

THE UP LINE

NEWSLETTER OF CAMBRIDGE HEATH AND LONDON FIELDS RAIL USERS

DECEMBER 2015

Overground boost

New passengers have flocked to Cambridge Heath and London Fields stations since they were taken over by London Overground in May.

London Fields passenger numbers increased by an average of 24% over the past year while Cambridge Heath increased overall by 29%.

Having staff at the stations seems to have given passengers reassurance that the stations are not only providing a good service but are safe to use in the evening.

Passenger numbers in the evening peak increased by 38% at Cambridge Heath and by 32% at London Fields.

Over the years, women told us that they were reluctant to use the stations or allow their children to use them in the dark. Now with the presence of friendly and helpful Overground staff equipped with mobile phones to keep them abreast of train cancellations and delays, passengers are more confident. They have also been impressed by the remarkable improvement in cleanliness.

The Overground says trains are now more reliable after being given special attention by maintenance staff. It has asked Network Rail to confirm that problems with



Picture: MALCOLM BURGUYNE

PROGRESS? This electrically powered trolley bus is preserved and was photographed in Lincolnshire this year. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the 555 trolley bus route ran along Mare Street, Hackney and past Cambridge Heath station, as the 55 bus does now. James Forrest, who was born in Mare Street, said: "The trolley buses were quiet, clean and reliable. Their noisy, smelly diesel replacements brought about a palpable deterioration in air quality along the main roads. It was realised too late that something essential had been taken from us."

the track and signalling will also be given the attention necessary. Stakeholder manager Sam Russell told us: "We are looking for assurances about maintenance from Network Rail and once we unlock that we should see

performance rise even faster." He is also making enquiries about when Transport for London's project team is proposing to replace the faulty customer information screens which have been out of order for more than a year.

Improvements needed

We welcome the prospect of new trains, but there are plenty of other improvements which are needed before then.

We have asked Transport for London to consider the following:

Changes needed at Cambridge Heath

1. Train information screen at ground level, as at London Fields, Hackney Downs, Stoke Newington and Rectory Road stations.
2. Reinstatement of the six peak hour trains at Cambridge Heath (that were cut in December 2011 and which led directly to a fall in passenger numbers).
3. Live monitoring of CCTV, as at London Fields station.
4. Ground floor retail unit to be let.
5. Station name and logo on Hackney Road bridge as at Hackney Central.
6. Second entrance on Hackney Road, to augment the existing entrance on Cambridge Heath Road.

Changes needed at both Cambridge Heath and London Fields stations

1. Repair or replacement of train departure information screens on the platforms
2. An earlier start to the Sunday service, from 07.00, rather than 09.00.
3. In the long term, improved timetable to provide a train every 10 minutes rather than every 15 minutes as at present.
4. Stopping some Chingford trains at Cambridge Heath and London Fields

to provide a direct service to and from Walthamstow, without the need to change trains at Hackney Downs.

5. Lifts at both stations to help mobility-impaired passengers, including parents with buggies and prams as well as passengers with cycles.
6. Additional platform shelters and seats, to cope with rising passenger numbers.
7. Regular on-train announcements of stations.
8. Designating Cambridge Heath and London Fields as art stations, to reflect the large artistic community in the area.
9. Encouraging artists to use the stations to display their art.

These changes are suggested by Cambridge Heath and London Fields Rail Users for the attention of Jonathan Fox (Director of London Rail) and Mike Stubbs (Director Overground) of Transport for London.

They will also be circulated to local politicians who have shown an interest in train services.

We are unhappy that the “official” estimates from the Office of Rail and Road seriously understate the real use of our two stations, when compared with our carefully recorded observations.

We believe the ORR 2014-2015 estimate of 720,904 passengers using London Fields annually and 402,078 for Cambridge Heath are about half the actual numbers. This under-estimate undermines the case for improving our stations and the train services.

What changes do YOU want?

Please email editor@railwatch.org.uk if you think there are other things we should be campaigning for.