

IARO report 6.02

Workshop, Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, 7 June 2002.

Help - there's an airport on my railway!

IARO Report 6.02: Workshop, Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, 7 June 2002

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Our mission is to spread world class best practice and good practical ideas among airport rail links world-wide.

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Introduction

This report summarises the output of the fourth workshop held by the International Air Rail Organisation (IARO), held in Amsterdam Airport Schiphol in June 2002.

The objective was to review good practice on ordinary railways which happen to serve an airport. Most of their custom comes from other stations on the network - although a significant and valuable percentage comes from the airport.

What is good practice in these circumstances? How can all of the partners co-operate to get the best out of this situation, to the benefit of themselves and their market? How can a railway increase its carryings of airport employees and air passengers? How can airlines and airports use a rail connection to best advantage - both for their customers and for their wider interests?

It was specifically designed to be a low-cost event, timed so that European delegates could travel out and back in a day. This was in part because IARO's main conferences in 2002 were planned to be in New York and Kuala Lumpur, involving rather more expense, travel and time away from the office for the average member than usual. Normally, our policy is to hold alternate conferences in Europe with the non-European one being in North America in alternate years.

Thanks to our hosts, the Schiphol Group who were generous in their sponsorship and help, we had an excellent welcome to the Netherlands. This report is a reminder that we worked hard too. Lessons were learnt, ideas were discussed, plans were made to follow up some of the issues. Coverage was by no means exhaustive, and much remains to be done - possibly by means of a follow-up workshop. In addition, some business was done!

To our hosts and our organisers as well as to all our delegates, grateful thanks.

Andrew Sharp

Director General

List of abbreviations and acronyms

ADP	Aéroports de Paris
ADV	Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Verkehrsflughafen (German Airports Association).
AENA	Aeropuertos Españoles y Navegación Aérea (Spanish airports and air navigation authority)
AG	Aktiengesellschaft (German joint-stock company)
Amtrak	National Railroad Passenger Corporation
BEST	Benchmarking for European Sustainable Transport
BOB	Best of Benchmarking
carrier	airline
COROP	Continuous survey of passengers at Schiphol.
DB	Deutsche Bahn - German Railways
DC	District of Columbia
EU	European Union
Fraport	Flughafen Frankfurt AG - Frankfurt Airport Company
GDS	Global Distribution System
Hbf	Hauptbahnhof - main station
HSL-Zuid	High speed line - south (between Amsterdam and Brussels)
IARO	International Air Rail Organisation
IATA	International Air Transport Association
ICE	InterCity Express - German high speed train
INFOS 2001	Schiphol airport's re-signing project.
interline agreement	Agreement involving two or more carriers
Kg	Kilogram
KLM	Koninklijke Luchtvaartmaatschappij - Royal (Dutch) Airlines
MML	Midland Main Line. A UK rail franchise, serving Leicester, Derby and Nottingham from St. Pancras.

mppa	million passengers a year
NBS	Neubaustrecke - new high speed line
NS	Nederlandse Spoorwegen - Netherlands Railways
Pantares	The alliance between the Schiphol Group and Fraport.
SDR	Special Drawing Right. An international reserve asset issued by the International Monetary Fund.
SEA Milan	Società Esercizi Aeroportuali spa. Milan airports operator.
SNCB	Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Belge - Belgian National Railways
SNCF	Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français - French National Railways
Thalys	French/Dutch/Belgian high speed train service.
UK	United Kingdom
US or USA	United States of America

Note that UK conventions are used for dates (day/month/year) and numbers (in 9,999.99 the comma , separates thousands; the full stop . is a decimal point). A billion is a thousand million, following US conventions.

The Schiphol Group.

Adriaan Mast, Managing Director Schiphol Real Estate and a Board Member of the Schiphol Group, introduced us to his company.

As well as Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, the Group owns, manages or operates a number of other airports (notably Rotterdam, Eindhoven, Leystad, Brisbane and Terminal 4 at JFK airport, New York): it is interested in acquiring a stake in Malaysia Airports Holding, the operator of the Malaysian airports. It has a strategic alliance (Pantares) with Fraport. It is owned jointly by the State of the Netherlands (75.8%), the city of Amsterdam (21.8%) and the city of Rotterdam (2.4%): the sale to the private sector is under active discussion.

Turnover in 2001 was Euros 695m (of which just under half came from airport fees): profit was Euros 183m.

The long-standing philosophy of the Schiphol Group is that airports are Airport Cities - the modern city, the city of today, a 24-hour 365-day dynamic multi-modal hub, a meeting place, a mainport.

The message is that, at Schiphol, don't worry: be happy - time spent here is quality time.

Contributing to this, their INFOS 2001 project had renewed all of the airport signage in a very user-friendly way.

Access was very important, and local public transport initiatives were strong. These included the "Air ticket = rail ticket" system, to be discussed later in the workshop.

The airport station sees 20 million passengers each year. The Sneret local bus network, particularly aimed at employees (who travelled free of charge), was an initiative of the Group and the Dutch Government. Two months ago, the 25 km Zuidtangent guided busway (using dedicated infrastructure, in particular between Haarlem Central station, Schiphol and Amsterdam-Bijlmer station) had been opened.

Locally, there are major congestion problems - both on road and rail, despite the quadrupling of tracks through the airport station in 1999. A key element of Schiphol Group's strategy is to reduce the percentage of people accessing the airport by private car: short-term parking charges are being increased as one deterrent. In 2001, 43.6% of terminating passengers used public or collective transport to access the airport. The use of public transport decreased from 35.7% to 34.2%, partly because of negative publicity about NS associated with strikes and reliability. There was some growth in collective transport - hotel, charter and taxi-buses.

In the long term, they are planning a new station under a new terminal.

Unlimited liability and air rail links - what does it mean for the railway company?

David Short, Director of Legal Services, IATA, discussed the different liability regimes applying to air and rail services for both passengers and baggage. He noted that this was a particular problem in the Netherlands, because some KLM passengers can travel free by rail to and from the airport on the day of their flight: they do not have a rail ticket or a contract of carriage with Netherlands Railways (NS).

He was particularly pleased to be invited to speak here: air rail intermodality was a priority for IATA, because it was increasingly being recognised that intermodal co-operation gave the potential for commercial benefits and for enhanced customer service.

The basis of the airlines' liability regime was the Warsaw Convention on Air Carriers Liability of 1929 (as amended, referred to below as "the Convention"). This recognised that there was a need to limit the liability of airlines for loss, damage and injury. This was partly because of the infancy of the industry, and partly because of the need for certainty - airlines and new entrants to the industry needed to know what their maximum liability was likely to be.

The Convention had established that, regardless of national laws, the maximum liability for each passenger was 125,000 Gold Francs. The Gold Franc no longer exists: the problem of valuing it has increased over time. Currently it is generally assumed to be around 8300 Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) or some US\$10,000.

The Hague Protocol of 1955, adopted by only some of the signatories to the Convention, doubled this. The US Government was one of those which did not ratify the protocol, on the grounds that the amount was insufficient.

Pressure from the US Government for an increase led to the Montréal Agreement of 1966. Under this, airlines serving the US or which had an interline agreement with a US carrier had to accept a maximum liability of US\$75,000.

However, because sums of the order of US\$1 million were commonly awarded for road casualties, the \$75,000 was still regarded as too low. Lawyers acting for passengers commonly tried to establish wilful misconduct as a way round the limit - which thereby became less and less relevant.

In 1995 an inter-carrier agreement was ratified by most IATA members which accepted unlimited liability for provable damages. They also agreed to waive the defence of "all necessary measures" (established by the Montréal Protocol of 1975) in the case of claims up to US\$125,000.

The current position is that both the US Government and the European Union (EU) enforce unlimited liability for death or bodily injury.

Liability for baggage is less of a controversial issue.

For both passengers' baggage and air cargo, a liability limit of 17 SDRs/Kg. generally applied.

The position for carriage by rail is different.

Under the Bern Convention, liability for death or injury on an international journey is limited to 70,000 SDRs. For domestic journeys liability is limited by domestic law and the Conditions of Carriage of individual railways: it varies considerably from unlimited liability down to relatively low limits.

There is no legal problem if separate conditions of carriage apply on different parts of a journey. It is accepted that a passenger buying an air ticket under the air carrier's conditions of carriage and a train ticket under the railway company's conditions of carriage would be travelling under two distinct liability regimes. The passenger has two contracts of carriage with two transport companies.

There was more of a problem in cases like the Netherlands, where some KLM passengers can travel free by rail to and from the airport on the day of their flight. They do not have a rail ticket or a contract of carriage with NS. Similarly in Air France's code-share with Thalys on the Brussels - Paris route, passengers travelled by rail on an airline ticket: they had no contract of carriage with Thalys.

A number of solutions had emerged.

- Rail companies could agree to accept the same liability as air carriers. There is commercial pressure for this, which will no doubt grow as intermodal agreements like this increase. Such agreements are not uncommon in Europe; and some railways accept unlimited liability anyway.
- Passengers could be told clearly in the conditions of carriage that different liability regimes apply to different parts of their journey. This is the KLM/NS solution; and in fact such provisions are common in airline conditions of carriage. Normally where transport is provided by another mode for part of the journey, the conditions of carriage of the actual transportation provider apply on that part of the journey. While the passenger only has a contract of carriage with KLM, the contract provides for carriage by NS under NS's Conditions of Carriage.
- The airlines could accept the difference in liability - they could pay the difference between unlimited liability and the railway company's liability. However this would be difficult to insure, because risks outside of the airline's control would be assumed.

He concluded by commenting that IATA saw a need for clarity, and was available for help, guidance and advice.

Unlimited liability - Question and Answer session.

The discussion had concerned air and rail transport - what about air and road, especially where passengers were carried by road because of bad weather at their intended airport?

The Warsaw Convention only applied to air transport. But generally airlines were prepared to honour the liability for such journeys for customer service reasons. If there was a problem, they would subsequently try to get as much as possible back from the road carrier.

What about liability for baggage on trains?

Baggage was generally under the control of passengers on trains, so it was less of a problem. While carriers were liable for losses to both checked and unchecked baggage under the Convention, different rules applied for each type.

What did "unlimited liability" mean in practice?

The amount awarded by courts of law in the particular case. So liability was limited by the common sense inherent in the judicial system, rather than by a contract between carrier and passenger.

Good practice in ticketing

A number of sessions on best practice in ticketing occupied the rest of the morning.

These comprised

- the Dutch “Air ticket = rail ticket” system;
- the code-sharing scheme between Continental Airlines and Amtrak, based on Newark International airport; and
- KLM’s code-sharing through Schiphol.

These were followed by a question and answer session.

Free rail travel for passengers with flight coupons - how does it work in practice?

Herman Gelissen, Director Sales & Marketing of Netherlands Railways, described the “Air ticket = rail ticket” system. Under this, KLM passengers who had bought a ticket in the Netherlands could use it on NS trains on the day of their flight to get to and from Schiphol airport.

He said that while at the moment it is a unique partnership, it is based on a commercial agreement and is not exclusive - it would work with any other airline.

The principle followed was the famous KISS - Keep It Simple!

So only one ticket was needed - the air ticket is the rail ticket. However it had to be issued in the Netherlands (this was a KLM requirement), so conductors on the trains had to be trained to look for this. It was valid on the day of flight or day before (departing from the Netherlands) or after (arriving in the Netherlands). It was valid to and from any station in the Netherlands. It was limited to tickets issued by KLM and some of its partners.

Conductors needed to check the airline code, the issue code (NL, indicating that it was sold in the Netherlands) and the class code.

He stressed the need for good information for customers.

KLM pay NS monthly in advance, based on historic data: the results of Schiphol’s quarterly COROP passenger survey are fed back into this to ensure accuracy. The payment is a fixed fee for each passenger: the system is not exact but good enough.

KLM and NS both believe they benefit. KLM’s market share is over 30% and stable: NS’s share of the Schiphol market is 32% and increasing slowly. KLM see it as an extra marketing tool, giving them a higher market share and more revenue. NS too get a higher market share: they are satisfied that, despite the discounted fare, their net revenue position is better as a result. The scheme will continue as long as both parties see clear benefits.

It has been running now for a year and a half: it is promoted especially through the travel trade but also direct to customers (for example at train stations).

E-ticketing is a challenge: there may be an Internet or email solution.

Air rail code sharing - 1.

Michael Welch, Managing Director Operations, Continental Airlines, introduced a key problem of operating their key hub at Newark International Airport - accessibility.

There was congestion in the air because of too many short flights. Therefore around two years ago they had investigated better connections with the rail system. This had led to the construction of a station on Amtrak's NorthEast Corridor, which ran about a mile from the terminals. The rail line served downtown Newark, New York and Boston in one direction, and Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington DC in the other.

The journey to New York Penn station by Amtrak InterCity train or New Jersey Transit suburban train takes 20 minutes for 8 miles: not high speed, not regular and not dedicated but 4,000 - 5,000 people use it each day.

This has been a good start, but a future goal is a dedicated service between Newark Liberty International Airport and New York Penn station.

The air congestion issue led to excessive times between leaving the gate and taking off - and this was exacerbated by the presence at the airport of many short haul flights. Continental Airlines, for example, used to fly 7 round trips a day to Philadelphia (90 miles, 145 kilometres) and the same to Providence (200 miles, 320 kilometres).

Before the station was built, if there were operating problems affecting flights Continental Airlines used to bus Philadelphia passengers to Newark Penn station and hand them over to Amtrak. This reduced airport congestion by freeing up slots. The positive response to this from passengers led to the concept of a code-share with Amtrak, between Newark International Airport and four stations - Philadelphia, Wilmington (Delaware), Stamford and New Haven (Connecticut). Phase 2 will add Providence (Rhode Island) and Baltimore.

Continental Airlines no longer fly between Newark and Philadelphia: the decision was seen by some in the company as risky! Instead, their passengers check in at the main station (30th Street): they travel by train on a Continental Airlines ticket to Newark International Airport and change to a plane for onward connections.

There were 775 operations a day at Newark airport: removing the Philadelphia flights reduced this by 35. Ridership has increased.

At the moment bags can only be checked in at Newark International Airport (at the station or terminals). Continental Airlines would like remote check-in at train stations: they recognise the problems (including that of service quality).

Normally the high speed Acela Express does not call at the airport station: however it does when irregular operations affect flights.

Air rail code sharing - 2.

Eric Stokhuyzen, Director Alliances, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines made a presentation, "Help, there's a Thalys under the runway!".

He described in detail the air-rail code-sharing arrangement in the Netherlands between KLM and Thalys.

Historically there had been 8 - 12 daily flights between Amsterdam and Antwerp: these had generally lost money. From 21 January 2002, KLM had entered into a code-sharing agreement with Thalys: flights will be replaced by trains in June 2002. This was a happy re-start to an old co-operation.

He commented that the "Air ticket = rail ticket" system gave passengers better accessibility to the airport and was very simple, very easy once negotiations were complete. The code-share with Thalys was much more complex - and more frustrating.

There is a strong contrast between the aviation industry environment and the railway industry environment. The rail environment is open: the airline environment is closed and controlled. Rail systems are generally not standardised: there is no check-in procedure. Coupons are not collected, unlike in the air. Data availability was limited.

Because of this, KLM has adopted pragmatic solutions. Advance reservation is necessary on the trains: the inventory of seats is held in an SNCF system unlinked with the air inventory. It is based on blocked space: KLM buy a fixed number of seats and load them onto the KLM reservation system. The trains have KLM flight numbers. In this way, the airline shares the commercial risk with the train operator.

There are some coding problems: not all systems are able to recognise ZYZ as well as ANR as a valid 3-letter IATA code for Antwerp.

Passengers starting from Antwerp have to exchange their air coupon for a Thalys ticket containing the reservation information. In the other direction, KLM collect the AMS - ZYZ flight coupon and give the passenger a boarding pass with information about the train reservation (coach and seat).

Information is the main challenge. The Thalys service is publicised on the in-flight magazine and the arrival video: airport signage reinforces this. Flights are on the airport monitors but Thalys trains are not. There is no system for updating real-time Thalys train running information. These are real challenges! Both parties need to be proactive to ensure that passengers are properly informed.

KLM gets little feedback: do passengers actually travel on the trains? Booking levels have been below expectations and there is little information on why this should be. There is a suspicion that one issue is competition from Brussels airport and this is being investigated.

There is a high no-show percentage: there is a major investigation under way this month to find out exactly what is happening.

A problem may be that the departure information at Schiphol station shows the train destination as Paris: passengers may not realise that they go to Antwerp as well.

Another issue is that, while the code-share is with Thalys, there are other trains between Antwerp and Schiphol. Passengers could be using these - in which case KLM is paying Thalys for accommodation not used.

KLM would like the whole process more aligned with airline practices and systems. They are trying to bring railway practice closer to airline practice on this route. This will be helped by their share, with NS, in the operation of the HSL-Zuid project. This will be completed in 2006, after which Thalys trains will be able to run at higher speeds on this sector. They would also like to be able to access the train reservation system directly, rather than block-booking.

The passengers who actually use it like it - they are pleased with the quality of the product.

Ticketing - question and answer session

Questions to Mike Welch

Given that currently Amtrak is a political football, what is the likely future position on the North East Corridor?

The North East Corridor is the best of Amtrak, and is always likely to be insulated - and indeed isolated - from the carrier's other problem areas.

What is the situation regarding the planned high speed rail corridors in the US?

There are 10 designated high speed rail corridors, but these are very much for future development.

Does the code-sharing make money for Continental Airlines?

Revenue is pro-rated, so each operator gets a share according to the sector mileage. This applies whether the code-share is with a regional air carrier or Amtrak.

Is there adequate car parking at the four code-share stations?

Yes, generally.

Questions to Eric Stokhuysen and Herman Gelissen.

Thameslink wanted to offer e-ticketing using a print-your-own system, and wondered if there was any experience of this?

NS plan to do this: it means ensuring that all the conductors had mobile phones with the ability to check the validity of self-printed tickets.

Is the "Air ticket = rail ticket" going to remain exclusive to KLM?

No. NS do not have any agreements with other airlines - yet - but expect to. It was easier to experiment with the home airline first.

Did the fact that it only applied to KLM tickets bought in the Netherlands give rise to any competition issues?

The EU had been asked if there would be any problems with competition and discrimination legislation. No definitive answer had been received, but since it was an open commercial agreement, it was thought that there would be no problems.

Is it likely to be extended to KLM tickets bought outside the Netherlands?

Doing so would represent more cost to KLM for little profit. It was a Unique Selling Point, which was particularly valuable and particularly profitable in the home market. There is at the moment no intention to go global: it would double the cost and not seriously increase revenue.

Is it likely to be extended to other airlines?

In principle yes. Clearly it would increase the complexity of the system - particularly from the ticket checking point of view - but maybe in time no airline serving the Netherlands would be able to afford not to do it!

When did it start?

October 2000.

Revenue allocation is based on a survey of departing passengers, but conventional wisdom is that arriving and departing passengers have different characteristics. Is this a problem?

The survey of departing passengers is done daily, but every 6 months arriving passengers are surveyed too and data from this are used for validation. In fact there seems to be very little difference between arriving and departing passengers - maybe 1% to 1½%.

Have you considered something like an add-on fare for inbound passengers who do not qualify for the free travel, giving them simplified ticketing?

KLM are keen to expand the system, both to inbound passengers and to those using Belgian Railways (SNCB). Belgian passengers can exchange their flight coupon for a ticket to Schiphol on any train - SNCB, NS or Thalys. There are major problems with ticketing for inbound passengers: KLM are reluctant to make any more complications - at least before they have fully investigated what is going on now.

Attendants on the Acela trains help you with your baggage, which is very customer friendly - is this an issue with using trains in Europe?

Maybe.

What happens if the inbound passenger's train ticket is collected during their flight?

There are problems. One solution may be to settle with Thalys on a sold coupon basis, not a collected coupon basis. It is a problem for KLM if passengers use NS or SNCB trains rather than Thalys - they then have to pay NS and SNCB as well as Thalys.

Good practice in marketing

Examples of good practice in marketing were reviewed.

These covered

- package deals, especially for groups and
- experiences of airport rail timetables and brochures.

Integrated group packages

Mike Adamson and Andy Wakeford, Thameslink Rail introduced their company and its ticketing systems for air passengers.

Thameslink Rail operates a major north-south route through the heart of London. It runs between Bedford, 70 km north of London, and Brighton, 80 km south, and serves both Luton Airport and Gatwick Airport.

It carries 125,000 passengers a year, with an annual revenue of £144m. It is profitable, paying a premium to the Strategic Rail Authority for the franchise. It is a subsidiary of Govia Ltd., a joint venture between the Go-Ahead Group (65%) and the French company Keolis (35%).

About 16% of Luton Airport passengers use rail: at Gatwick the share is 18%, spread mainly over 3 operators (Thameslink, South Central and Gatwick Express) - although other operators also served Gatwick, from the east and west.

Luton Airport Parkway station was opened in November 1999: it is linked to the terminal by a frequent free shuttle bus service. Before that there was a shuttle bus service from the main station in the centre of Luton. The airport currently handles 14 mppa - 85% on scheduled flights. The fare from London is around £10: there is coach competition, and Midland Main Line also serves the station.

Gatwick is long established as London's second airport, with a station immediately adjacent. It has recently lost traffic because of BA's decision to concentrate more on Heathrow, but their slots are being taken up by, in particular, low cost carriers. There are 25 million terminating passengers at the airport each year. The one-way fare to London on Thameslink is £9.80.

Because there is significant on-rail competition at Gatwick, Thameslink's strategy is to move the buying decision to the point where the trip is booked, so that people decide in advance to use Thameslink. Another part of the strategy is to ensure that rail travel is seen as part of the total transport solution.

As part of this, they have a number of novel fare initiatives - both current and planned.

The Outback Roundrider is a group travel product, set up and retailed by Medigen, a third party. It includes a taxi ride of up to 16 km to a station and a rail fare, with a fixed price for up to 4 passengers. The airports fare is £75, competitive with either a taxi throughout or long-term parking. Because of the way it is sold, Thameslink have very little involvement in the marketing. The product, now 3 years old, makes around Euros 39,000 a year.

There is an Internet booking arrangement with Easyjet. When people book an Easyjet ticket, they are offered discounted rail travel on Thameslink. Discounts, like those of Easyjet, are at two levels. For example, London to Luton Airport costs £4 if booked more than 8 weeks in advance, or £8 if booked between 7 days and 8 weeks in advance. Tickets are mailed to passengers: newer technology is needed in order to expand sales. Revenue from this currently is around Euros 1 million a year.

Thameslink also offer Internet booking for travel between Luton Airport and Gatwick, for people flying into one airport and out from the other.

They also plan a ticket on demand system, to avoid mailing tickets. This will be similar to - and compatible with - the current system used by Stansted Express. Passengers will be able to book on the Internet, pay by credit card, receive a magic number, put the credit card in the ticket machine before travelling and receive their ticket. This will open the way to significant expansion (with the removal of the seven days notice, currently necessary because tickets have to be posted): the cost of sales will also drop significantly. The first ticket machine equipped for this will be installed at Luton Airport shortly

Their policy is to have a multiplicity of small deals tailored to specific markets rather than to have one all-embracing scheme. These include

- deals for bulk sales by specific charter operators - for example, Monarch and British European both sell Thameslink tickets on board
- deals with Tourist Information Centres, especially in London
- Sales and promotion through the Aviance ground-handling group, part of the Go-Ahead Group.

The future strategy was to have simple solutions, add-ons to the air journey and deals with partners in order to reach the passenger early on in the decision making process.

Integrated group packages - question and answer session.

How does on-rail competition at Gatwick work?

This is a unique situation. The theory when Britain's railways were privatised was that there would be on-rail competition at different prices. In general this does not work - it doesn't happen as envisaged. There are 3 operators running trains between London and Gatwick: Gatwick Express charges a different fare, and different tickets have to be bought for Gatwick Express and for the other companies (although there are also tickets which are valid on all three). This is confusing to the passengers and gives relatively little benefit.

Thameslink tends to serve the eastern and central side of London, with termini at London Bridge, Blackfriars, City Thameslink, Farringdon and King's Cross. For passengers from Gatwick, these are very different to Victoria, the terminus served by the competition which is in the West End. So Thameslink feel they have some control over the situation for Gatwick passengers, who consciously choose one or the other.

With Luton Airport, however, they are in competition with Midland Main Line (MML), running to St. Pancras, very close to King's Cross Thameslink - so there is a danger that MML will benefit from Thameslink's marketing activities.

What about employee travel?

Employees form a significant and valuable market, and Thameslink have done deals with major employers at both Luton Airport and Gatwick.

The fundamentals - timetables and brochures.

Bob Longworth (Manchester Airport) and Stephen Holt (Birmingham Airport) spoke on their provision of train time publicity for their airports. This was particularly important in the UK, where rail operators were in competition with one another and tended to provide operator-specific timetables.

Bob Longworth stressed the importance of information on how to get to and from the airport. They had produced timetables aimed at air passengers, focusing on the airport. This again was different from the timetables produced by the rail operators, to whom the airport was just another stopping point.

Information in the timetable is grouped by origin and destination, rather than by operator.

Essentially there were two timetables - one for trains to Manchester (including a city centre guide) and one for places further afield.

Both included information about the airport.

Stephen Holt said that the airport was some 500 metres from Birmingham International station, a multi-functional interchange. Currently there was a bus shuttle between the airport and the station, but a new Doppelmayr cable-powered transit system would be introduced within the next few months.

Services at the station were also multi-functional, ranging from InterCity services operated by Virgin Trains and regional services to Wales to local services operating within the West Midlands conurbation. None were dedicated.

As in Manchester, two timetables had been produced - one for the conurbation and one for other major destinations. Both featured diagrammatic maps.

Both maps and timetables were geared to places air passengers travelled to most. This tended not to be the case with the train services - for example the major train service ran from Birmingham International to London, but few air passengers wanted to go to London.

A major problem in the current year was engineering work seriously affecting weekend journeys.

- The secondary route south towards London Marylebone was closed on a number of weekends in early summer so that a key section could have a second track installed.
- Once that was back in operation, the West Coast Main Line to London was closed between Milton Keynes and Hemel Hempstead - a distance of some 40 kilometres - for about 18 weekends. Trains would be replaced by buses.

- On a number of Sundays, trains would not serve the airport at all: again, there would be a bus service between central Birmingham, the airport and Nuneaton (on the West Coast Main Line). It had been through the airport's initiative that the buses were serving the airport itself rather than the International station, a bus ride from the terminals.
- Finally, going north, the line between Wolverhampton and Stafford was closed on some weekends.

Compounding the problem was the difficulty of getting accurate information. Because of uncertainties about work programming, Railtrack had initially planned not to publish a timetable at all for weekends but to rely instead on the Internet, leaflets and posters. However they had found that they were obliged under their licence to do so - so they had published one, but one based on very preliminary plans and unlikely to be adhered to.

It was clearly desirable to publish accurate information - passengers would keep travelling, would keep on arriving by air at Birmingham - but the airport could not produce accurate information if it couldn't find it.

In response to a question, he said that he thought it would be even more confusing for passengers if the airport provided buses to key destinations at weekends too.

Good practice in baggage handling

This section reviewed the state of the art on baggage handling for this kind of railway. Because of the multiplicity of terminals served and the fact that relatively few passengers were air travellers, Heathrow Express-style in-town check-in was difficult - and even more financially complex than for a dedicated airport express.

Bob Longworth discussed plans for baggage drop systems for Manchester airport.

This was followed by a description of the integrated baggage handling system at Frankfurt and its contribution to rail-air intermodality, by Hans Fakiner.

Baggage drop.

Bob Longworth, Ground Transport Manager of Manchester airport, discussed their future plans. He stressed that this was what they wanted to do, not what they did do at the moment.

Baggage drop was part of their long term strategy - partly for customer convenience, partly because of the need to optimise space at the airport. Passengers would be able to leave their bags in a designated place, and be re-united with them at check-in: this saved them carrying their bags particularly at interchange points. The concept could apply both at the airport (at the station, at car parks) and remotely (at Leeds, York and Crewe stations, for example).

They had already made a trial of the system at one of the airport car parks for two airlines - it worked well, but costs were high.

The new Ground Transport Interchange, currently being built and opening next May, was designed to be a receiving point for bags and passengers - those arriving by bus, coach, train and light rail.

Because they already have 100% Hold Baggage Screening, there is no need to screen bags at source - but the cost issues remain.

Self service check-in machines, especially for passengers with just hand baggage, may be a way forward.

Common user terminals are being developed, which will help by economising on space. These are self service check-in machines but with a common user front end, like cash dispensers: they were not dedicated to one airline or alliance.

It is possible for these machines to issue baggage tags. Passengers would then have to carry their own bags to the baggage drop point or a manned check-in facility.

Frankfurt - Stuttgart and beyond.

Hans Fakiner, Aviation Strategies Commissioner for Intermodal Systems for Fraport AG (Flughafen Frankfurt Main AG), described air rail integration and substitution at Frankfurt.

Their goals were to strengthen the hub function of the airport, to increase its catchment area, and to increase capacity. The co-operation with Deutsche Bahn (DB) was forecast to increase airport capacity by around 5%, by freeing up slots currently used for short haul flights.

There had been a regional rail station at the airport since 1972: the new AIRail station for high speed trains had opened in 1999. The presence of high speed rail intensifies competition between airports.

The station at Köln/Bonn airport was due to open in 2004.

The new Frankfurt - Köln high speed line (NBS) is to open on 1st August 2002, initially with a Frankfurt - Köln shuttle halving the present travel time. From 15th December 2002, there were to be 9 trains an hour at Frankfurt AIRail station. The full air-rail service between the two cities would start in January 2003, with Customs and baggage facilities at Köln Hbf.

On the Köln trains, baggage would not be containerised in special luggage compartments as on the Stuttgart service. Instead, bags would be loose-loaded into a reserved passenger compartment (with the seats protected by special covers - this is done for some mail services already). They would then be offloaded into containers at Frankfurt or Köln. This would save modifying coaches - which were common-user ICE-3 sets, which could go anywhere in Germany (and indeed to some places beyond).

The Frankfurt - Stuttgart service is running well. About 30% of the space on the trains is used: this had not changed since August last year. There are about 5000 passengers a month - 20% of the total air and rail traffic between Frankfurt and Stuttgart.

Lufthansa is to cancel its Frankfurt - Köln flights, but is unlikely to withdraw planes from the Frankfurt - Stuttgart route because of competitive pressure: they do not want long-haul traffic to go Stuttgart - Paris instead of Stuttgart - Frankfurt.

Responding to a question, Hans said that 4000 pieces of baggage were checked in each month at Stuttgart, and 90% of passengers using the train declared themselves very satisfied.

Finally, he looked forward to welcoming delegates to the IARO Air Rail Conference in Frankfurt early next year.

Benchmarking airport access

Miguel de Bernardo of INECO spoke on the European Union (EU) Airport Access Benchmarking study, of which he was the leader.

The EU had, under its 5th Framework Programme, sponsored a series of benchmarking conferences - BEST, Benchmarking for European Sustainable Transport. One of the results of these was a series of benchmarking workshops (BOB - Best of Benchmarking) - essentially to test practical applications of the output of the conferences.

The BOB studies deal with road safety, railways, and airport access.

The airport access study is looking at good practice in public transport use, and at alleviating congestion and bottlenecks. It aims to identify key factors affecting the use of public transport to access airports.

Participants included the airports of Amsterdam Schiphol, Bologna, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dublin, Germany (ADV), Heathrow, Lyon St-Exupéry, Manchester, Milan (SEA Milan), Paris (ADP), Spain (AENA), Toulouse and Vienna.

A number of working meetings had already been held.

Initially there had been a brainstorming session to attempt to establish what benchmarks were important: unfortunately the data to support these ideal benchmarks were not readily available. Therefore a combination of data collection and site visits was being used, in an attempt to learn transferable lessons. The outcome would be a description report for each airport (basic data) and a final synoptic report.

Surface access strategies and key factors affecting use of public transport by both air passengers and airport employees were being studied as part of this.

Where next?

Cyril Bleasdale, Chairman of IARO, invited delegates to share their own views of the day.

- What, specifically, did they get out of it?
- What action plan will they go away with?
- What was not covered which should have been?
- What needs to be covered in a follow-up?
- What should IARO do next?

Thameslink picked up the point that information needs to be clear and in a form people are expecting it. The comment from KLM that passengers were looking for trains to Antwerp and didn't expect them to be going to Paris was interesting - and, to the traditional railway mind, unexpected. Trains, unlike planes, often make many stops! It shows one of the key differences between the rail market and the air market which we need to keep in mind.

AccesRail commented on the two different types of airline - those using GDSs, and low-cost carriers. Airlines were not monolithic! Perhaps IATA needs to adapt more to the changing environment.

Birmingham Airport suggested putting the workshop papers on IARO's website, perhaps in the Members Only section.

ADP suggested an IARO working group on intermodality. They had been particularly interested by the concrete case studies.

Future needs were identified as follows.

- More on information - how to get train information and ticket sales information to the passenger. How do you catch the right train and buy the right ticket? How do you access the system?
- How can we share market research?
- What will make a difference to passengers in travelling - especially those not speaking the language of the country they are visiting?
- What do people need to know?

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Task Groups, workshops and conferences

Task Group reports are usually the topic of all or part of an IARO workshop.

Copies of the reports of the first (in Berlin in 1999) and second (Milan, 2000), are available price £250 (free to IARO members). The report of the Madrid workshop is in preparation.

These workshops are very focused, dealing in detail with a restricted number of key issues, and complement the regular Air Rail Conferences. Workshops and conferences (with site visits) have been held as follows.

- 1993 - Zürich
- 1994 - Paris
- 1996 - London (Heathrow Express, Stansted Express)
- 1997 - Oslo (Airport Express Train)
- 1998 - Hong Kong (Airport Express Line)
 - Frankfurt (with the AIRail station and the Cargo Sprinter)
- 1999 - Workshop 1: Berlin (the Schönefeld link)
 - Copenhagen (the Øresund Link)
- 2000 - Workshop 2: Milan (Malpensa Express)
 - Paris (plans for CDG Express)
 - Washington (Baltimore-Washington International Airport)
- 2001 - Zürich airport: Air rail links - improving the partnership
 - Workshop 3: Madrid (and its airport rail links)
 - London Heathrow (Heathrow Express)
- 2002 - Workshop 4: Amsterdam, for railways serving airports but not as their main job - "Help - there's an airport on my railway".
 - New York (the Airtrain projects)



Planned workshops and conferences

- 2002 - Kuala Lumpur and its new Express Rail Link (October)
- 2003 - Frankfurt/Stuttgart and air rail integration (February)
 - Hong Kong and Shanghai (October)
- 2004 - Brussels
 - San Francisco

Details are available from IARO, or on www.iaro.com.

Future plans are, of course, subject to change.