



THE ABBEY FLYER NEWSLETTER

Abbey Line Recent News

In this Issue:

Abbey Line recent news	1
724 Makeover	1
Future events	1
Silverlink lose franchise	2
Abbey Line User Survey	2
Contact details	2

There was a special late train from St. Albans at 23.00 during the Beer Festival, September 27th-30th.

A special late train ran after the first two Watford FC midweek home games, and could become a permanent feature.

The Abbey Line features in the adopted Local Transport Plan in various capacities, including road safety.

(The passing loop is also mentioned briefly).

Engineering works will occur on the first 3 Sundays in October (1st, 8th and 15th) until 12.00 with replacement buses in the mornings.

The Southend Special has been deferred until 2007, probably between Easter and Community Rail Day in May.

James Elliot has been appointed as Group station manager to oversee both the Abbey Line and forthcoming Marston Vale CRP, which will both come under the new West Midlands franchise.

The Members Meeting will be at the Bricket Wood Parish Centre on 31st October at 7 for 7.30, with speakers James Elliot and Geraint Hughes.

The Editor

FUTURE EVENTS

The St. Albans Branch of the Locomotive Club of Great Britain meets on the second Thursday of each month at the Chiswell Green United Reformed Church hall, Watford Road St. Albans from 7.30 pm.

There will be a Ghost Train on Saturday 28th October between 16.30 and 18.30.

724 Makeover

The 724 Green Line express coach service which runs from Harlow to London Heathrow airport received a makeover recently with new low floor fully accessible vehicles. The route now stops at both the Abbey

station (photo) and Watford Junction, providing hourly links to both London Heathrow and Stanstead airports (change to the 510 at Harlow). The route is now more direct with fewer stops overall.



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Silverlink to lose Franchise

Breaking news as we went to press was that Silverlink Trains are out of the running to operate the new West Midlands Franchise. There are currently 3 groups in the running; Govia (who ran Thameslink), Hong Kong transit operator MTR, and Serco/Nedrail who are both established transit operators in urban situations. The new Franchisee will be asked to price for a half hourly enhanced service on the Abbey Line, and recognise Community Rail Partnerships for various lines, including the Abbey, emerging Marston Vale and Walsall, Stourbridge lines in the West Midlands. National Express are still in the running with 3 other groups for the new expanded London Overground Franchise (currently Silverlink Metro).

Abbey Line User Survey Results

A consultant's survey was carried out this Spring into how the Abbey Line was being used and when. The results were largely anticipated, and were as follows;

*Usage had declined about 20% since the early 1990s due to service cuts.

*Recent usage had increased in line with rail use generally.

*Ticketing was poor, and needs improvement.

*The busiest stations were St. Albans Abbey and Watford Junction with almost 50% of all traffic, so limited stop services like some other CRP's may be possible.

* The best used intermediate station was Garston, and the worst Park Street and How Wood, serving the same area.

*Only 11% of traffic was to Euston, with more going to West London and other main line destinations, mainly weekdays.

*The consultants suggested that Cottonmill should have a station, as this is similar to Garston in nature but poorly served by local transport.

*Most traffic (about 50%) was purely local in nature, so through services look unlikely at present.

*There is a case for the passing loop and half hourly frequency which would boost usage. (Full details are available on the CRP website).

