

# THE "DRAIN" SAMPLED

*by Transit*

I was able to ride and examine the revitalised Waterloo and City Line early in October and found that the line really has been transformed. The L&SW Railway terminated at Waterloo a mile short and on the wrong side of the River Thames from its ideal destination – the heart of The City. An extension to the conventional railway would have been refused permission so the LSWR built an underground link line

starting below the platforms at Waterloo and terminating beside the ideal spot in The City beside the Bank of England. This line has been incorporated into the London Underground network and forms part of Metronet's responsibility. The line has been virtually rebuilt during a five month long closure though the reopening was a week behind schedule on 11th September 2006.

The track has been totally renewed. Fine new bullhead rail fixed to concrete sleepers lies on new deep ballast and the result is a much smoother ride. The W&C had become known for its bumpy ride and the sway when sharp corners were negotiated. The signalling has been renewed and is partly responsible for the slicker throughput of the trains.

On 4th October 2006 I enjoyed a remarkably smooth ride with no evidence of a sway even at the sharper corners. Standing was no problem at all despite the fact that I am just a shade unsteady on my feet these days. Before the rebuild I would have had to hang on tightly to avoid falling. The interior of the twenty coaches has been modernised. The aquamarine colour used for the line on maps etc is repeated on the grab rails and columns. The seats are now covered in a fabric that features a bold pattern in black, white and aquamarine. The lighting has been improved with strip lights down the centre of the ceiling plus concealed lights

along the sides of the roof. The exterior of the cars has been given a fresh LUL livery of silver body with blue band at lower edge, plus bright red doors. The stations have been repainted and given new signs, and at Bank there is at last an indicator to show which platform will be used by the next service. The platforms are surfaced with terrazzo tiles and at Waterloo the wall behind the platform is covered by what looks like large tiles of marble chips.

What is the result of the upgrade work? Metronet claims that the trip time will now be slightly reduced – 30 seconds will be saved on a return trip. You may think that this tiny change is inconsequential but it will allow the operation of two additional services during each peak hour, an increase in the carrying capacity of 2000 per hour. “The Drain”, as its regulars call it, has been given a new lease of life and will give a better ride for the hordes of commuters who use it every day on their journey to and from the heart of London’s financial district.

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## US VOTERS DECIDE

The much publicised U.S.A. Congressional elections in November 2006 were the occasion also for voters to decide on many purely local projects including public transport plans. The results were, as usual, a very mixed bag. In Florida voters in the south of the State soundly rejected an increase in the Sales Tax that would have funded proposals to expand the Miami metro and purchase a substantial fleet of new buses to replace some of the existing elderly vehicles. In the north of the State voters approved the expenditure of \$4m for transport improvements provided none of the money came from the present tax on petrol. In contrast there were strong votes

in favour of plans to expand public transport around Salt Lake City using money from a higher Sales Tax. Minneapolis-St Paul similarly backed plans to expand the highly successful light rail line. The Minnesota vote also included a ruling that vehicle related taxes must be spent on measures to improve public transport. California voters approved \$30bn expenditure on a selection of public transport initiatives. In road-orientated Texas Voters approved a plan for a suburban rail route linking the community of Grapevine to Fort Worth and the existing route to Dallas. A surprise result in Kansas City after seven failed ballot attempts was the approval of a

27-mile light rail line plus a gondola tram to serve the Penn Valley Park. Kansas City has for long relied on its comprehensive bus network. Plans for the light railway are in a far from complete state but the funds will be

drip-fed to the scheme over several years giving time for the plans to be finalised properly.

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