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Airtrack 2 feasibility study to be commissioned

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[Airtrack Lite map](#)

Wandsworth Council says it will appoint a transport consultancy to develop the case for a direct rail service from Clapham Junction to Heathrow.

The move could create a successor to the ill-fated Airtrack scheme as the south west London authority pursues the prospect of a 30 minute journey to the airport for the borough's residents and businesses. South Londoners currently have to travel north into London to catch a connecting train from Paddington or a Piccadilly line Underground service.

Airtrack, a £673m project promising new rail links to Heathrow from south London and Surrey, was promoted by BAA - now Heathrow - but abandoned in 2011 (TB 7593). Wandsworth Council subsequently announced a revised plan called Airtrack Lite, designed to deliver rail access to the airport without increasing the frequency of trains over level crossings - one of the factors which led BAA to abandon Airtrack

Since then meetings have been held with BAA, Vauxhall Nine Elms Battersea landowners, Greengauge 21, Hogan Lovells law firm, Surrey County Council and Atkins to review the reasons why Airtrack failed and to assess the level of support for an alternative scheme. The council says lessons have been learnt from both the failure of Airtrack and the support being enjoyed by the Slough Council-backed Western Rail Access to Heathrow (WRAtH) project, which has secured support from Network Rail and the Department for Transport.

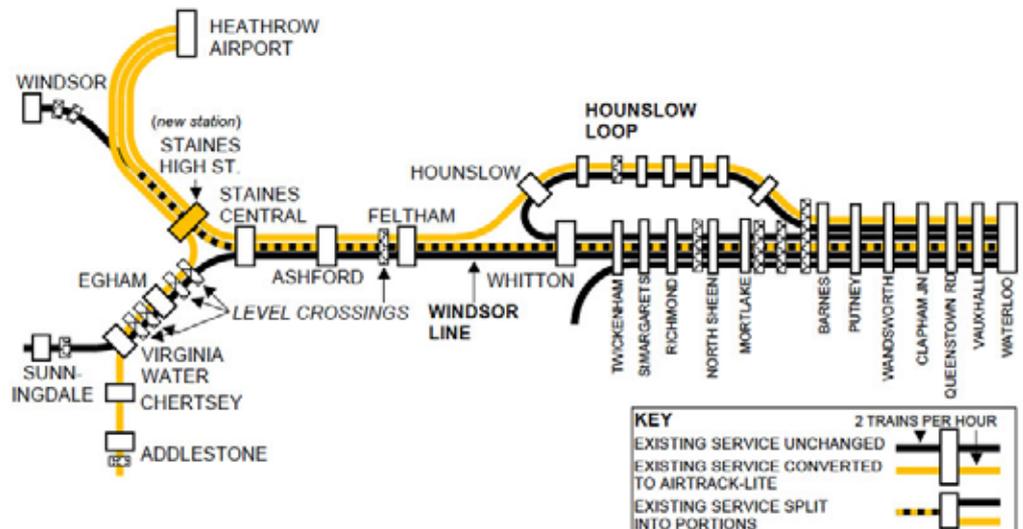
The borough says discussions have shown there is still widespread support for improved rail access to Heathrow from the south and a number of different route options have been put forward. Trains would head south from London Waterloo and travel via Clapham Junction, mooted as a future interchange with Crossrail 2, before heading towards the airport.

Subject to approval by the council's executive on 25 February, Wandsworth will pay a transport consultancy around £25,000 to assess the feasibility of potential routes. Following this a formal stakeholder group would be established to take the project forward.

A key aim is that by summer 2014 the preferred option would have the support of Network Rail with the project in their Control Period 6 plans for 2020-2024. That could coincide with platforms being made available at Waterloo station through a major redevelopment of the station, including the former Eurostar platforms, in CP6.

Leader of Wandsworth Council Ravi Govindia said: "Our success in bringing the Northern line to Battersea shows just how much a council can achieve when it takes the initiative on transport improvements. We believe there is strong demand for direct services from south London's biggest transport hub to Heathrow and are starting to move the project forward."

The council says its latest initiative is supported by Transport for London and notes that Surrey County Council is currently developing a county-wide rail strategy which will consider the possibilities of rail access from Surrey into Heathrow.



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