

Future Transport London campaigns for sustainable solutions to London's transport problems favouring public transport, walking and cycling over private cars. Membership £15 a year. Please join us. Contact Chris Barker. 46 Redston Road, N8 7HJ. email chrisjbarker46@gmail.com: phone 020 8347 7684.

The newsletter is edited by Chris Barker. Contributions are welcomed. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of Future Transport London. Please look at and comment on our new website. All issues of the newsletter can be found on our website.



No 50 JANUARY 2024

The out-of-control cost increases and the constant dithering about where HS2 is to go has resulted in a practically useless stump of a new railway from the outskirts of London to the outskirts of Birmingham – Acton to Aston as Christian Wolmar calls it.

The crucial extension to Euston is to be left to the expectation that an enterprising developer will appear but that seems highly unlikely, leaving an ugly gash in the ground and thousands of angry residents whose lives have been blighted by the works.

Even if HS2 does reach Euston there will only be six platforms as opposed to the original eleven. This would allow a maximum of only eight trains an hour. Some of these trains would skirt Birmingham and continue along the existing railway to Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow, clogging up the lines which HS2 was supposed to relieve. In the meantime Old Oak Common, with six platforms, will only be able to deal with six terminating trains an hour. Taking into account the extra time needed to reach central London this will deliver end to end timing hardly more than for existing trains.

Is there some way that the project could be rescued and some use made of this expensive stump of a railway? Neil Roth has one imaginative suggestion in an article in this issue. Could there be others?

FTL Podcasts

Check out our podcasts at <https://www.futuretransportlondon.org/podcasts>.

In the latest FTL's vice-chair Andrew Bosi explains the challenges of bringing HS2 into central London and why Old Oak Common rather than Euston may end up as the long term terminus for the completed HS2 line.



Our aspiration is to be a good neighbour every single day by respecting local communities and the environment.

Elizabeth line to Birmingham and Pendolinos to Paddington?

HS2 is supposed to be about 'capacity not speed'. However, so long as Old Oak Common is its London terminus, only six trains per hour are planned to run along the rump of HS2: three trains to/from Birmingham and three trains beyond.

A 400-metre HS2 train will have 1,100 seats, so the hourly capacity along that line will be 6,600 in each direction. That seems a very modest increase after all that expense and disruption, especially if HS2 never gets to Euston. Could more capacity and public benefit be achieved at much less cost?

Yes, if the infrastructure built for HS2 between Old Oak Common and Birmingham, Curzon Stret is repurposed as, mostly, a new branch of the Elizabeth line. Stations could be added to serve intermediate towns and cities, eg, Aylesbury Parkway, Calvert (for interchange with East-West Rail), Brackley, Coventry/Kenilworth Parkway as well as Birmingham Interchange. Some would be good locations for new towns.

Commuters into Birmingham from those places would have a new, high-quality train service, helping to balance demand in both directions.

London passengers, instead of waiting for an infrequent HS2 departure and having to change trains at Old Oak Common, would have a high-frequency service direct to/from all existing Elizabeth line stations/interchanges in Central London including Paddington (with its existing Great Western interchange) and both eastern branches: Stratford station is close to Stratford International and there are calls for the Abbey Wood branch to be extended to the vicinity of Ebbsfleet International. Both have potential for interchange with HS1, which HS2 always lacked.

The enormous Old Oak Common

interchange/terminus need not be built, operated, or maintained. Nor would Great Western trains be delayed by stopping there (a modest, surface-level station could be added on the existing Elizabeth line tracks to serve local developments).

The costs and technical difficulties of extending HS2 into Euston and of dispersing passengers from there (especially if that 'requires Crossrail 2') would vanish. A much more frequent and direct Elizabeth line service would help offset it having slower trains than HS2.

At present, 24 trains are scheduled between Whitechapel and Paddington during the peak hour, but 14 of those reverse at Paddington, reflecting much higher demand to/from the Elizabeth line's eastern branches. Maintaining 24 trains per hour through Central London but extending some of or all those 14 reversing trains per hour to-

wards Birmingham, would provide more frequency and capacity between the UK's first and second cities. The current Elizabeth line trains have a top speed above 100 mph and stated maximum capacity of 1500. Fourteen of those to/from Birmingham would give an hourly capacity of 21,000 compared with HS2's planned 6,600 to/from Old Oak Common.

Birmingham trains would need to have the same door configuration and floor height and the same length as existing Elizabeth line trains: perhaps a faster version could be developed. The addition of accessible toilets and of more seating would marginally reduce train and hourly capacity, but line capacity would still be at least double that planned for HS2.

A lower maximum speed than HS2 means the train wheels need not dissipate so much heat when braking and can be smaller, giving more flexibility about train floor height.

If the platforms at the intermediate Acton-Aston stations can be built on side tracks, they could provide step-free gap-free boarding and alighting just as Elizabeth line trains do in Central London while faster trains pass on the main line.

At Old Oak Common, the tracks designed for HS2 are 18

metres below the surface. Instead of being extended from there all the way to Euston in tunnel (at great expense and technical difficulty) they could be extended a short distance to provide a grade-separated junction with the existing Elizabeth line tracks, which are parallel to HS2's and nearby.

That new junction would also connect the HS2 tracks with the existing National Rail terminus at Paddington. The trains currently on order for HS2 are too big, but Pendolinos could reasonably terminate there, and they could exploit their design top speed of 140 mph between Old Oak Common and Birmingham Interchange. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Rail_Class_390

North of Birmingham, being able to tilt through West ~Coast Main Line curves, Pendolinos would outpace the non-tilting trains ordered for HS2. Perhaps three Pendolinos per hour could be scheduled for the services between Paddington and Manchester/Liverpool/Glasgow, while the Elizabeth line serves passengers between London, intermediate stations, and Curzon Street.

Neil Roth

Listen to Neil's podcast: HS2: An alternative Infrastructure at <https://www.futuretransportlondon.org/>



Could this train get to Birmingham?

BRENT CROSS WEST OPENS

Local residents were shown around the gleaming new Brent Cross West Thameslink station a couple of weeks before it opened to the public on 10th December.

There are now eight trains per hour each way stopping there, and a 24-hour-access footbridge across the tracks, useable without having to pass through the gateline. The station has passive provision for the planned West London Orbital line as well.

The station is to serve a major new development but, for now, it is on the edge of a building site. Like Barking Riverside, the public transport provision comes before the passengers, suggesting that those who come to live there can thrive without the need for a car.



Protests at London City Airport expansion plans

London City Airport wants to increase the number of hours it flies. A Public Inquiry into the proposals is currently taking place.

It is expected to conclude this month. It follows the refusal of Newham Council, the planning authority, to grant the airport permission to increase its hours.

The airport's proposals may seem like small beer compared with, say, any plans for a third runway at Heathrow. But they have aroused widespread community opposition and well as objections from as many as eight local authorities.

At the heart of the objections is this proposal: London City wants permission to remove the weekend break that gives residents a break from the noise. Currently no planes are permitted between 12.30pm on Saturday and 12.30pm on Sunday. Residents see this as part of the deal of having an airport so close to where they live and one which overflies some of the most densely-populated areas in the UK.

London City wants planes to be able to use

the airport until 7.30pm on Saturday evenings. Residents feel betrayed. Many of the local authorities feel cheated. The fact the airport says it will only allow new, 'quieter' planes to operate during these extended hours has done little to quell the anger. Particularly when it has been revealed that these new planes will only be noticeably quieter in areas close to the airport, and only on departure. For everybody else overflown, the reduction in noise will be just 2-3 decibels, imperceptible to the human ear.

The reason why London City is pressing for the extended hours is that it wants to increase the number of leisure passengers using the airport. It has traditionally been a business airport serving the financial centres of Europe but, post-Covid, business passengers have been slower to return than leisure passengers. It believes, with its proximity to the City and the West End, it can attract 'high-value' leisure passengers. It sees extended flying hours on Saturday as a critical component of that.

Over the last twenty years or so the spot-

light has been on Heathrow and its plans for a third runway. Now those are in abeyance, the focus has shifted to London City, perhaps traditionally seen as the little cousin tucked away in Docklands. So, the scale of the opposition to its plans has probably taken many by surprise.

A lot of this opposition is coming from people living many miles from the airport. There are three key reasons for this. First, being a London airport, City planes disturb a lot of people, more than much larger airports such as Madrid or Brussels. Second, City planes are low as they need to fly below Heathrow airspace. This means in some places over 15 miles from the airport they are under 2,000ft. And third, in 2016 London City concentrated its flights paths so the same communities get all the planes. Complaints jumped five-fold within a year. It is those people who form the backbone of its opposition to the current plans. How the airport must regret concentrating its flight paths!

John Stewart

Cablehailed people-mover comes to Luton Airport

FTL members enjoyed a behind the scenes visit to Luton DART (Direct Air-Rail Transit) generously hosted by Linsey Sweet DART's General Manager on 8th November.

DART (opened 27th March) links Luton Airport Parkway station with the Airport Terminal, which is about 40 metres higher above sea-level than the Midland main line. DART consists of two cable-hauled automated people-movers (gradients ruled out conventional rail technology) and about 2 km of dual, segregated tracks with bridges and tunnels. The journey time is four minutes.

DART operates 24 hours a day although only one or other people-mover runs during the small hours of the night carrying mostly airport workers and responding to demand. DART carried its millionth passenger during August 2023 and was expected to carry its two millionth before Christmas 2023. It replaces the shuttle buses, which took much longer to access, board, travel and alight from and suffered from road congestion. Total scheduled journey time from St Pancras

International via East Midlands Railway and DART to the airport is now 32 minutes.

DART is entirely step-free and gap-free. It cost £300m. and was funded by Luton Borough Council who own the airport (through a company called Luton Rising), receiving airport profits, with plans to expand which include a second terminal.

DART's lower terminus is built on land once owned by Vauxhall Motors and integrated with Luton Airport Parkway station (opened 1999) which appears to have been designed with DART in mind, but we were assured it wasn't. There are two lines of ticket barriers between the railway platforms and the DART platforms: one line to check train tickets, another to check DART tickets. Through tickets via DART can be bought at National Rail ticket offices or online if you specify "Luton Airport" (as opposed to 'Luton Airport Parkway') as your destination station.

The full fare DART element costs £4.90, about twice as much as the erstwhile shuttle bus fare. Holders of Freedom Passes can travel for free on DART, but the ticket barriers are not clever enough to give entry by simply tapping the Freedom Passes (as one could on the shuttle buses): you have to create in advance an online account, specify the date and time of travel and download a free QR coded ticket which the DART gates can read. DART is not

compensated for accepting Freedom Passes as bus companies are.

There are three platforms at the lower DART terminus: one island platform between the two tracks for boarding passengers and a side platform outside both tracks for alighting passengers.

The platforms being more than twice as long as the current vehicles confirmed plans for airport expansion. There are vehicle doors and platform-edge doors and no member of staff is required to travel on the vehicles. The control room seemed to be staffed, equipped, and operated like many railway control rooms

The vehicles run on rubber tyres (filled with nitrogen) with horizontal guidewheels and steel guiderails. Each haulage cable is underneath the vehicle at track level; the two tracks and cable systems are independent. However, when both people-movers are in operation, departures from opposite terminals are slightly staggered, so that both systems do not demand maximum traction power simultaneously (the first few metres after leaving the upper station are uphill). DART has plans to use solar power whenever possible.

DART's contractor is Doppelmayr Cable Car, whose equipment is commonly found at ski resorts. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doppelmayr/Garaventa_Group

DART's upper terminus and maintenance facility are mostly underground and have only one island platform for reasons of space, but it is not integrated with the existing airport terminal: a walk of about 200 metres alongside the bus station is required. The footway is covered but did not appear pleasant on the windy, rainy day of our visit. The upper station is aligned so that the underground DART tracks can be extended to the proposed location of the second airport terminal.

The surface elements of DART's upper terminus are adjacent to the car park having to be demolished (and many cars written off) following a fire on 10th October causing DART to close for 12 days while safety checks were carried out. During that closure, buses once again conveyed passengers between Luton Airport Parkway station

and the airport terminal.

Between DART's upper and lower termini there are some intermediate platforms, but these are for emergency evacuation purposes only: a fully-fledged intermediate station was being considered at one time but is now unlikely to go ahead.

Exactly how DART will be operated, if it is extended to a second terminal, does not appear to have been decided. A few options are under consideration for extending either or both people-movers to the second terminal.

During the DART visit, FTL member Christian Wolmar interviewed General Manager Linsey Sweet for his Calling All Stations podcast series 2 episode 7. The interview can be heard towards the end. <https://markwalkerg.podbean.com/e/27-new-transport-laws-new-job-for-a-rail-leg-end-and-a-new-airport-shuttle/>

We all thank Linsey Sweet for the comprehensive briefing and tour she gave us of DART and for her generous hospitality.

Neil Roth

ELECTRIC BOATS FOR THE THAMES

A report by the Port of London Authority proposes three new ferry crossings of the Thames which, they say, would be about a third of the cost of building bridges and could be delivered in a fraction of the time. The ferries would be powered by electricity.

Robin Mortimer, PLA Executive, said: 'The Thames has shaped London's history for centuries and is key to its net zero future too. Based upon the experience of Auckland and Amsterdam, this report shows that the river can help create an affordable, low-carbon way of tackling transport inequity in east London.'

The routes proposed, all linked to major development areas are: Canary Wharf to North Greenwich, the Royal Docks to Charlton, and Barking Riverside to Thamesmead.





This is where the high line would start

Teaming up with Just Space

Through contact with the London-wide community planning group called Just Space, we have teamed up with students from the UCL Bartlett School of Planning to develop understanding of two projects affecting London's transport infrastructure.

They are the development around the Old Oak Common HS2 station and the proposal to turn a section of railway line around Camden Road into a linear park on the model of the New York High Line. TfL is concerned that decisions in both areas would have an adverse effect on transport infrastructure. The work of the students could throw valuable light on the viability of the projects, and we await their involvement with interest.

Just Space is an informal alliance of around 80 community groups, campaigns and concerned independent organisations which was formed to act as a voice for Londoners at grass-roots level during the formulation of London's major planning strategy, particularly the London Plan. They have been collaborating for many years with The Bartlett School of Planning, enabling students to develop knowledge and support community groups across London with local planning issues.

TFL FUNDING 2024/5

The Ministerial code directs that important announcements should be made firstly to Parliament.

The apologies that regularly follow the breach of this convention have all the conviction of those that follow an announcement that 'the driver has been instructed to wait at this stop to regulate the profits' (or something like that).

So it was that the Autumn statement was devoid of any news about funding a capital programme for TfL. Following the Christmas recess, the government announced that £250m would be provided in 2024/5.

This funding will enable TfL to complete the payment on the Piccadilly line trains which were ordered before the pandemic, have all been built (elsewhere in the UK) and are currently being tested. It will not pay for the signaling upgrade, which would optimise their worth and produce a significant capacity increase at a fraction of the cost of mega-schemes that take decades to gain authorization. It will not pay for an extension of the Bakerloo line, which again would sweat the assets of the existing line, or for new rolling stock on that line. The trains are so old they were built when passenger comfort was still a consideration.

Despite warm words about growing the economy once inflation is out of the way, there is little sign of action. The government appears tired, even to some of its supporters. Even the New Year's honours list looked tired, with more retreads (people receiving a second gong in addition to one already awarded) than ever before.

VICTORY Ticket offices saved

Train operating companies drew up their proposals to close almost all ticket offices in response to government pressure to save money. The Prime Minister and the DfT approved the plan. Now the government has instructed TOCs to abandon the programme provoking fury amongst TOCs at DfT's dithering.

Whatever the views of TOCs the news of the abandonment of the programme has pleased many including the 750,000 responders to the consultation. Although opposition was spearheaded by disability groups, the reasons for opposition were widespread including the inability of ticket machines to offer the full range of tickets or handle cash payments.

... and the One-Day Travelcard saved

The one-day travelcard will no longer be discontinued following negotiations between TfL and the train operating companies to reallocate revenue although the cost will rise three per cent above general fare increases. Mayor Sadiq Khan complained that, under the present deal, Londoners are effectively subsidising national rail travellers from outside London to the tune of about £40m a year. Saving this money would go some way towards the £600m of savings the government is requiring him to make to cover losses during the Covid-19 period. Negotiations with the DfT and the Rail Delivery Group have resulted in TfL gaining a larger share of ticket revenue.

Opposition to the cancellation was led by the Campaign for Better Transport and supported by London TravelWatch and a number of local authorities in the Home Counties. Norman Baker, Director of External Affairs for CBT, said 'Costly and complicated fares are a barrier for too many people when deciding how to travel, so the Day Travelcard is just the sort of simple, integrated ticket that we need across the country if we want to make public transport easy'.



More roads at 20

After holding out against reducing its main road network to 20mph to match those of many of the boroughs through which the roads run, TfL are now catching up. In 2022 all the roads in the Congestion Charge Zone were capped at 20 and this was then expanded to roads in Enfield, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Croydon making the total mileage to 40.

A further 47 miles have now been designated, covering roads in Bromley, Greenwich, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Southwark and Wandsworth. TfL’s statistics demonstrate that 20 mph speed limits have a positive effect on road casualties. According to data collected in the central London congestion zone area from May 2020 to June 2022, the number of crashes fell by 25 per cent and the number of collisions resulting in death or serious injury decreased by 24 per cent compared with before the limits were introduced, although this has to be put in the context of a 10% London-wide reduction in collisions resulting in death or serious injury over the same period.

Safer buses

TfL has published its Bus Safety Strategy outlining specific actions to be taken to achieve the Mayor’s Vision Zero goals for the bus network.

The first area to be addressed is speed. Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) has been fitted to all new buses since 2021. Geofencing ensures that buses cannot exceed the speed limit. Kerri Cheek, TfL Senior Bus Safety Development Manager, says: ‘If the bus is only doing the speed limit, all of the other features we’re putting on the bus will work better because they work much better at lower speeds than they do at higher speeds’. As a bonus, buses obeying the speed limit also slow traffic behind them. Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB) is also coming on new buses from next year. This will operate to warn drivers of the very close presence of other road users although automatic braking although this technology needs to be refined

if it leads to sudden braking impacting passengers.

The silence of electric buses is an issue which presents dangers to road users particularly those who are blind or partially sighted. To combat this TfL have developed their Acoustic Vehicle Alerting System (AVAS) to produce a sound which is unique to TfL buses.

Thought has been given to the shape of the front of the bus to reduce the risk of serious harm in the event of a collision. Although 50 per cent of fatalities and serious injuries involving buses are pedestrians, bus occupants account for 17 per cent so interior design features such as bevelled edges on the stairs and foam protection bars are being installed.

Silvertown delayed.

The target opening date for Silvertown Tunnel has slipped towards September 2025 and the estimated final cost has increased from £173 million to £179 million. Separately, the cost of associated bus infrastructure improvements will require another £2.7 million which has not yet been budgeted for. Contracts for the bus services, including routes 129 and Superloop 4 were awarded to Go-Ahead London, include a commitment that all the buses on these routes will be zero emissions from the start of operation. The consultation on TfL’s proposal to set up a shuttlebus service for cyclists through both the Silvertown and Blackwall tunnels closed on 10th September.

Parcels by rail

There is a growing trend by road hauliers to establish consolidation centres in large cities to handle the rising quantity of small items generated in response to internet orders. Ideally these items are then delivered by electric vehicles or cargo bikes, thus limiting carbon emissions. This has led distribution firms to consider the use of rail for this traffic, using major city centre stations at night when there is little passenger traffic. Initially two firms, Orion High Speed Logistics and Swift Express Freight,



More space for people in Oxford Street

proposed routes from the Midlands to Scotland.

There is now a possibility that the idea is moving to London. Cross River Partnership proposes using undercroft space at Waterloo where small freight items can be consolidated and transported onwards by zero-emission vehicles.

Oxford Street revamp

The Mayor’s plans to pedestrianise Oxford Street which were vehemently opposed by the City of Westminster have finally been put to rest by the City’s new Labour administration which proposes a watered down version of the plan. The focus is on improving the street for pedestrians with wider pavements, wider pedestrian crossings, longer green signals for pedestrian crossings and more frequent formal crossing points. There will also be a clamp-down on street clutter including street traders. To assist pedestrian flow at Oxford Circus there will be a ban on turning traffic. The effect of this on bus routes has not yet been publicised.

Free public transport in London

Initiatives to make public transport free are growing around Europe. Local transport is free in Tallinn, Estonia, and in the whole of the country of Luxembourg. Even in the UK free city centre buses operate in some cities.

A proposal to make all public transport free in London has been put forward by Stop the Silvertown Tunnel Coalition. They argue that this could con-

tribute to improving air quality and combatting the climate crisis by making bus travel more attractive and help households struggling with the cost of living. They point out that ‘national government policy has undermined public transport and active travel for many years by supporting road traffic with subsidies and undermining rail and bus services in line with privatisation dogma’.

The issue of how to pay for it is of course crucial. TfL fares bring in £4.3bn per year which is a far greater proportion of total income than comparable urban transport systems around the world. This could be made up by such actions as a road user charge (which itself could bring in about £4bn according to Prof Stephen Glaister of Imperial College), but also land value capture (for example through the Community Infrastructure Levy which was used to fund the Elizabeth Line), an increase in fuel duty and a workplace parking levy (as funds the Nottingham tram system).

Stop the Silvertown Tunnel Coalition hopes to win support from a wide range of community groups, transport workers’ unions, researchers of climate, air pollution and transport policy, politicians and local government, in order to lobby the Mayor and the GLA.

Stop the Silvertown Tunnel Coalition is organising a meeting to discuss the proposal on 24th February in Central London. Email: stopsilvertown@gmail.com for more information.