

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group: Feedback from Users, 26 June 2018

About this Document

The questions in this document were gathered from Rail Users at Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton via the User Group Facebook Page (meldrethsheprethfoxtonrail), and via direct emails to the Rail User Group email address (railusergroup@gmail.com). This document will be sent to Govia Thameslink Railway and Network Rail in advance of the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group Meeting on 27th June.

The document is divided into three sections:

- A. Service Failures
- B. Compensation
- C. Record of Impact on Users

Where several users have raised the same issue, the problem has been summarised.

A. Service failures

Peak time – key services to reinstate

- Villages → Cambridge morning peak. **Ensure the 7.44 now runs consistently and that there is an earlier train reinstated for those that need it.**

The advertised 06:38 (from Shepreth) has not run at all for the last week. The 7.09 (from Shepreth) has run intermittently, the record for the 7.44 is worse.

- Villages → Kings X morning peak. **Ensure the 7.38 reinstated.**

“There is currently an unacceptable gap between 6.40 and 8.10 – commuters have to get the 6.40 to reach London before 9am. Last week there were no arrivals into London between 8 and just before 9.30, obviously a massive issue.”

- Cambridge → Villages Evening peak.

“We would like to know when the evening rush hour trains from Cambridge to the Villages will be returning to the timetable? The services from 16:00 – 19:00 in the evening peak are frequently cancelled on the day. For example, last week the 16.57 was cancelled Monday and Tuesday; the 17.27 only ran on Thursday and Friday; the 17.57 only ran on Friday; the 18.27 was cancelled Monday and Tuesday; the 18.57 never ran; the 19.27 didn’t run on Monday or Tuesday. The worst day was Monday 18th: the 16.27 ran, the 17.27 ran 23 minutes late, and the next train was not until 19.27 – one train in 3 hours.”

“This is a disaster for school & college kids.” “Anyone local to the city leaving work/college/university at peak times is unable to get home by train. For me personally, this means I now drive in.”

- Weekend services have been sporadic at best since 20th May. “For example on the 24th June from Shepreth to Cambridge the only trains were 14.15, 17.15, 20.18 and 21.15. It is very clear that the village trains continue to be routinely cancelled when there are driver shortages at the weekend. Saturday 23rd wasn’t that much better only eight trains.”

“Weekends remain a joke.”

Stop-Skipping: Completely missing out the villages

- Trains are regularly skipping Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton if they are running late so that they can make up lost time.
- "The contract for the franchise needs to prohibit or severely penalise this. It is equivalent to a partial decommissioning of a service and has undergone no public consultation or due process. This happened again this evening.”
- Trains have been stopping at the village stations which have not been advertised on the app. This means that very few passengers are using these services. “Evening trains to villages especially prone to NOT show on the apps”.
- “The lack of stopping trains on return from Cambridge is spawning the conspiracy theory that GTR would like to scrap the village stations altogether.”

Cambridge to Brighton Service

- Can you confirm that the service Cambridge to Brighton through St Pancras has been completely suspended? If so, do you have any idea when it will be reinstated?

B. Compensation

- Am I able to claim compensation because my preferred service, 07:11, is semi-permanently cancelled?
- Can I be compensated for taxis I’ve had to arrange independently when stuck with no one at the station?
- I’m having to factor in parking charges at Royston station, which adds up considerably. Can I be compensated?
- We’ve had a large lunchtime booking cancelled because the guests who were going to travel by train couldn’t get here. How can we be compensated?
- GTR/GN should actively promote the service when it settles down again. I think they should offer something over and above the normal pay/delay to their season ticket holder regulars, say a week’s free travel when the ticket is renewed. To encourage people back to the service and new comers, at the weekends offer nominal fares of say a £1 return to Cambridge from MSF and on other weekends travel anywhere on the GTR network for £5 return. They should do this anyway to promote the service but it is imperative they do something positive now.

C. Record of Impact on Users

Week 5

Please ask the people running the trains to reinstate the 07:08 ish train from Shepreth to Royston as I cannot keep cycling 16 odd miles from Barrington to Royston every day.

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Since the timetable changes I have, most days, changed from catching the 08:10ish to 06:36ish. This is because I can't otherwise rely on the trains to get me to work on time at the moment. My office doesn't open until 08:00ish so I often find myself sitting outside the office, sometimes for an hour.

On the return journey I don't bother looking at the timetables anymore since they have been so unreliable and unpredictable (yesterday I took a train which was unscheduled and not on the departure boards!). I leave the office as early as possible and don't expect to get home for any particular time.

On a positive note I have recently noticed there have been northern reps at CBG station. Although they don't usually know what's happening either, it does at least show that Thameslink are making an effort to hear what the issues are on the ground.

The app said there were buses running through Meldreth, but I didn't see any go past my house [near the station] that day. I have seen buses go into the station today, but didn't notice any mention of bus replacement on the app.

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I would like to know why there are currently no trains running from Cambridge station to the South Cambs villages between 16:57 and 18:27 on week nights. This means that anyone local to the city leaving work/college/university at peak times is unable to get home by train. For me personally, this means I now drive in. Surely trains should be available to encourage people to leave their cars at home rather than add to city congestion?

I would be very grateful if you could let me know if/when rush hour trains from Cambridge to the villages will be returning to the timetable, and the reasoning behind removing them in the first place.

I would also like to add that the first time I arrived at Cambridge station from university to find my usual train had vanished, your staff were incredibly polite and efficient, and ensured I could get home by securing me a pre-paid taxi. They had a number of frustrated commuters venting their anger at them, yet handled the situation impeccably, so many thanks for the wonderful customer service.

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In week 4 it is just as bad if not worse:

Timetables have been stripped back so GTR can manage better. This is now not based on the May timetable at all.

You can only check the timetable from 10pm the night before, but the trains vanish/are cancelled last minute.

Take this morning as an example. Checked the trains last night and it listed 6.10, 6.40, 7.25 (bus), and 8.10. Arrived at the station and 6.30 and train was cancelled at 6.40. The 7.25 bus is very unreliable (arriving earlier/later or not at all).

Most people I speak to are now taking the 06.40 as it's the only option.

If you change at Royston its barely possible to board a fast train. (And these are also often cancelled). In fact the trains are so overloaded they cannot be safe.

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As you may hear from others, this morning's 6:43 failed to appear, and the same occurred on Thursday and Friday

Even Bern didn't have a clue about what was going on, but at 6:51 a direct service went through Meldreth, much to the consternation of 17 of us waiting

A bus was provided and eventually some of us caught a train from Royston, although even the stopping points of this were unclear at departure

The lack of information just compounds the fundamental issue of the lack of any reliable service. There was no information on Meldreth station about this morning's 6:43 being delayed until well after it was due to arrive - and then it just came up "delayed" on the signage. Even Bern thought that it had left Cambridge!

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We are heavily reliant on train services to both Cambridge and London and like many others, we have suffered greatly from the breakdown in train services to and from each destination over several weeks now. I commute to and from London for work and 2 of our children travel to Cambridge for school. As you will no doubt be aware, for my London journeys, the morning train service has been virtually non-existent during the main peak travel times with my usual 7.11 train not having run for many weeks now (the options typically being 6.43 or 8.13). I now have to arrange separate transport to Royston to catch a train there. This compared with 2 x regular half hourly trains previously. For our children's journey, they used to take the 7.41 train to Cambridge but this has been withdrawn over recent weeks, meaning that they are left with 1 train per hour, having to catch the 7.06 train for school which starts almost an hour and a half later at 8.30 which is far from ideal. This compared with 2 x trains per hour, again half hourly previously. The return journeys have also been impacted.

The current situation is causing us a huge amount of inconvenience and there does not appear to be any end in sight. As you no doubt will agree, this is a significant issue for those of us who live in South Cambs and have settled here mainly as a result of the good train links previously. I would be grateful if you could continue to apply as much pressure as possible to secure a resolution to the current problems and keep us posted with any developments in particular with regard to firm reassurances from Thameslink that our lives will return to normal as soon as possible.

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The situation is simply desperate. Impact for me is as follows:

- 1) less time at work
- 2) less time with family
- 3) need to save up to buy a second family car so I can start driving in to either Royston or Stevenage to catch the train