



**To: Sussex RUS Programme Manager**  
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**West Sussex Rail Users Association response to Sussex RUS consultation paper.**

This is the West Sussex Rail Users Association response to the Sussex RUS consultation draft paper.

This response contains:-

1. Observations on general points
2. Response to specific points
3. Recommendations for proposals to be included in the final RUS
4. Additional recommendations not contained in the draft.

**1. General points.**

1.1 WSRUA welcomes the RUS and also the opportunity to comment. The document is informative, well structured with helpful illustrative charts.

1.2 The Arun Valley line runs through the heart of West Sussex and is the principal, generally the only, means of public transport across half of the county. The Arun Valley line is of therefore of strategic importance in West Sussex, providing the means to travel to work, school and college, and to local market and entertainment centres. The line is also important in providing access for holidaymakers to South Coast resorts (Bognor Regis and Littlehampton) and to Gatwick and Southampton Airports.

Paragraph 3.12.3 of the consultation draft states that "the Arun Valley (between Arundel and Billingshurst) is one the three most highly utilised during the busiest times of day". Given the importance of the line and its high and increasing usage we are disappointed that the "Sussex RUS" offers negligible improvement for Arun Valley services. Indeed in our view this draft should more properly be called " Brighton Main Line RUS Mark 2".

## 2. Response to specific proposals/points.

Paragraph 5.7.4 – figure 5.6

We support proposals to make more effective use of the line from Horsham to Dorking. This line is woefully underused and, while we recognise the capacity issues at Sutton and Clapham Junction, we contend that the line should be used when there are engineering works north of Horsham. The line should also be used on Sundays to spread demand to and from London.

Paragraph 6.4.8. There is considerable suppressed demand for rail services from Horsham southwards. At present growth is severely limited by several factors:

i) lack of integrated public transport. There are few bus services from outlying villages to rail-heads, those that exist are poorly timed and do not link with trains. Also the bus services stop running before the evening peak services arrive leaving commuters stranded or relying on taxis.

ii) lack of parking at rail-heads. If adequate parking were available at Horsham and all stations south of Horsham there would be an exponential growth in rail travel. At present the lack of parking means many commuters drive long distances, some into central London, to Gatwick, Haywards Heath or Haslemere.

iii) journey times. The journey times are too long, particularly travelling southwards in the evening peak. The dwell time imposed by the splitting at Horsham has proved a major irritant to commuters between Christ's Hospital and Arundel. If they can find an alternative they will leave the line, which is ironic given that building companies in Pulborough have recently advertised proximity (driving distance) to the station as a plus point!

Paragraph 6.4.9. We are concerned to note that rolling stock may provide less seating. On some peak Arun Valley services (particularly in term time in winter months) passengers are already standing from Crawley to London and from London to Horsham in the peak and shoulder peak. This means standing for 45 – 50 minutes which is unacceptable by any standard. There should be no reduction in seating capacity for trains outside the South London Metro area.

Paragraph 7.6.4.

We are puzzled by the omission of Horsham as a hub requiring improved car parking. Network Rail have in the past stated that Horsham is one of three priority stations for improved car parking in the Southern area. Surely the omission of Horsham is an oversight? With 5000 season ticket holders and only 250 spaces, of which about 10 are reserved for staff, the provision is wholly inadequate and has suppressed demand. There are no spaces after 08:15 and Horsham District Council in its infinite wisdom has blocked all commuter parking in streets within ½ mile of the station. See our proposal at para. 4.4

below. Pulborough station is a hub for the area south of Horsham and should likewise be included in this paragraph.

#### Paragraph 8.3.2. – Assessment of Option 1.1

We are concerned that this option may result in shorter trains travelling to Horsham and beyond. Whilst some off peak services are not full the concept of “part empty” formations is not one we recognise and is certainly not true during peak hours.

#### Paragraph 3.11.7 – Signally headways, and 4.11 Major signalling renewals.

The document states that the signalling headway is the single key constraint to capacity on the Arun Valley line, and this is also the only place on the network where block signalling continues to be just that, a blocker. It is risible to think that a main line in the UK is still functioning with signalling equipment that would be welcomed as an exhibit in the neighbouring museum.

The Arun Valley line between Christ’s Hospital and Arundel is an ancient island of absolute block signalling in what is otherwise a modern environment of track circuits and multiple aspect colour light signals. There is a plan to insert an additional signal in each direction south of Horsham controlled from the Three Bridges panel that will improve the timings of the Horsham splitters and joiners, but the only other “modernisation” of existing semaphore signalling has been to replace the oil lamps with LEDs. That Network Rail is even contemplating replacing like with like is a clear indication of the second class status they afford to this line. An analogy would be the replacement by a privatised utility of lead water pipes with new lead water pipes.

Whilst we support the proposal in paragraph 8.12.6 to 8.12.8 we consider that traffic levels of the line justify upgrading the signalling to current standards. We appreciate there is a cost to this but Network Rail would have offsetting savings from the closure of 3 signal boxes and the maintenance of the life-expired mechanical equipment in them. It would also allow increased traffic levels that would arise if the Arundel Junction chord is built.

### **3. Recommendations for proposals to be included in the final RUS**

3.1 The RUS should consider the Arun Valley line not as a branch line of little consequence but as an integral part of the Sussex rail network. Arun Valley deserves equal consideration because of its strategic importance to West Sussex. The potential for significant sustained growth in capacity over the medium to long term should be recognised by the adoption of the following proposals:

3.1.1 The line should have equal status with the rest of the Sussex network and have equal treatment and be afforded the same priorities with other routes at all times of day.

3.1.2 The line should have faster services via the Quarry Line, especially at peak times. The RUS proposals for Redhill to have many more dedicated services will enable this.

3.1.3. All Arun Valley peak services to be 12 cars (fast and slow services)

3.1.4. There should be no splitting / attaching during peak times.

3.2. There must be later trains southwards down the Arun Valley from Victoria and northwards from Chichester.

3.2.1 Later trains from Victoria would obviate the need for passengers who leave London to rail-head to Gatwick or Horsham. At present the last through train leaves Victoria at 22:32. Later services are slow and terminate at Horsham.

3.2.2 Similarly the last train from Chichester up the Arun Valley should leave 10+ minutes later (as was the case some years ago) not least so that visitors to Chichester Festival Theatre can be sure of a through train service rather than drive into Chichester.

3.3 The Arun Valley line desperately needs better Sunday services. With just one train per hour on Sundays the Arun Valley line trains are the heaviest loaded trains (per coach) in the BML area. The line needs a Saturday service in both directions on Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays. Similarly, the West Coastway needs an extra and faster hourly service between Brighton and either Portsmouth or Southampton.

3.3.1 The RUS needs to recognise that the line is used extensively by people in the South London Metro area as well as the Arun Valley area to reach the South Coast for days out and the current service is inadequate in frequency and train length.

3.3.2 An improved stopping Sunday service into London is also urgently required.

#### **4. Additional recommendations not contained in the draft.**

4.1 The draft is deficient in making no reference to the Arundel Junction Chord. We have long maintained that the provision of the Chord would provide the capacity to enable sustained long term growth and the flexibility to cope far better than at present with the inevitable crises that occur all too frequently. The predicted growth in housing along the West Coastway means there will be significantly more commuters heading north to Gatwick, East Croydon and Central London. The Arundel Junction chord will enable a faster journey time than is currently the case and make the train a far more attractive option than it is at present.

4.2 The definition of peak and shoulder peak times needs to be revised.

4.2.1. Working patterns are changing and the peak time for travel into London from the Arun Valley and beyond is now an hour earlier than it was 20 years ago. Trains arriving in London termini at around 09:00 am are not by any means as heavily used as those arriving at or before 08:00am. The London Bridge service has been progressively re-timed to arrive later over recent years and is now arriving pretty well too late for most commuters.

4.2.2. The evening peak out of London has also moved – or perhaps broadened. All trains from 16:32 to 19:32 are very heavily loaded until Crawley. We welcomed the half hourly service achieved in the recent timetable change which provided Arun Valley with an additional evening peak train. However the extra capacity has already been taken up and all these trains are now busier than before so growth continues to outstrip provision.

4.3 Services to London Bridge will be disrupted by the planned work at London Bridge. The Arun Valley now only has one peak time through fast service into and out of London Bridge and there is a threat to remove these trains at least for the duration of the project if not permanently. This is unacceptable, unreasonable and unfair and is a demonstration of the scant regard given to the needs of the Arun Valley commuters who already have the longest journey times to and from London Bridge. The argument is that Arun Valley passengers can change at East Croydon, however the travelling conditions north of East Croydon are horrendous and changing trains will preclude being able to continue to work for the last 20 minutes of the long journey.

4.4 Extra parking at Horsham.

Network Rail possesses a large and greatly underused goods yard at Horsham. In the short term this should be made available to Southern and Network Rail staff for parking so that all parking spaces in the current car park can be used by paying passengers. In the medium term Network Rail should develop some of the spare acreage into a decent car park for rail travellers as there is space to provide several hundred parking spaces. Network Rail should be aware that double-decking the current car park will not get planning consent because of the proximity of single story sheltered housing.

Finally, we are grateful to Network Rail for meeting representatives of the West Sussex Rail Users Association and for giving us the opportunity to comment on the Sussex RUS. We hope that this contribution is useful and we are happy to provide further information if asked to do so.

Monica Edmonds –Chair  
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20<sup>th</sup> August 2009