

CADRA

A Brief Guide to the Main Bus Service Changes starting April 20th 2009

Summary

The summary programme of alterations for this change includes three main elements:

1. The final implementation of the scheme to separate the north and south ends of Premier Route 9 to improve reliability and enhance patronage and revenue levels
2. The complete overhaul of the main rural service corridors from Reading
 - a. To Theale, Thatcham and Newbury
 - b. To Burghfield, Mortimer and Tadley
 - c. To Peppard Common and Sonning Common
3. Enhancements to evening and Sunday operations
 - a. To Caversham Heights (evenings)
 - b. To Peppard Road (evenings and Sundays)
 - c. To Shinfield Park (evenings)
 - d. To Lower Earley via University (evenings)
 - e. Between Thatcham and Newbury
 - f. To Burghfield and Mortimer (evenings and Sundays)
 - g. To Dee Road Estate (evenings and Sundays)
 - h. To Tilehurst Road and Turnhams Farm (evenings)

The Changes in Detail

Caversham Heights, Shinfield Park and Lower Earley

At the beginning of 2008 we took the decision to split Premier Route 9 in order to improve its operational performance (it suffers from congestion at both Caversham Bridge and on Shinfield Road which have been driving customer numbers down).

The initial idea was to split the route in the town centre, but when this was taken to public consultation there was significant feedback centering on two issues. The first was severing the link between Caversham and the RBH and the second was based on school movements to and from Reading School and the other schools in the same area.

In July 2008 we therefore withdrew the proposal and re-thought our position. From this emerged the idea to retain the current quarter-hourly service between Caversham Heights and Central Reading but to extend alternate

journeys, every half an hour, onto what is now the 18 service to RBH, Whiteknights Road and Lower Earley.

The consequential changes that are required in addition are a minor diversion of the 62 to serve Erleigh Road in place of the 18 at present and the isolation of the western end of the 18 to operate between Central Reading and Calcot only.

The second phase of public consultation concluded at the end of November 2008. Many people welcomed the revised plans but some parents were still concerned about home-to-school journeys.

A great deal of work has been done to meet these concerns and we have been able to augment our second proposal by running all morning peak journeys from Caversham Heights through as far as Craven Road (RBH South Entrance). In addition, we have revised the special school bus from Caversham Heights so that it neither picks up nor sets down in Central Reading, therefore ensuring that it can provide adequate accommodation for all pupils that will need it.

We have now registered the new arrangement, which comprises:

Premier Route 9 - Central Reading - Shinfield Park
Premier Route 22 - Caversham Heights - Central Reading extending half-hourly to RBH and Lower Earley
Route 922 - Caversham Heights direct to schools in the RBH area (School Days Only)
Route 18 - Central Reading - Kentwood - Calcot
Route 62 diverted via part of Erleigh Road and Addison Road

As part of these proposals, evening services (Mon-Sat) will be significantly enhanced:

9 to Shinfield Park to every half hour (presently hourly)

21 to Lower Earley to every half hour (presently hourly)

Together this will provide a 15-minute frequency between Central Reading and the University

22 to Caversham Heights to every 20 minutes until 2315 (presently every 40 minutes until 2100 then no service). This is a big change!

Rural Services

Central Reading - Peppard Common/Sonning Common - 137/138

Central Reading - Burghfield/Mortimer/Tadley - 143/148/149

These services have remained largely unchanged for about 15 - 20 years and customer numbers have been dwindling year on year.

We needed to apply similar thinking to that used on the Premier Routes to re-invigorate these operations. To kick-start the process we put out a public consultation in September and October to ask people what they would like to see. This produced a good response with a variety of ideas which has helped to stimulate the creation of a set of changes designed to make the routes simpler and easier to use.

Our ideas, which are radical in nature and not without risk, are to operate a half-hourly shuttle service **(route 2) between Sonning Common and Burghfield/Mortimer** and to introduce an hourly (and much faster than now) service **(route 3) between Tadley and Central Reading.**

The overall proposition:

- Is much simpler to understand than the current complex mix of routes and numbers
- provides services on regular clock-face timetables
- includes evening operation (very late on Fridays and Saturdays to Mortimer)
- restores Sunday operations to most areas
- is going to be vividly branded with a new and different image
- will have simpler better-value fares
- will provide a “fitted” frequency with the Newbury services along the Bath Road in Reading to give a neat 15-minute frequency (half hourly on Sundays).

The simpler route means that the current diversion, within the RBC borough boundary, of service 138 via Tower Close, Marchwood Avenue and Kiln Road, is no longer possible. We are in discussion with RBC as to how these roads can be served in another way.

Improvements for Caversham

- Evening Service Mondays to Saturdays to Caversham Heights now every 20 minutes - a radical change (route 22)
- New hourly evening and Sunday daytime service along Peppard (route 2)
- All morning journeys on route 22 continue as far as Royal Berkshire Hospital
- Special schools service designed to meet the needs of schoolchildren in Caversham Heights attending Reading School and other schools in that area.

Timetables

Timetables for all these services - and the other Reading Buses and Newbury Buses services that are changing will be available on www.Reading-buses.co.uk from mid-March. Leaflets will be available about two weeks before the change.

James Freeman
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