

Network Rail to carry out further upgrades to Midland Main Line

February 16, 2024



Network Rail is set to carry out significant upgrades to the Midland Main Line over four weekends in February and March, resulting in some changes to Thameslink and East Midlands Railway (EMR) services.

Engineers will improve overhead line equipment south of Bedford, as well as undertaking further work to electrify the line between Kettering and Leicester.

Network Rail said the improvements will pave the way for new electric and bi-mode trains, ensuring that passengers enjoy smoother, quieter, greener, and more reliable journeys in the future.

On Sunday 25 February, engineers will install overhead lines between Kettering and Leicester, resulting in no trains to Market Harborough. Some EMR Intercity services will be diverting around the closure and a rail replacement bus service will be in place to serve passengers between Leicester, Market Harborough and Kettering.

Buses will replace trains on Sunday 10 March and the weekend of 16/17 March between Luton and Bedford to allow for further upgrades to the overhead lines. Thameslink will run amended services south of Luton to and through central London, and EMR will operate a train shuttle service between London St Pancras and Luton, with trains running northbound from Bedford.

Additionally, on Sunday 10 March, there will be no trains between St Pancras and London Bridge, via Farringdon because of cyclical maintenance with passengers advised to use London Underground or TfL buses. Trains will also not call at Kentish Town on this day.

On 9/10 March, 17 March and 23/24 March, engineers will be laying new track to deliver smoother journeys between Syston and Hellspton which will affect CrossCountry services from Leicester to Peterborough. A rail replacement bus will be in place to serve passengers along this route.

On the weekend of 23/24 March, there will be additional improvement work to the overhead lines south of Bedford and upgrades through Luton station as new switches and crossings are installed, the specialist equipment used by trains to change tracks from one to another, meaning smoother journeys for passengers.

Amended and reduced Thameslink services will operate south of Harpenden, where a rail replacement bus service will transfer passengers to Luton and Bedford. Trains will not call at London Bridge owing to further engineering work in that area.

East Midlands Railway will operate no services south of Bedford on the affected weekend. EMR passengers should travel on Thameslink from London St Pancras to Hitchin, where a rail replacement bus service will operate to Bedford, connecting passengers to EMR services towards Sheffield and Nottingham.

Network Rail is encouraging all passengers to check their journey before travelling via National Rail Enquiries or through their train operator.

Gavin Crook, Principal Programme Sponsor for Network Rail's East Midlands route, said: "The engineering work to the Midland Main Line is essential in improving the journeys of passengers, allowing for faster, more reliable and smoother services in the future.

"Our teams will be working around the clock throughout the affected days to deliver these vital improvements.

"We want to thank all passengers for their patience and understanding while these major upgrades are carried out and to encourage them to check before they travel via National Rail Enquiries or their train operator to ensure they are aware of any impact on their journeys."

Dave Meredith, Customer Services Director for EMR, said: "We are encouraging customers planning to travel to or from London in February and March to check their journeys in advance on the EMR website.

"Engineering work will affect EMR Intercity services at weekends at the end of February and throughout March.

“Customers should expect extended journey times with rail replacement buses and amended timetables in place.

“We would like to thank our customers for their patience whilst the engineering work to electrify the Midland Main Line takes place. This work will greatly benefit our customers in the future with more reliable, quicker journeys.”

Jenny Saunders, Customer Services Director for Govia Thameslink Railway, said: “We also thank our customers for their patience and understanding while Network Rail carry out vital modernisation along this important route.

“We’re running replacement buses where needed for passengers to complete their journeys, which means those journeys will take longer than normal, so we advise everyone to plan ahead and re-check their schedules before setting off.”