

16% GROWTH in 2009 !**DURING 2009 PASSENGER USE HAS INCREASED
BY 16% AND AROUND 30% AT MANY BRISTOL
SUBURBAN STATIONS.**

Provisional figures from the Severnside partnership have shown a near exponential growth in the number of passengers using greater Bristol local stations. Increases of around 30% on have been reported for Parson Street, Redland, Lawrence Hill (main line route) Shirehampton, Yate and Filton Abbey Wood.

So if we were to organise these results as if the network was run in the style of a continental **U-Bahn/Cercanias** system, we can extrapolate the potential of local passenger rail in the greater Bristol area.

**sb = Severn Beach Line passengers nsb= not Severn Beach Line passengers
(SC)= connects with a show case bus route. (AIR) = airport bus, #49= new buses**

Potential Greater Bristol Metro Line 1 Western Super Mare to Yate

Station	2007	2008	2009
Western –S-Mare	2279	2253	2579
Nailsea and Backwell	1315	1477	1441
Parson Street (SC) (AIR)	108	208	269
Bedminster	156	280	322
Temple Meads all. (AIR)	2985	5096	5951
Lawrence Hill nsb	263	334	366
Stapleton Road nsb #49	326	489	540
Filton Abbey Wood	1958	2065	3102
Yate	694	707	931

Welsh Spur for line 1

Patchway	139	156	234
Pilning	It is still open!	On Saturdays	only.

Portishead Spur for Lin 1

Freight to Portbury dock only. Being studied by NR for passenger use.

Potential Greater Bristol Metro Line 2: From Bath to Severn Beach and Bristol Park/Filton Abbey wood.

Freshford	89	98	109
Oldfeild Park	841	985	974
Keynsham	839	972	1034
Temple Meads sb	2845	4613	5325
Lawence Hill sb (SC)	263	334	366
Stapleton Road sb #49	326	489	540
Montpelier (SC)	253	495	623
Redland	264	474	635
Clifton Down (SC)	500	827	981
Sea Mills	121	166	191
Shirehampton	86	158	214
Avonmouth	218	294	243
St Andrew's Road	30	19	18
Severn Beach	135	107	135
Hallen	Currently	freight	only
Henbury	Currently	freight	only
Filton Halt (SC)	Currently	freight	only

Number for "Line 2" are sure to increase further with the improved Sunday service to Severn Beach.

Together with famous FOSBR map it is quite obvious that if this growth is to continue/be encouraged together with the electrification of the great western main line and the long hoped for reopening of the line to Portishead then it becomes increasingly obvious that the Filton Bank pinch point has to be resolved by restoring the main line from 2 to the 4 tracks that the network enjoyed up to 1986. (see comments on great western RUS) for local rail to reach its full potential.

FOSBR Subscriptions for 2010

Thanks to all of you who have sent your subscriptions and donations for this year. We have raised over £1,000 so far - which is excellent ! Your membership card is enclosed with this edition of the Newsletter.

A gentle reminder for those who have not yet renewed ... If you would like to continue supporting FOSBR and to receive future Newsletters, a subscription form is enclosed with your Newsletter.

Thank you. **Tony Lloyd, Membership Secretary.**

OPEN FOSBR MEETING

6pm Saturday the 17th April 2010

Open FoSBR meeting for all members and general public to be held in the **Great Western Staff Club, Temple Meads Station Approach.** (down the steps on the right). See what's on where...

FEATURED STATION: Severn Tunnel Junction/Cyffordd Twmel Hafren.



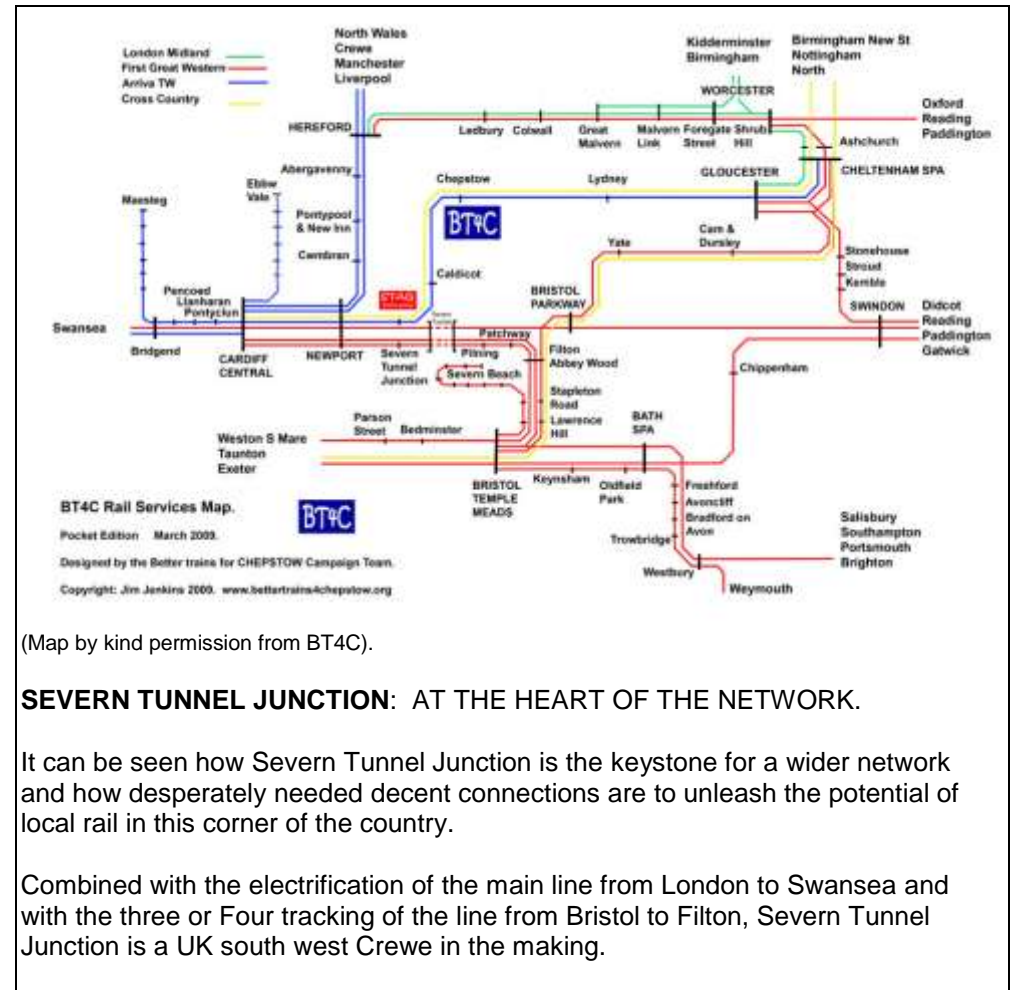
Photos by Rosana Torres.

On the Celtic side of the Severn, Severn Tunnel Junction station has undergone not only cosmetic refurbishment, but has had some major engineering work undertaken by Network Rail to removing the bottleneck of the Gloucester line merging with the route from Bristol gaining and extra platform in the process. All this due in part to the active campaigning of STAG. (Severn Tunnel Action Group).

Faced by the prospect of losing most of their commuter trains in 2006, STAG was formed by disgruntled rail commuters who lobbied for their rail services to be reinstated. However things didn't stop there, public transport aware politicians in the Welsh assembly saw the strategic value of the station as part of South Wales's transport strategy especially now with the cancellation of some road building in southern part of the principality has focused peoples minds on the alternatives to more tarmac. Tacking advantage of the resignalling of the south Wales main line, the tracks around Severn Tunnel Junction have been reconfigured so that Gloucester Trains are no longer held up by traffic using the Severn Tunnel. This is exactly what 4 tracking will resolver for Filton Bank.

Back to the Forest: With no sign of original Severn rail bridge at Sharpness to the Forest of Dean being reinstated and the Great Western RUS ruling out a direct service from Bristol to Gloucester via Lydney, there is now no excuse not to improve the connections with services up north side of the River Severn with those to Bristol from the Severn Tunnel. Better Trains 4 Chepstow (BT4C) are crying out for more trains to stop at Chepstow and if reasonable connections could be made at Severn Tunnel Junction then maybe some of those who commute by car from Chepstow and the Forest of Dean to Bristol could be tempted to use rail instead.

FOSBR should watch the development of the station very carefully as it is a case study on how the removal of a restrictive bottleneck impacts the growth of local rail.



(Map by kind permission from BT4C).

SEVERN TUNNEL JUNCTION: AT THE HEART OF THE NETWORK.

It can be seen how Severn Tunnel Junction is the keystone for a wider network and how desperately needed decent connections are to unleash the potential of local rail in this corner of the country.

Combined with the electrification of the main line from London to Swansea and with the three or Four tracking of the line from Bristol to Filton, Severn Tunnel Junction is a UK south west Crewe in the making.



Photo by Rosana Torres.

CLIFTON DOWN Station: Bristol's other potential rail gateway.

Clifton Down Station seems to be rightly or wrongly the jewel in the Severn Beach Line's crown in many people's eyes, fettered in every transport report given its own very special turn back to protect it from "perturbation" and it still has its old station building intact. Status, use, location, access and architectural heritage: perhaps these are the ingredients to make it Bristol's other gateway station. For this to be a reality, Bristol's gentlefolk require a more agreeable route that doesn't require changing trains at the Dickensian Stapleton Road nor fighting their way past the Cornish Pasties in the Temple Meads subway to make their superior connections. By reinstating the Henbury loop long distance trains can call at Clifton Down and carry on to London or the north via Stoke Gifford junction without the need to leave the comfort of the train whilst still travelling through the city of Bristol.

Varsity Special?

Maybe in the very long term when the Varsity Route between Oxford and Cambridge is rebuilt, a varsity service could run from Cambridge via Oxford to Clifton Down (for Bristol University). Not so different to the Monkey Specials that were run in the 70's.

WORKINGTON NORTH TEMPORARY STATION and SHIREHAMPTON P&R

It is amazing what this county can do when people put their minds to it. After the flooding in Cumbria this winter the town of Workington found itself divided when the road bridges over the river were either swept away or declared unsafe, forcing people to make a long detour to simply to reach the other side of the town, children couldn't get to school, shops cut off from their customers, businesses having to make 40-mile detours. But because the railway bridge survived relatively unscathed Workington was reunited by the constructing a station on the north side of the river. Network Rail in conjunction with the local council and operator constructed a temporary station (with two platforms) **within two weeks**, at a cost far less than what has been quoted for a platform at Shirehampton. Could this be an option for the Shirehampton park and ride. Just shows you what can be done when people don't sit on their hands.

FOSBEER FAMILY FUN by Bethan Risby age 13

On Sunday 14th of March, Mother's Day, me and my family took the train to Temple Meads Station. The train was on time and was very busy, and we only just got seats. As you approach Temple Meads if you look out of your window you will see the park that you could go to.

We left through the back exit of station and walked towards the river, then right and crossed the bridge. We looked at the water and it was very peaceful. We walked with the Ibis hotel on the left and crossed the road into Chimney Steps with some newly built houses on either side of us. We turned right onto Barton Road and then turned left onto Oxford Street and into a good park.

We played in the park and it was great fun. There is a younger children's play ground, a basketball and football court and a table tennis table that was very popular with my family.

Then we went back to Barton Road and to a pub called the Barley Mow - the pub in the FOSBEER leaflet. The Barley Mow is very inviting and cosy and has a different atmosphere, more like a cafe. Everyone is friendly and chatty. We had a very nice roast with chicken and lots of vegetables all for a reasonable price. There was also a veggie bake with a cheese topping that was very tasty. Then we had warm homemade chocolate brownies with vanilla ice-cream. There is a garden with an outside chess table and the pieces and lots of board games for entertainment on the wetter days.

Then we walked back to Temple Meads and got the train back home feeling very happy about the day's events. I would definitely recommend it as a summer outing.

FOSBEER NEEDS YOUR HELP

Fellow Fosbrates!

We have an excellent new leaflet, which needs to be distributed to the pubs near the Severn Beach line stations. Fosbeer committee is asking YOU to adopt a pub! Barley Mow, Seven Stars, The Kenny and The Victoria are already spoken for but there are plenty more which need regular visits and feedback to Matt so he can up date our wonderful website.

Have a look at the website, select a pub and contact me, Teresa on 0117 9421574 or teresamcgill@hotmail.co.uk for your stash of leaflets and handy plastic holder plus timetables.

Our pubs and suburban railways are under threat. All hands to the pumps and join the fight back! (but best to have a pint after the fight is won –ed.)

STOP PRESS!

The Victoria will be holding a beer festival from 22nd April - 26th April. An excellent opportunity for us to have a good night out and promote FOSBR at the same time.

Station Staffing, Filton Abbey Wood, Clifton Down and Stapleton Road.

According to my basic research. With more the 700 passengers per day both Clifton down (981) and Stapleton Road (858) could be describe as **Class E=** "Small Staffed Stations". So where are the staff! Filton Abbey Wood with 3102. qualifies as Class D "Medium Staffed" which in Bristol means it has a ticket machine. However I believe things may change.

Getting back to our unstaffed "Small Staffed" stations, imagine what a difference it would make. Clifton Down with people not only using the train for commuting but very often going much further afield would benefit having rail staff to advise on the more complicated fare options and would greatly take the stress off the onboard guards enhancing the collection of revenue and demonstrating true earning ability of the station for long distance travel as well as local, perhaps laying the ground for when it becomes Temple Meads sister station enabling people to travel via the Henbury loop, to London, Wales and the north.

Staff at Stapleton Road would make a great difference in a very different way. The Community garden has improved the ambiance but staffing would enormously raise the perception of safety an thereby possibly bring the station up to the Level C "Medium Staffed"

In some parts of the country, cutting station staffing levels has proven to be a false economy not only financially but also in the terms of station quality and service.

Renewing the Contract for the Severn Beach Line Enhanced Service

Since May 2008, two trains have run on the Severn Beach Line, ensuring an improved level of reliability and a 40-minute daytime frequency. Bristol City Council funds the second train, but its contract with First Great Western (FGW) will expire in May 2011. If the current level of service is to continue, and not to revert to a single train running hourly, the contract will need to be renewed. Informal enquiries of councillors had told us that continuing provision for funding the second train would be made in the council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) covering the period 2010–13. The draft MTFP did not mention the train specifically, however, and enquiries about the negotiations for the new contract did not receive a response.

We therefore submitted two questions to the council's cabinet meeting on 25 March 2010, which approved the MTFP.

The first question asked whether the MTFP provides for the second train currently serving the Severn Beach Line to be funded from 2011 to 2014. The cabinet replied that it does.

The second question asked what steps have been taken to negotiate a renewed contract with FGW and Network Rail so that the second train will continue to run from 2011 to 2014. The cabinet replied that discussions have started with FGW to determine the rail industry timescales for confirming the level of service required. The level of service is currently being reviewed and will then be further discussed with FGW to ensure a decision is made within the required timescale.

We were allowed to ask two supplementary questions at the meeting. We asked first what service enhancements were proposed for the line, such as an improved evening service. Cllr Jon Rogers, Executive Member for Transport, replied that, because discussions have only started with FGW, there are no specific proposals, but ideas from FOSBR are used in the discussions.

We then asked whether the council would make available the notes of the meetings with First Great Western and when they took place, and when they propose to meet next. Cllr Rogers replied that he thought the notes of the meeting would be commercially confidential, but he would be able to share at least the dates of meetings with us.

Better evening service called for

We look forward to hearing more from the council in due course. Because of the long lead-times for decisions in the rail industry, it is important that the contract is agreed far enough in advance to secure the rolling stock and train paths needed to continue to run the service. It is also desirable, as we pointed out to the council, to improve the evening service, which currently has gaps of 60 and 100 minutes between the three last trains. Finally, we understand from the Department for Transport (DfT) that, if the enhanced service continues until 2014, it will then become eligible for DfT funding. If granted, this would ensure its future in the longer term.

Tina and Brendan Biggs

RUS: Great Western Regional Utilisation Strategy.

A more in depth report to be in the next newsletter.

Key Points;

1. Growth figures predicted by Network Rail and measured to appear not to reflect the reality on the ground, despite growing passenger figures in a recession. Is this an exercise in expectation management?

2. **RUS cost benefit calculations are positive about the 4 tracking of Filton** bank and extra capacity to Parson Street. This is encouraging for local rail in general and reopening the Portishead line in particular.

3. Other improvements such as Yate turnback part of the greater Bristol Metro project would have to be funded by third parties. i.e. Local councils.

4. The electrification of the great western main line does have the potential to extend to local rail. It could be argued that the Severn Beach line is easier to electrify than the Henbury loop as it doesn't pass through the aerodrome at Filton an important consideration for the new deep water harbour to be built at Avonmouth.

5. RUS is positive about a 30min service from Bath to Clifton Down/Avonmouth. (i.e. potential Greater Bristol Metro line 2).



Photo by E. Wildman.

Is Bristol City Council giving local rail the cold shoulder? Our seasoned campaigner Julie Boston gives her view.

Half Hour Train Campaign A 30 minute train service to every station in the West of England Partnership area is enshrined in the 2006/7 – 2010/11 Local Transport Plan.

Knowing that public pressure can speed things along, FOSBR launched a petition in 2006 aimed at the WEP for a 30 minute train service. Our next move was more modest – a Half Hour postcard campaign aimed at the Bristol City Council (BCC) budget of 2007. The three year investment was supported by councillors of all parties and, in May 2008, timetable 29 was published. Although the Severn Beach line frequency was not everything FOSBR campaigned for, nor everything Bristol City Council wanted, it was an important first step towards achieving the wider aspirations for the Greater Bristol rail network, and one that the long-suffering travelling public needed.

On the First Anniversary of the improved service, in May 2009, FOSBR, in keeping with WEP policy, called for double tracking of the stretch of line between Redland and Montpelier Stations in order to allow trains to pass.



An extra two tracks here please. Photo by R.Torres

This is the only way of achieving the magic 30 minute service using two trains and it needed another postcard campaign directed at Network Rail. FOSBR also sent a detailed response to the RUS – Rail Utilisation Strategy – pointing out the successes as well as out errors and low aspirations of growth.

Since January 2010, FOSBR has asked Bristol City Council to negotiate with FGW and Network to continue to invest in a second train between Temple Meads and Avonmouth Stations from May 2011 - 2014. Emails to BCC transport officers, a meeting with Transport Supremo Peter Mann, a Valentine's Day card to Cllr Barbara Janke and a postcard campaign directed at local councillors have assured us that the funding will continue but at what level. One train is one big problem of cancellations and uncertainty. But, at the Cabinet Meeting on 25 March, we were given a statement that negotiations with stakeholders have started.

Why is BCC so reluctant to promote the amazing achievement of this investment – a passenger increase of 87% on the 2007 figure and a thriving Sunday service ! Councillors of all political parties join our celebrations and could spread the message that the Council has some transport powers. In this case they have used them successfully and effectively.

Julie Boston 30 March 2010

2nd EDITION OF FOSBEER RECEIVES WARM RESPONSE

Fosbr members distributed copies of the latest Fosbeer leaflet at the Camra Bristol Beer festival which was held at Temple Meads on Friday, 19th and Saturday 20th March. It received a very warm response from very many of the thousands in attendance. Severn Beach line timetables were also given out and were gratefully received by many who use the line and a number who plan to in future. Our belief that local pubs and local railway stations can support each other went down very well. There was a great friendly atmosphere at the festival and a lot of very good beers and ciders on offer.

Contact was established with Steve Plumridge, Editor of Pints West who is keen to publicise FOSBEER and Fosbr in his magazine.

There is another local beer festival coming up at The Victoria, Southleigh Road in Clifton, 22nd April - 26th April which presents us with another great opportunity to promote our cause.

(there is a 16 page feature called "Rail Ale" in April's modern railways magazine-Ed.)

What's On Where....

17th April 10 Sat 6pm	Great Western Staff Club Temple Meads Approach	Open Meeting. Roger English on Portishead line latest. The Cambridge busway and RUS.
22nd -26th April	Victoria Pub, Southleigh Rd Clifton.	Beer festival
1st May 8pm	Arnolfini, 16 Narrow Quay, Bristol	David Johnson's poem and film about the Severn Beach Line Tickets: £ 7
3rd May	Redland Fair, Redland	FOSBR will have their stall.
6 May	Local Elections	Political musical chairs.
23th May	Severn Beach	2 nd Anniversary Celebration picnic- helpers required flyer enclosed.
24th May (TBC).	Tali Café Easton (TBC).	FoSBR awards

Keep in Touch.

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