

MK Rail Users
Minutes of Annual General Meeting
Centrecom, Central Milton Keynes
13th November 2008

Present: Philip Lawton, Alan Francis, Chris Wright, Jill Hope, Steve Barker, Stuart Nightingale, Andrew Fisher, Jim Middleton, Dr. Phyllis Starkey MP, Lynne Button, Mohammed Khalid, Mohammed Razaq, Mark Balaam (West London Line Group), Rupert Lodge

Guests: Steve Banaghan (LM), Rachel Webster (LM), Paul Bryan (LM)

Apologies for Absence: Stuart Baker (DfT), Andrew Couldrake, Peter Smith, Patrick O'Sullivan, Steve Mortimer

1. Chairman's Report

Philip Lawton welcomed everyone and thanked Steve Banaghan, Managing Director London Midland and his team for attending and reported on progress in the last year.

2. Presentation by Steve Banaghan, MD London Midland

Steve Banaghan spoke about the first year of their franchise and their plans for the future.

3. Questions from the floor were taken

4. Committee Election

The committee agreed to continue to serve with Philip Lawton as Chair. Andrew Couldrake communicated his wish not to continue and Robert Prosser did not seek re-election.

5. Philip thanked all those attending and MK Transport Partnership for providing the funds for the room hire. Meeting closed at 21.30

Chairman's Report

MKBRUG was formed in 2004 following the loss of VT fast peak hour trains to Euston and had seen services deteriorate since. With completion of the MKC re-structuring MK travellers should now be receiving improved services from December '08. Since December 2007 London Midland took over from Silverlink and had a difficult start but had responded to the concerns expressed by MKRU at the time LM inherited the old Silverlink timetable based on the franchise bidding specification laid down by the DfT. MKRU had meetings throughout the year with DfT, TOCs, MPs and MK Council and MK Partnership transport Groups

- A meeting with DfT confirmed the loss of several VT direct services to Liverpool and Glasgow with Birmingham, Chester and Manchester being seen as main destinations from MKC. The new WCML franchise in 2012 may offer the chance to seek changes. The possibility of ICE trains in 2014 could also be an opportunity. Fast paths were already, however, available from MKC if LM wished to use them whilst the MKC station upgrades increased capacity. DfT meetings had been quite positive.
- The new TOC made an encouraging start with MKRUG by seeking views, seeing MKC as a key centre, an interest in developing services and may consider faster services from MKC. LM had included growth in their bid, but the levels specified for 2011 had already been reached and under capacity was a major issue. Paul Bryan attended MKRUG meetings to update the group and this is appreciated. MKRU will continue to press LM for the introduction of non-stop peak hour services to and from Euston
- During the year LM & VT had presentations by MK Partnership and MK Council highlighting the growth plans for MK and the need for improved rail links to and from the MK area.
- MKC is the subject of serious consideration for development. LM had secured funding for upgrade work on station facilities. Station Square continues to be the subject of considerable debate as to the nature of its development but considerable funding is in place.
- Meetings with VT had been disappointing, VT consider their timetable is set in stone and specified by DfT so not willing to consider extra stops at MKC. They also do not accept poor organisation at Euston during disruption.

- Congestion at Euston in the morning 'crush' created by Virgin Revenue Protection and major communication breakdown at times of service problems were a serious current issue.
- Cyclists causing problems on platforms and stairs had been raised with LM who had taken action to seek a solution but enforcement was sporadic.
- Disruptive LM Revenue Protection checks had caused congestion at MKC had been discussed with LM and concerns acknowledged. Fraudulent travel is a major problem and LM accept the need to make detection effective but not disruptive to legitimate travellers.
- Both MPs had been active in taking up issues with the Minister and in verbal and written questions in the House of Commons.
- Some concerns over 2009 Bletchley resignalling and further disruption

The future has some good signs –LM interest in stakeholder views, potential for non-stop MKC – Euston peak hour trains, possible ICE trains, Pendolinos to be lengthened, WCML re-franchise opportunity for new timetable opportunities, Station Square and station upgrade, car parking, new rolling stock and East-West Rail Link progressing.

Presentation by Steve Banaghan

Steve Banaghan acknowledged that much of what he had to say had been covered by the Chairman's address. LM recognised that their first year had been difficult but there were signs of improvement and was pleased MKRUG recognised the progress being made.

- WCML modernisation is nearing completion and LM is meeting targets
- Timetable shows scope for improvements and pathing is under review
- Growth in passenger numbers has seen overcrowding arise as an issue. New Desiro stock is arriving and increased number of trains will be 12 cars. In addition LM has bid to retain some 321 units which will be refurbished to give extended life.
- Potential capacity issues in 2012 if growth continues. ICE would help, but is not due for delivery until 2014 at the earliest.
- Network Rail is reviewing maintenance and engineering regimes.
- Following heavy maintenance at Eastleigh, the 321 fleet reliability has declined lately and being addressed 'in-house' to correct maintenance defects.
- Infrastructure Performance locally has declined and working with NR to address
- Timetable being introduced in December is being reviewed for 2009/10
- LM has experienced and committed team

Question & Answers

Q What measures to address capacity issue in 2012?

SB LM reviewing slow line capacity
Longer trains at peak from 12/08
Possibility ICE stock
New Southern service in Jan. '09 may take up some WLL users.

Q WLL Users Group welcomes Southern extension to MKC and growth in users but is concerned about gap in peak timetable.

SB Southern is related company and faces same limitations of stock availability and growth. Refranchising underway and may offer an opportunity and WLL investment options could increase route capacity

Q Concerns over staff availability and communication in times of disruption

SB Disruption should decrease with WCML work nearing completion. Two reviews underway to improve matters –Euston re Network Rail and LM communications and on service recovery and communications. MKRUG to meet Andy Thomas.

Comment – Could extra stops cover for displaced services and more staff for customers to consult?

Q Issues around stopping 12 car trains at 8 car platforms

- SB Safety with current 321 & 350 12 car sets not having selective door opening, new 350s have this facility and staff review covers procedures.
- Q Broken step at MKC has taken ages to be repaired and this with congestion is safety hazard – what action is being taken?
- SB Concerned about delay to repairs and Paul Bryan to follow up. LM reviewing congestion and may consider second exit and holding people at barrier if departing train not imminent.
- Q Is PSR are more important than customer satisfaction?
- SB PSR is DfT Specified and WCML work has impacted on PSR but LM needs to grow the business and encourage people to travel, passengers will not be sacrificed to satisfy PSR targets
- Q Dr Starkey MP welcomed work of MKRUG and sees it as a voice for local rail users and takes up issues on behalf and also concerned about coping with growth but encouraged by appointment of Lord Adonis who visited MKC recently.
- SB ... was encouraged by contact with Lord Adonis. LM looking at slow line paths and if a Euston-Watford Junction shuttle service would help, ICE stock would increase capacity and speed up trains. LM has to balance needs of all users (including Leighton Buzzard who would have some views on reduced fast services!) LM is not unsympathetic to seeing faster journey times. LM plans to strengthen capacity on either side of peaks (4-8pm) and on Saturdays.
- Q Can LM improve northbound services following loss of some VT trains?
- SB New service in timetable serving Trent Valley and Crewe and would be willing to look beyond. VT set VT timetable. Semi-fast services by LM serving the NW would not be possible, LM services must serve newly connected communities.
- Q Why does freight use WCML in peak and disrupt commuter services?
- SB New LM peak timetable in 12/08 is hoped to improve things and no scheduled freight at peak but may be late running or an as required service. New 2009 timetable has embedding period and also hopes 321 unit reliability improves. Will come back to next AGM if asked!
- Q Will LM not increase fares if services are not better?
- SB No. Not able to give such a commitment