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By email

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May 2015 Hackney Interchange passenger count and report

Hackney Council commissioned JRC Ltd in April 2015 to undertake urgently a new count of passengers interchanging between Hackney Downs and Hackney Central stations.

At present passengers wanting to interchange must exit each station and walk along the streets (Dalston Lane, Amhurst Road) for over 500 metres platform to platform, a time requiring 6½ minutes using Transport for London's standardised estimate of walking 80 metres per minute. TfL's Journey Planner, which is used by many unfamiliar with journey options and who may be interested in making cross-suburban journeys, discourages use of the current street-route interchange by inserting anything up to 16 minutes to do that.

With the changes to service ownership and marketing from the end of May, and investment under way in a new direct behind-the-barriers interchange between the two stations, it is expected that interchange usage will grow considerably. The current count is therefore a 'before' survey, ahead of these changes.

This report completes our assignment for Hackney. It covers the reasons and purposes of the survey, its methodology, the detailed and summarised results, and comparisons with other relevant surveys. The future situation is also discussed, following imminent changes to services, operations, interchange facilities and marketing.

We shall be pleased to respond to comments or queries arising from this report.

May 2015 Hackney Interchange passenger count and report

Final report

JRC, 22nd May 2015

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Rationale for the interchange survey

1. Changes are imminent for Hackney Interchange, and a ‘before’ survey has been desired by Hackney Council and other stakeholders:
 - London Overground takes over operation of the West Anglia inner suburban services (Liverpool Street-Enfield Town/Cheshunt/Chingford) via Hackney Downs on 31st May 2015
 - The interchange with the North London Line Overground at Hackney Central station will be marketed on the Underground diagram from this date. At present the interchange is not publicised.
 - A new ‘behind the barriers’ interchange is under construction between the two stations, and should open within the next two months, reducing time and increasing convenience.
2. The combination of these three events will stimulate awareness of the interchange and enable it to become a practical London transfer point between lines, instead of a hidden mystery known only to those who have had to research a practical and efficient route to and from work. Passenger numbers are bound to grow. Getting a ‘before’ initial volume of patronage is important, to be able to assess the transport and user benefits which result from the three new factors.
3. There is a fourth factor, that the linking of one station to the other will also create a new access point within Hackney for each station. For example, in the case of Hackney Downs station, those passengers who alight to reach Hackney town centre – there are many, as we can verify from following groups of passengers from the station exit – may find it more convenient to use the internal interchange and exit via Hackney Central, which will be a shorter and partly step-free route. So other benefits will arise, in addition to the line to line interchange.
4. The Interchange was last surveyed by JRC Ltd in Autumn 2010 (Thursday 4th November), for the West Anglia Routes Group (WARG), over a 13 hour period (6AM to 7PM). Sampling of interchange passengers was undertaken, by following groups of passengers leaving each station, and seeing how many individuals went to the other station at different times during a weekday. The results were then scaled to a full yearly volume, using methodology established by JRC during the annual WARG surveys. However this information is now 4½ years out of date, and an up-to-date count has been desired.

5. A more recent survey was undertaken by another consultancy for WARG in November 2014. It relied on 'tagging' people who used Bluetooth and could be logged passing survey beacons installed for a week at Hackney Downs and Hackney Central. The results of that survey could not be correlated reliably against a baseline data set, when JRC attempted to do that, so that the results which were secured meant nothing. The actual counts also suggested passenger volumes which were not consistent with the main times of passenger flows in Autumn 2010.
6. Hackney Council, JRC and TfL met on 5th March 2015, and discussed the survey requirements and the shortcomings of the 2014 survey. It was agreed that if a survey was to be repeated before the end of May, it would need to be the 'follow passengers' method, desirably gaining data comparable to the Autumn 2010 survey.
7. Hackney Council subsequently commissioned JRC Ltd on 16th April to undertake the survey, before the end of May. In practice, a mid-week day was selected in mid-May (Wednesday 13th May), to exclude the bank holidays and school half-term. The weather was sunny and warm, and no surveying problems were experienced.

Survey methodology in May 2015

8. The survey was on the same principles as in Autumn 2010. Surveyors visually observed groups of passengers randomly, and followed them. The sample volume was noted, and the number of those who lasted the distance and went to the other station were also noted. Over a 13 hour period, this is statistically significant.
9. The proportioning was then set against a previously counted volume in Autumn 2014 of all entries and exits at Hackney Downs station (that survey day had also been a Wednesday, 1st October 2014, and therefore achieved greater data comparability).
10. Starting times for each sample were noted to the nearest 5 minutes, so that the proportions at different periods of the day were also reported, rather than there being just an aggregate number for the survey period as a whole.
11. A similar process was adopted at Hackney Central. As in 2010, the passengers who lasted the distance were compared against the Hackney Downs baseline data (not Central), in order to be noted as Hackney Downs entry passengers rather than exiting.
12. Four surveyors were used in May 2015, instead of three in the AM in Autumn 2010 (two in the 2010 PM). This broadly doubled the volume of passenger groups which were surveyed within the 13 hour period. The survey this time was from 7AM to 8PM because the 6-7 AM period in 2010 had shown minimal usage, while there was a hint in the 2014 Bluetooth data of some interchange into the evening. Re-allocation of survey times to include 7-8 PM should give an indication of this. In physical terms, it also meant that instead of walking an estimated 51 miles in 2010 – the distance from Liverpool Street to Cambridge – the miles walked were about 100, so the equivalent of London to Cambridge, and back.

13. Results have since been collated and are reported here, together with comparisons and conclusions.

Summary results from May 2015

14. Detailed tables are set out in the annex, showing 5 minute periods for data.

15. These are summarised here as 06:00 to 07:00, AM Peak to 10:00, Offpeak to 16:00, PM Peak to 19:00, and initial Evening period to 20:00, together with the direction of travel. The actual counts and proportions of passengers sampled and completing the distance between the stations are compared with the similar count in Autumn 2010.

Hackney Interchange surveys 2010 and 2015						
Passengers completing the interchange						
	Autumn 2010 survey		May 2015 survey		Autumn 2010	May 2015
	Downs>Ctl	Ctl>Downs	Downs>Ctl	Ctl>Downs	Two-way vol	Downs<>Ctl
06:00-07:00	5	2			7	
07:00-10:00	14	8	14	13	22	27
10:00-16:00	5	13	11	18	18	29
16:00-19:00	9	18	13	21	27	34
19:00-20:00			2	7		9
Totals 07-19	28	39	38	52	67	90
Sample: initial volume						
06:00-07:00	23				23	
07:00-10:00	125		175		125	175
10:00-16:00	224		293		224	293
16:00-19:00	144		300		144	300
19:00-20:00			120			120
Totals 07-19	493		768		493	768
Proportions completing interchange, from samples					Sample vol x 2 for entry+exit	
06:00-07:00	21.7%	8.7%			15.2%	
07:00-10:00	11.2%	6.4%	8.0%	7.4%	8.8%	7.7%
10:00-16:00	2.2%	5.8%	3.8%	6.1%	4.0%	4.9%
16:00-19:00	6.3%	12.5%	4.3%	7.0%	9.4%	5.7%
19:00-20:00			4.9%	6.8%		3.8%
Totals 07-19	5.7%	7.9%	4.9%	6.8%	6.8%	5.9%

16. Overall, there is good comparability between the two surveys.

17. There are fewer passengers completing the interchange in 2015, as a percentage of Hackney Downs station users. However, passenger volume has also grown in the same period – an estimated 2.14m to 2.32m passengers annually in 2010, generating ca. 160,000 interchange

passengers. In Autumn 2014, the estimated annual volume is 2.45m, which proportionately equals ca. 153,000 interchange passengers. This is comparing a 2010 survey from 06:00 to 19:00, with a 2015 survey from 07:00 to 20:00.

18. Taking a constant time comparison, for 07:00 to 19:00, the proportions interchanging are an average of 6.8% in 2010 and 5.9% in 2015, which converts on an annual basis to 152,000 (2010) to 144,000 (2015). The figures are therefore 5% different, which is within the norm for accuracy with this type of survey. The overall volume is also comparable to the TfL business case volume justifying the new direct interchange, which was based on 150,000 passengers. **Overall, an interchange volume of ca. 145,000-150,000 passengers is confirmed.**

19. Several other observations may also be relevant between the two surveys.

- There was a marked volume of passengers in 2015 (greater than recalled from 2010) interchanging at Hackney Central and Hackney Downs with buses to/from northern suburbs. So some passengers may have transferred to bus from West Anglia rail in the intervening years.
- The opening of a Tesco Express store and a Borough Wine store alongside Hackney Downs station may have influenced some journeys, causing shopping on the way.
- There is still a greater proportion of passengers using the station for peak time travel than during the offpeak, although the offpeak volume has risen.
- The characteristic interchange journey therefore remains one adopted by passengers who have an awkward orbital/cross-suburban journey to make, where no other interchange is better, and people have made the effort to work out a non-advertised travel route.
- There is evidence of some pre-AM peak (2010) and early evening interchange (2015).

Looking to the future

20. The interchange (initially via the existing street route) will be shown on the tube map from the end of May 2015. The internal station interchange should be open by July 2015. The Overground will be running both service groups (NLL, and West Anglia) from the end of May.

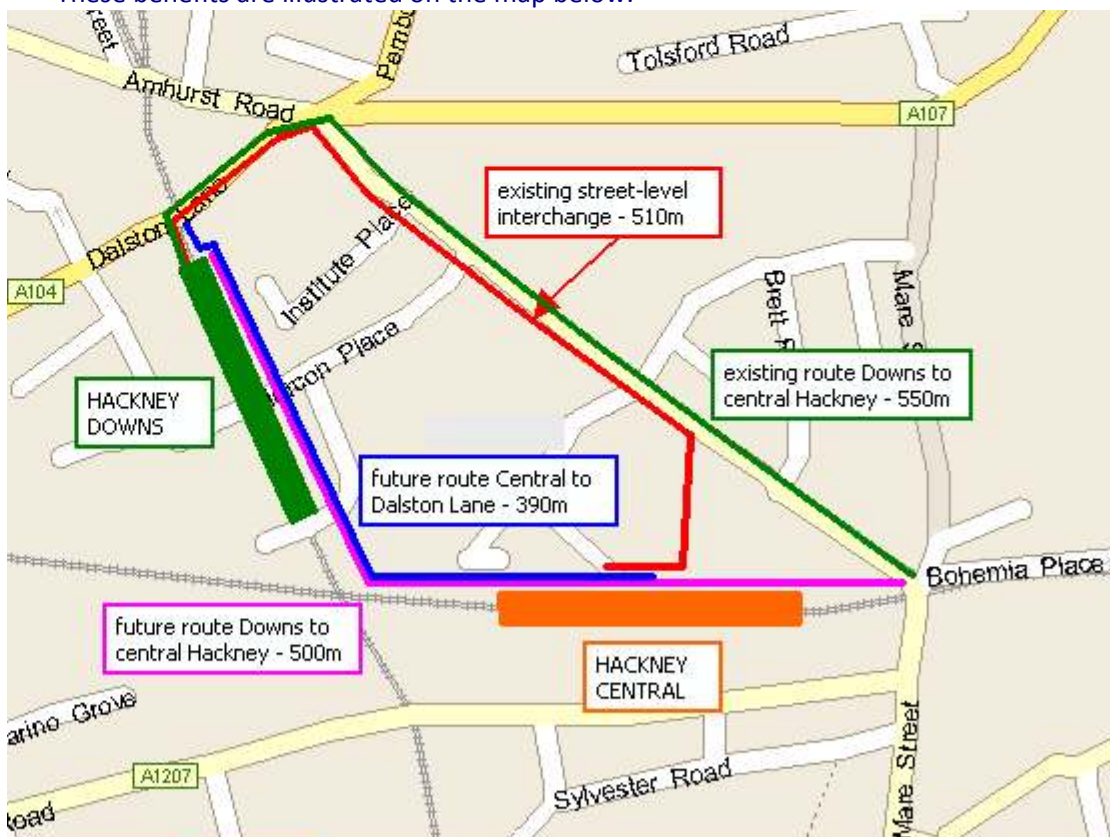
21. It has yet to be seen to what extent the radical effects of Overground marketing as seen with a near-four fold growth in Overground travel on the orbital network since 2007, will be mirrored on the West Anglia lines.

22. New West Anglia trains are ordered but will not be delivered until ca. 2017. Train service levels will, initially, be similar to now, although Sunday stopping services are being doubled (from 2 to 4 trains per hour) on the line via Seven Sisters. A programme of station full staffing and station quality 'refresh' will begin at once from the end of May. Placing the lines on the tube map will also increase awareness of new travel options in and around NE London.

23. All these factors can be expected to stimulate new travel, and divert other journeys, via Hackney Interchange.

24. Equally important is the potential for the combined station complex – all to be operated by the Overground – to offer an additional entry point for each station. That may be more efficient for passengers than using the existing station exits, and will also offer a perceived securer route within the stations. Two good examples are:

- Hackney Downs passengers requiring access to the town centre, Mare Street and the Town Hall. The interchange will enable a shorter distance from Hackney Downs platforms (even from those not connected directly, as Platform 1 is the interchange route) to central Hackney. The saving is at least 50 metres (from 550 to 500 metres, a greater saving if using trains on Platform 1).
- Hackney Central passengers wanting to access Dalston Lane, where the present street-level route is 500 metres to passing Hackney Downs station entrance. In future, this distance will be 390 metres, a 120 metre saving.
- These benefits are illustrated on the map below:



25. 'After' surveys of the new interchange should therefore take these other travel opportunities into account, in measuring the differences and the cumulative benefits to passengers.

26. The new interchange, under a single management, will also be a start for new ideas on making the combined station complex an even better centrepiece for Hackney. Already there are ideas for re-opening Hackney Central's former historic North London Railway booking hall, and improvements at Hackney Downs entrance with more step-free access. The case for such options should be improved as a consequence of the new internal passenger routes.

Annex – Hackney Interchange detailed survey results for May 2015
(07:00-20:00, 13th May 2015)

Combined output from 4 surveyors				From Central		Combined output from 4 surveyors				From Central		Combined output from 4 surveyors				From Central	
From Hackney Downs to Central				to Downs		From Hackney Downs to Central				to Downs		From Hackney Downs to Central				to Downs	
Time	Sample at start	D > C	C > D														
07:00			1			11:15	5					15:40	7				
07:05	5					11:20						15:45	13				
07:10	3					11:25						15:50	9				
07:15	3					11:30	2					15:55	12		1		
07:20	14	2				11:35						16:00	1		2		
07:25						11:40	1					16:05	3				
07:30	2		1			11:45	7	1	1			16:10	15	2			
07:35	11					11:50	6					16:15	6		1		
07:40	10					11:55	4		1			16:20	14	1			
07:45			1			12:00	5	1				16:25	3				
07:50	4		1			12:05			1			16:30	5			1	
07:55	8	1				12:10	7	1				16:35	13				
08:00	3	1	1			12:15	2					16:40	1				
08:05	9					12:20						16:45	16				
08:10	10	2				12:25	1					16:50	5				
08:15						12:30						16:55					
08:20	1					12:35	5					17:00	9			2	
08:25	5		1			12:40	3					17:05	1				
08:30	4					12:45	3					17:10	8				
08:35						12:50			1			17:15	7			1	
08:40	3	1				12:55						17:20	10	1	1		
08:45			2			13:00	4					17:25	3				
08:50	9	2				13:05						17:30	8	1	1		
08:55	8	1				13:10	4					17:35	12	2	1		
09:00	8		1			13:15	6					17:40	8			1	
09:05	9	1				13:20	6					17:45	7			1	
09:10	5	1				13:25	9		2			17:50	18				
09:15	7					13:30						17:55	7	1			
09:20	3	1				13:35	8					18:00	12			2	
09:25	10		1			13:40	1		1			18:05	8	1			
09:30	8	1				13:45	12					18:10	9	1	1		
09:35	3					13:50	4					18:15	10	1			
09:40			1			13:55			1			18:20	16	1			
09:45	3		2			14:00	4					18:25	10			1	
09:50	7					14:05						18:30	6			1	
09:55						14:10	5					18:35	8	1			
10:00	5					14:15	7	1				18:40	6				
10:05						14:20						18:45	6			3	
10:10						14:25	8					18:50	16				
10:15						14:30	6					18:55	13			1	
10:20	11	2	1			14:35	3		2			19:00	3				
10:25	5					14:40	4		4			19:05	11			1	
10:30	6					14:45	9	4				19:10	18				
10:35						14:50	6		1			19:15				3	
10:40	3					14:55	6					19:20	18	2			
10:45	4					15:00	11					19:25	13				
10:50						15:05						19:30	18				
10:55						15:10	13					19:35	6				
11:00	1					15:15	1					19:40	17				
11:05						15:20	14					19:45	10			2	
11:10	3					15:25	5					19:50	6				
						15:30	7	1				19:55				1	
						15:35			1				888	40		59	