

Hugh Wood/Shepreth Parish Council

As discussed at the Enquiry my key question was how/whether Network Rail:

A - assess balance of risks holistically (ie looking beyond just their own metrics to include knock on effects on road safety, access for emergency services)

B – model downtime impacts, having used incorrect data for the Meldreth Road crossing and its unusually low c 50 second downtime, and we believe incorrect data and assumptions in traffic modelling (the results of presumably similar modelling having been experienced consistently at Shepreth level crossing after an identical change).

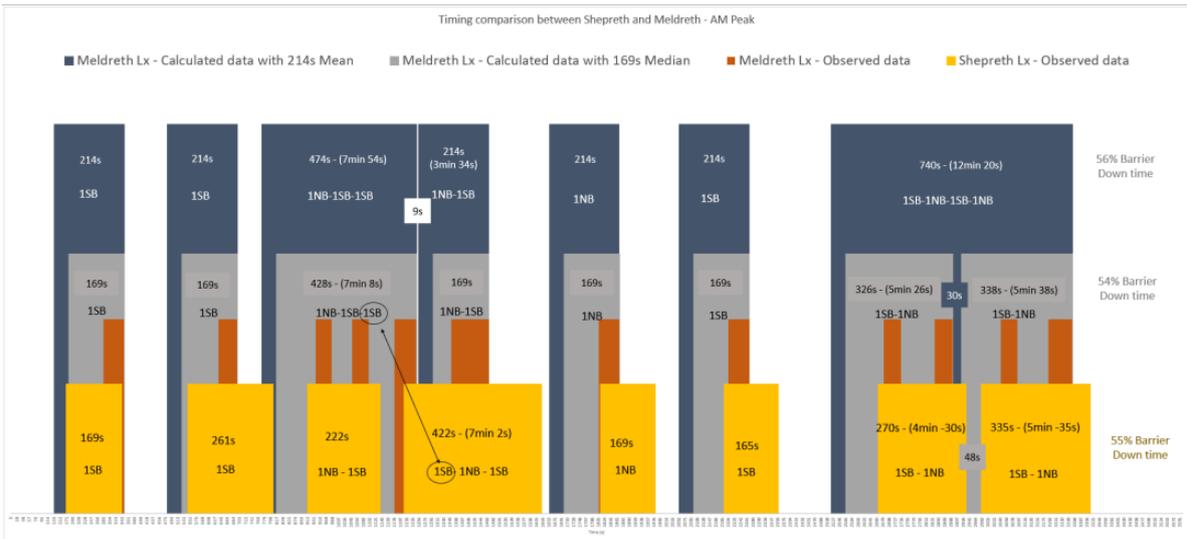
C – and therefore misrepresented (or themselves misunderstood) actual impact and therefore balance or risk and upsides.

I appreciated the good intent of the individuals who spoke on Network Rail's behalf - especially of Mr John Prest. But I saw and heard nothing to allay the above concerns.

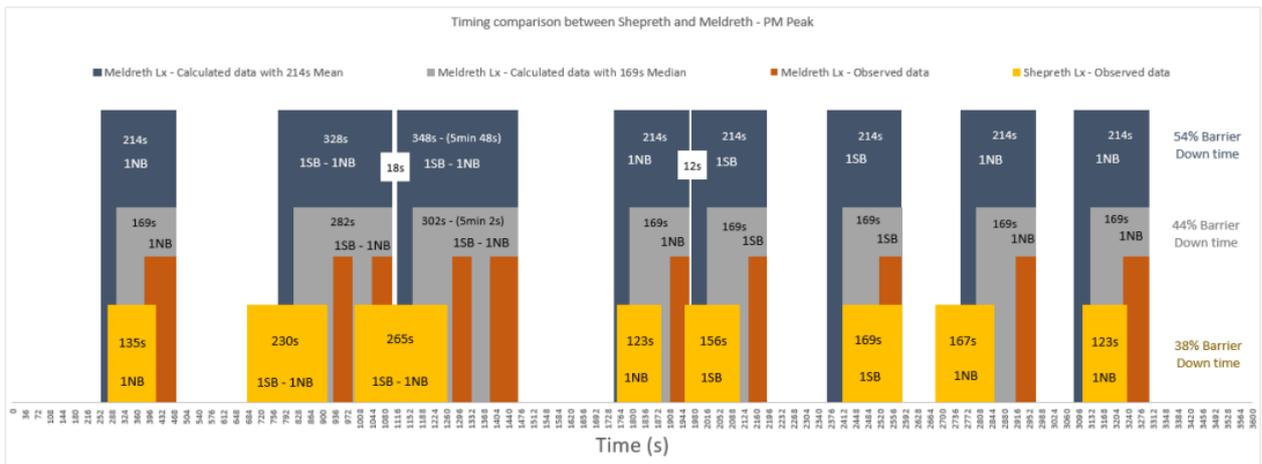
The new data/bar charts which we are asked to react to strongly reinforces that view, making it still clearer that the changes will in no way be 'not seen as significant' by local crossing users.

Specifically:

- We established at the enquiry that the reduction in mortality risk from the current barrier would be a modelled risk of 1 death every 50-150 years. So it would be fair, as I understand it, to assume the modelled fatality risk from NOT making a change is in the order of max 1 per 50 years (to be at 'harsh' end of the range for my case).
- The new data models:
 - In AM Peak hour @168s mean:
 - Downtime of 7 minutes 8 seconds, a 1 minute gap, and another downtime of 3 minutes 34 seconds.
 - Downtime of 5 minutes 26 seconds, a 30 second gap, and another downtime of 5 minutes 38 seconds. Even if the barrier elevates (ie no train is late) that will not be sufficient time to clear queue, so some drivers would have a downtime of up to 11 minutes and 8 seconds
 - In AM Peak hour @ 214s mean:
 - Downtime of 7 minutes 54 seconds, a 9 second gap, and another downtime of 3 minutes 24 seconds, with high probability of the two merging to become 11 minutes 20 seconds, and no chance of the queue clearing with that space.
 - Downtime of 12 minutes and 20 seconds.



- In PM peak hour @ 169s median:
 - Downtime of 4 minutes 42 seconds, c 1 minute gap and further downtime of 5 minutes 2 seconds.
 - Downtime of 2 minutes 49seconds, a c 45 second gap, and further downtime of 2 minutes 49 seconds.
- In PM peak hour @ 214s median:
 - Downtime of 5 minutes 28 seconds, an 18 second gap, and a downtime of 5 minutes 48 seconds.
 - Downtime of 3 minutes and 44 seconds, a 12 second gap, and a further downtime of 3 minutes and 44 seconds



I assume but don't know this also assumes 'perfect' performance from the manager of the crossing who will be at Foxton signal box, for whom one must assume Meldreth Road crossing will always be 3rd priority after Foxton itself and the Shepreth station barrier.

It is therefore very evident that if the proposed changes go ahead as current we will routinely be seeing downtimes of 7-10 minutes.

This is entirely inconsistent with data that Network Rail:

- Presented in the 14/6/22 'Performance Report - Level Crossing Study', asserting 'the average delay will not exceed 1 minute' (p51) and 'the proposed crossing will have minimal impact on the eastbound journey times' and 'in the westbound direction the highest increase is 65s, which is not considered significant' (p52).
- Presented in the 11/8/22 'Local Model Validation Report – Level Crossing Study', which clearly shows the actual current downtimes of c 50 seconds in both directions (p36) and that current Shepreth crossing downtimes are up to 409 seconds (6 mins 49 seconds), a crossing which all understand will have slightly lower downtime than a changed Meldreth Road.
- Presented at the enquiry on actual Shepreth crossing in Mr Contentin's evidence, where it was asserted that it was very clear all along that maximum delays can be up to 428 seconds (7 minutes and 8 seconds) but that long delays would be extremely rare.

In summary:

- The new data shows that we would experience am peak hour downtimes of 7 minutes 8 seconds, 5 min 26 seconds and 5 min 38 seconds – in the 'better scenario' of 169s mean
- And an am downtime of 12 minutes 20 seconds at the 214s mean is modelled/expected, with likelihood of another similar downtime earlier in the hour
- No account has been taken into model of an increase in local mortality that would result from emergency vehicles either being held up 7-10 minutes OR diverting the additional ~10 minutes road trip. I do not have access to data to quantify but given population and age that is surely likely to result in far more than one incremental fatality over a hundred years.
- There would be knock on increase in road dangers, from cars accelerating hard to beat eastbound barriers and entering a residential area
- Reduction of local train use. The majority of Shepreth train users head north to Cambridge, many being school children (and most London commuters using fast Royston trains). Shepreth Station is a 2-5 minute drive from the Shepreth end of Meldreth. Bearing in mind rail users would have to cross both Meldreth Road and Shepreth level crossing to reach northbound trains (in absence of a footbridge over track), what time should they allow to ensure they can safely catch example 7.39/8.09/8.38 am peak northbound trains?

I am for safety, and not against making any changes to the crossing. But the impact of the proposed change would far outweigh any benefits when considered 'in the round'.

Network Rail need to consider alternate options and mitigations. If a sensible increase in downtime could be achieved I am sure the community would support it.