

ORR Inquiry into May 2018 Network Disruption

Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership and Rail User Group

The May 20th timetable failure has had a profound effect on the community that depend on rail services at Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Stations.

Rail and our community

- About half of our outbound passengers travel north toward Cambridge; the other half travels to points south, including Royston, Letchworth, Stevenage and London. Inbound passengers travel mainly to work in our area.
- The housing market in this community is largely based on access to rail. A significant population living in these villages depends regularly on rail and accessing rail in a way that does not depend on operating a car.
- Our area hosts a large business community (Melbourn Science Park and Industrial Site, Shepreth Wildlife Park; Harston Mill) for which access to rail travel is integral to Travel Plans.
- The three stations combined see half a million passengers annually.

Lack of information

- No uniformity of information across different apps & departure boards.
- Shepreth and Foxton are unmanned stations, so there is no human presence to assist in arranging taxis or providing information on rail replacement buses, which according to the National Rail Enquiries website 'run without a schedule'.
- Information points have been reported as either not working or not helpful.
- At King's Cross, regular practice of allowing large numbers of people to board a train, only to cancel it minutes later – compounding stress on passengers.

Impact on passengers

- Disruption and stress for students depending on rail at exam time.
- Financial penalties for late arrival at work.
- Increased costs of childcare due to late arrival home.
- Loss of contracts for people conducting business in the Cambridge-London corridor.
- Cost of daily petrol to and parking at Royston Station, for access to a more reliable service.
- Purchase of a car in order to drive to Royston Station, or to take up driving to Cambridge
- Cycling in unacceptable conditions to reach Royston Station.
- Stress and impact on health, especially for those already vulnerable.
- Time cost to passengers leaving significantly earlier than usual, to arrive at work on time.
- Time cost to other family members, for lifts to other stations to catch more reliable services.

Impact on local business

- Loss of revenue at local pubs near stations, due to last minute cancellations.
- Resignations of staff who travel into the villages by rail but not willing to endure any further aggravation arising from vastly elongated journey times.

Low wage earners: Urgent need for fair and timely compensation

- Compensation is urgent for those on low wages who have had pay docked due to lateness.
- There is no obvious avenue or recourse for this and other examples of consequential losses, about with the Train Operating Company has shared no advice.
- Lack of experience and confidence on the part of some passengers to deal with the overwhelming bureaucratic nature of compensation suggests that claims are not being made that should be.

Sacrificing the villages

- The pre-interim and interim timetables contain regularized gaps that scupper a workable rail commuting routine (see below).
- These gaps create a significantly poorer commuter service than pre-May 20.
- These gaps give credence to the perception that Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton are being sacrificed in the big picture context.

Key gaps in service regularized in interim timetable

- Gap between 8.36 and 9.36 (Foxton, Shepreth Meldreth – London).
- Gap between 17.27 and 18.27 (Cambridge-Foxton, Shepreth Meldreth).
- Gap between 6.38 and 7.36 (Foxton, Shepreth, Meldreth - London) means no train which currently arrives in London for around 8.30, for a 9am start.
- Gap between 17.21 and 18.21 and 19.23 and 20.21 (London to villages) - not possible to combine fast service to Royston with a connection to Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton.
- Gap between 22.21 and 23.51; ditto Sat 20:51-23:51 (London-villages).

Abandoning rail

- Some people have given up rail and adopted new patterns of work and travel, including private car as noted above but also more days working at home and hiring a private driver to London a couple of times per week, with net savings over a rail season ticket.

Empty car park (photo attached)

- Before May 20, urgent pressure at Meldreth Station was around car park capacity and how to expand it.
- Now, the car park is largely empty.

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