

News Release from Network Rail

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NEW TIMETABLE MARKS START OF MAJOR CONSTRUCTION ON THAMESLINK RAIL UPGRADE

A new timetable for one of London's busiest commuter routes comes into force this week, marking the start of the major construction phase of the congestion-busting Thameslink Programme.

The multi-billion pound Thameslink upgrade will revolutionise travel on the capital's only north-south main line route, delivering more trains, more seats and more journey choices as well as new and upgraded stations that will benefit millions of passengers.

As part of massive improvement work, the Farringdon to Moorgate branch will close so that Network Rail can extend Farringdon's platforms to accommodate longer 12-car trains. Blackfriars main line station remains open but the three terminating 'bay' platforms have been temporarily closed so work can begin on a completely new station - the first to span the River Thames with a new entrance on the South Bank serving the Tate Modern, Shakespeare's Globe and other top London destinations.

These changes simplify the rail route through central London, paving the way for a new timetable with almost double the number of trains travelling through London in each direction every hour (from eight to 15).

The new timetable and the start of Network Rail's major construction work is just the latest milestone to be completed on a project which has already successfully delivered:

- Improved connections to and from Europe by opening a new Thameslink station at St Pancras International
- Platform extensions at Luton Airport Parkway, as part of a programme to lengthen the trains serving many stations on the route by 2012
- A new, larger footbridge to relieve station congestion at Farringdon

Andy Mitchell, Network Rail programme director, said: "Hitting this latest milestone on the congestion-busting Thameslink upgrade is not simply a next step, it's a step

change. The new timetable means more trains through the heart of London and gives us the green light to start major work at Farringdon and Blackfriars.

“Once completed, these new and improved stations will make travelling in and around London quicker and easier, providing better access for people with restricted mobility, pushchairs or suitcases, as well as improving connections with London Underground and future Crossrail services.

“Blackfriars, with its stunning glass façade running the full width of the Thames, will become a new landmark that London can be proud of.”

Mr Mitchell added: “Even now, as we work day and night to build new stations and upgrade the railway, passengers are benefiting from more trains through London offering direct services to new destinations. This must be the first time that anyone has been able to actually increase the number of trains whilst carrying out a major upgrade of a busy capital city commuter line.

“Keeping the railway open for day to day business is crucial for London’s economy. With a project of this scale this represents a serious challenge and will require the whole industry to work together to keep our work on schedule and minimise disruption to passengers.”

Notes to Editors:

Network Rail has already spent some £40m to improve reliability whilst major works are under way. A huge range of equipment has been replaced and upgraded including signalling, cabling, tracks, power supply and track circuits with improvements in performance and reliability already being felt by rail users.

The next major Thameslink programme milestone comes in 2012 with a massive boost in capacity as 12-car trains are rolled out on the main Bedford to Brighton route as well as a further increase in frequency up to 16 trains per hour. The new station at Blackfriars and the expanded Farringdon station will also be completed in 2012.

By 2015 the complete redevelopment of London Bridge – currently the biggest bottleneck on the British rail network – will allow the full Thameslink service level to rise to 24 trains per hour through central London. In addition, 12-car trains will

operate on all routes with even more direct destinations from north to south and vice versa.

The Thameslink Programme is part of Network Rail's wider commitment to improving rail travel in and around London. We are investing over £450m to transform King's Cross into a world-class major transport hub - the largest of its kind in Europe. And we are working hard to deliver Crossrail, which will increase London's entire public transport network capacity by a massive 10%.

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About Network Rail

Network Rail is the 'not for dividend' owner and operator of Britain's railway infrastructure, which includes the tracks, signals, tunnels, bridges, viaducts, level crossings and stations - the largest of which we also manage

We aim to provide a safe, reliable and efficient rail infrastructure for freight and passenger trains to use

Our website: <http://www.networkrail.co.uk>