believed that this would further degrade the premium airport express service and further exacerbate crowding on peak hour Gatwick Express trains.
- Reiterate that GATCOM does not support the use of Class 442 rolling stock on Gatwick Express services and urge Network Rail and Southern that a suitable alternative needs to be found.
- Welcome further information and early engagement on any proposal for changes to Gatwick Express peak services once further modelling work is complete.

**Gatwick Station**

- Seek clarification on the base lining assumption that track improvements and platform 7 will both be delivered throughout CP4, and in time for the Olympic Games in 2012. It is not clear from the consultation document whether the wider station concourse improvements will be delivered over this same time period

**Services to/from Gatwick on the Brighton Main Line/Arun Valley Line**

- Express disappointment that little regard has been given to the provision of early morning services from Brighton and the coastways to Gatwick. The aspirations of BAA/Gatwick Airport Ltd and GATCOM as well as a number of other interests

represented on the Committee is that provision is made for early morning services from across the Sussex RUS area to cater for early morning trips to Gatwick Airport to meet flight schedules, both for airport passengers and Gatwick employees. This aspiration is not reflected within the Sussex RUS.

- Request that Network Rail consider the possibility of introducing peak period stops at Gatwick for Brighton Main line and Arun Valley line services. It is felt that the addition of Platform 7 at Gatwick could offer opportunities to introduce a Gatwick stop on some peak hour London/Coastway services.

### **Gatwick Airport service links to North Downs Line (Reading-Guildford-Redhill), West London Line and Redhill-Tonbridge Line**

- Support the extension of all First Great Western North Downs Line services from Redhill to Gatwick Airport (to give a half-hourly frequency in the case of the Redhill-Gatwick Airport section) and seek a retiming back from Guildford to address dwell time issues at Redhill.
- Express disappointment that the Redhill-Tonbridge line potential is overlooked in both the draft Sussex RUS and the draft Kent RUS. If better promoted and enhancements made to services, this line could provide rail links to and from Ashford International (and Eurostar) as well as Gatwick Airport to reduce pressure on the Brighton Main Line by utilising underused capacity. The withdrawal of direct trains on the Tonbridge-Redhill line to and from Gatwick Airport has had the opposite effect to encouraging greater use of public transport.
- Urge Network Rail to consider extending to Ashford or to serve Maidstone via the Medway Valley Line. It is understood that there are capacity constraints at Redhill and Gatwick Airport, however schemes for track improvements and new platforms at these stations should facilitate some additional flexibility in service provision. This should help achieve public transport modal share targets identified within the Gatwick Airport Surface Access Strategy.

### **West London Line**

- Welcome the reconsideration of the potential for West London Line service links from the Brighton Main Line and Gatwick Airport as this will provide for direct cross-London journey opportunities for journeys to and from the West Coast Main Line, without the need for changes through the London Underground network, again to meet targets within the Gatwick Airport Surface Access Strategy.

### **Rail growth over the 30-year horizon and future implications for destinations**

- GATCOM welcomes the longer-term focus of the Sussex RUS strategy to the 30-year horizon, particularly given the demand predictions that peak on train capacity will be reached between 2019 and 2023.
- Urge Network Rail to commence early planning for future rail travel demand and the possibilities for new lines into London.
- Request that Network Rail consult GATCOM on the draft London and South East RUS.