

BARKING-GOSPEL OAK LINE USER GROUP

www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk

FEBRUARY 2008 NEWSLETTER

OVERCROWDING

This is without a doubt the single most pressing issue on the line. Improved frequencies, improved reliability and the publicity boost of having the line shown on the Tube map mean it is now busier than ever, particularly in rush hours. Our 2-car trains cannot cope at such times now – they certainly cannot be expected to cope with ever-rising demand until the new trains arrive in December 2009, and neither can their increasingly-crushed passengers. With the knowledge that we have of available train paths, we believe that it is possible to operate a 15-minute interval service using existing resources during the busiest parts of the morning and evening peaks. We have submitted a draft timetable to operators LOROL, and are meeting them on February 26th to discuss this in detail. LOROL themselves have interim plans to take out the end seat of the 3-seat rows, which will free up more gangway space and standing accommodation, thus easing the situation slightly. We are told that the design and layout of the new trains will enable them to carry 30% more passengers than the existing rolling stock – but they will still only be 2 cars long. We remain firmly of the opinion that they need to be 3 cars in length from Day One.

PENALTY FARES

Penalty Fares came in on our line on January 21st, meaning that anyone boarding a train without a ticket or valid Oyster card may be liable to a £20 fine. Obviously legitimate exceptions will be allowed – eg if the machine at the station isn't working. If you have trouble using the station ticket machines, remember that the station staff are there to help you. NB – in normal circumstances it is no longer possible to buy your ticket on the train.

If you do incur a penalty fare, you can choose not to pay on the spot and instead opt to be issued with a penalty fare notice. You can then appeal to the Independent Penalty Fares Appeal Service (IPFAS), whose address appears on the penalty fares notice, but for it to be considered it must be received by IPFAS within 21 days. If you ignore a penalty fare notice you could find yourself prosecuted for fares evasion.

London TravelWatch has a limited role in respect of Penalty Fares and appeals should not be sent to them. Ordinarily London TravelWatch's sole role is to consider whether the agreed procedures for handling penalty fares appeals have been followed, and it will not be able to consider the merits or otherwise as to whether a penalty fare should have been issued in the first place. We'd also be interested to know about any such experiences.

One thing the machines can't do is issue you with a top-up ticket from a zone boundary to a station further out, so if (say) you have a Zone 1-3 TravelCard and want to go to Barking, you are perfectly entitled to buy the add-on ticket en route or on arrival without incurring a penalty fare.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Our next open meeting is on Tuesday June 3rd (715 pm at Barking Town Hall), As per usual we hope to have representatives from the line's management and from British Transport Police on hand to update us and answer questions.

SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

Subscription renewals have been rather slower than usual this year – maybe people thinking all the battles are won and we can shut up shop now! Not so – there is still much to be done and we shall need to be around for a good while yet. Plus the leafleting and publicity exercises we undertook towards the end of last year used up a hefty chunk of our resources. So if you haven't yet renewed for this year, please do so – and persuade a friend or two to join too!

Subscriptions are still only £3 for the year – please make cheques payable to Barking-Gospel Oak Line User Group and send to the Secretary, 35 Carr Road, London E17 5ER. Thank you to those people who have renewed so far, particularly those who included a bit extra as a donation.

NB – people who joined towards the end of 2007 do not have to pay again!

Barking-Gospel Oak Line User Group, 35 Carr Road, E17 5ER