

CAMPAIGN FOR RAIL BRIEFING PAPER

Serving Birmingham Airport through the night

Assessing the need

Birmingham Airport is expanding. £65 million is being spent extending the runway so that direct flights to destinations such as Tokyo, Johannesburg and Singapore can be offered.

Outbound flights, at present, from Birmingham Airport are scheduled from 06.00 to 22.05. Passengers need to arrive in time for security checks at least an hour earlier. For long haul, longer is required. Occasional flyers, such as for holiday flights, tend to need the reassurance of an even longer check in allowance, so they want to arrive at the airport very early.

Inbound flights are scheduled to arrive over an even longer period. The last scheduled holiday flight is 04.35 but flight delays can mean a scheduled late evening arrival is actually well after midnight.

When a passenger's flight is suitable for public transport in one direction but not the other, or when the return is scheduled towards the end of the day and there is a fear of missing the last train, public transport is unlikely to be used in either direction.

The airport itself is a major employer. More than 7,000 now work there. The immediate vicinity has no housing so commuting is the norm. Almost all airport activities, operational and retail, are in full swing in the early morning before public transport is available, so a high proportion is commuting by private transport.

There is also an irregular demand for very late evening flows in each direction from the NEC. Fear that a performance will finish after the last train means that people go by road for their evening out. Improved public transport availability would also allow winners and diners to avoid drink driving fears.

Rail provision now

The up service at Birmingham International finishes early with the 00.05 to Coventry [23.53 from Birmingham New Street], then there is no train until Virgin's first London train of the day at 05.40. Towards Birmingham city centre, Virgin has trains at 00.21 and 01.24, but then there is no train until 06.05 [05.16 from Northampton].

05.40 [up] and 06.05 [down] is too late to arrive at Birmingham International for the first 18 flights of the day from the airport.

An all night service

It is possible to provide Birmingham International with an hourly service to and from Birmingham and Coventry through the night at minimal cost, using just one multiple unit and two train crew from London Midland. Two sets now stable overnight in Coventry Yard. It is suggested that the 23.48 or the 00.15 arrival at Coventry provides an 00.42 to Birmingham New Street [in between the last two down Virgin services], then hourly via Birmingham International.

An additional 05.00 from Birmingham New Street, perhaps calling at Stechford, Lea Hall and Marston Green for airport workers is also suggested. This would be formed of the 04.50 empty stock from Tyseley to Coventry, retimed a little earlier. Also the unit that has shuttled between Coventry and New Street through the night runs at 05.33 from New Street, calling at all stations [except possibly Adderley Park] to International for workers on the 06.00 shift. At present this unit runs empty at 05.38 from Coventry to form the 06.17 from Birmingham International.

The suggested timetable below shows new services in italics.

COV d.	00.12	<i>00.42</i>	01.13	<i>02.00</i>	<i>03.00</i>	<i>04.00</i>	<i>05.00</i>	05.50
BHI a.	00.21	<i>00.52</i>	01.24	<i>02.10</i>	<i>03.10</i>	<i>04.10</i>	<i>05.10</i>	06.04
BHI d.	00.21	<i>00.54</i>	01.24	<i>02.12</i>	<i>03.12</i>	<i>04.12</i>	<i>05.12</i>	06.05
BHM a	00.32	<i>01.06</i>	01.36	<i>02.24</i>	<i>03.24</i>	<i>04.24</i>	<i>05.24</i>	06.16

BHM d.	23.53	<i>01.30</i>	<i>02.30</i>	<i>03.30</i>	<i>04.30</i>	<i>05.00</i>	05.29	<i>05.33</i>
BHI a.	00.04	<i>01.40</i>	<i>02.40</i>	<i>03.40</i>	<i>04.40</i>	<i>05.14</i>	05.38	<i>05.49</i>
BHI d.	00.05	<i>01.41</i>	<i>02.41</i>	<i>03.41</i>	<i>04.41</i>	<i>05.15</i>	05.40	
COV a.	00.15	<i>01.53</i>	<i>02.53</i>	<i>03.53</i>	<i>04.53</i>	<i>05.25</i>	05.50	

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