

Friends of Woodsmoor and Friends of Davenport Positive Service Proposals – June 2017

Rail users at Woodsmoor and Davenport want to see genuine improvements and a commitment from Northern Rail to ongoing service development in line with the spirit of improvement promised by Northern under the new franchise, and the wider policy and strategic frameworks for public transport in Greater Manchester.

Whilst the complexity of planning revisions to rail timetables is acknowledged and it is also recognised that the current proposals involve improvements in some parts of the network, it is entirely unacceptable that these should be at the expense of service quality and capacity on the Buxton Line and implies that the changes are being led by operational needs rather than passenger requirements. Northern has a responsibility to the communities it serves across the entire network and the imposition of a sub-standard service on some lines cannot be justified on the basis that other parts of the network might be improving since this will be of little or no benefit to the passengers adversely affected.

We welcome the improvements to the late evening service contained within Northern's current proposed timetable, and wholeheartedly support this change which will enable more effective use of the service for a wide range of leisure activities in the city centre as well as helping those working unsocial hours.

We have the following positive proposals for the levels of service which we consider to be both desirable and justifiable for Woodsmoor and Davenport.

Context

- Woodsmoor and Davenport are 1 - 2 stops out of Stockport on a key line into Manchester city centre, and serve substantial commuter communities.
- Woodsmoor and Davenport are the 3rd and 4th busiest stations on the line and journey numbers are growing year on year in a sustained trend over a number of years.
- The stations serve commuters into Manchester but also Stepping Hill Hospital (the main hospital for Stockport and the High Peak serving 350k people, and a key element of the GM NHS hospital infrastructure)
- These stations also serve numerous colleges, schools and leisure users
- Trains in peak periods are regularly overcrowded with the current level of service provision
- Cancellations of peak services are not uncommon, often resulting in passengers being unable to travel on subsequent services due to sheer numbers of travellers.
- A key strategic aim of TfGM and Stockport MBC is to maximise usage of rail system and reduce car journeys, particularly on the main arterial routes into Manchester.
- In light of the above, these stations should be targeted for service **improvements** – both in terms of service performance (improved punctuality, reduced cancellations, no short trains) and service frequency. There is an opportunity for Northern to deliver a step change in rail services for these areas in line with the spirit of the franchise agreement

Proposals

To move towards a service which adequately meets the needs of the Woodsmoor and Davenport user communities, we recommend the following:

Mondays – Saturdays:

1. During peak periods there should be a minimum of four trains per hour as indicated by consultation with users, and clearly demonstrated by the current level of demand.
2. Off peak frequency should be three trains per hour
3. The scheduling of services should aim to provide as evenly spaced timings as possible to maximise the utility value of the trains. This principle should apply throughout the day.
4. Service users have particularly highlighted the importance of services departing Woodsmoor and Davenport within ten minutes of 07:00, 08:00 and 09:00 to enable arrival in Manchester at convenient times for commuting purposes.
5. At least one service per hour to continue beyond Manchester Piccadilly to Oxford Road, Deansgate, Salford Crescent and Bolton (and to be mirrored in the opposite direction) for the many travellers to the education establishments and other major employers served by these stations.
6. All trains to be formed of four carriages.
7. A minimum of an hourly service should be provided for Davenport and Woodsmoor to / from Middlewood and Disley.

Sundays:

1. All trains to/from Buxton should call at Middlewood for convenient access to the Middlewood Way rural leisure facility.
2. The aim should be to provide two trains per hour in each direction.