

**Our latest podcast is on micromobility and electric buses.  
Gordon McCullough, CEO of the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers  
(RiDC) answers our questions. Access the podcast via our website.**

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](mailto:chrisjbarker46@gmail.com) phone 020 8347 7684.

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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.

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## Bikes through the Silvertown Tunnel

**Silvertown Tunnel opened on schedule on 7th April. Bikes and pedestrians are banned from the tunnel, as they are from the Blackwall and most wheelchairs can travel by bus but cyclists are catered for by a service of bespoke cycle-carrying buses.**

A fleet of three electric buses have been refurbished to take cycles and

the service will be free for at least the first twelve months.

But does this account for all cycles and mobility scooters? It seems not. The shuttle bus imposes a width restriction of 0.76 metres, and cargo bikes can be in excess of a metre. Mobility scooters are not accepted although a member of staff told FTL that he understood

they would be allowed on board at the driver's discretion (ie, subject to available space and cyclists being given priority). They can, of course, be taken on buses; again subject to a maximum width.

An alternative way to cross the Thames in this area is via the Greenwich or Woolwich foot tunnels. However the relevant lifts have a

record of non-availability: the north lift of the Woolwich tunnel has not worked for several years, while one or other of the Greenwich lifts is out of order more than a quarter of the time. We understand that Cutty Sark station is now facing a six-month closure and the Rotherhithe Tunnel is also facing a long closure.





## How can more Elizabeth line services be run to Heathrow?

Neil Roth's January article asks if Heathrow Express should be absorbed into the Elizabeth line. The answer is probably yes, but depends, inter alia, on whether, and at what fare, Heathrow Express can continue to attract passengers; demand growth at Heathrow and elsewhere; and the extent to which the Elizabeth line could cope with longer trains, more frequent services, or new infrastructure.

*Heathrow Express passenger numbers peaked at 6.3 million but were down to 4.1 million in 2024. Fewer passengers are willing to change at Paddington when the Elizabeth line has a through service. For journeys booked more than 45 days in advance, Heathrow Express now offers an Advance £10 Ticket, cheaper than via the Elizabeth line through Paddington to Zones 1 or 2. As Neil says, TfL would already like to increase Elizabeth line services from six to eight per hour, four each to Terminal 4 and Terminal 5.*

Demand on the Elizabeth line is still growing. Passenger numbers at Heathrow are back above pre-pandemic levels and, even within the current cap on aircraft movements, both load factors and aircraft size can continue to rise. Around Elizabeth line stations, housing is appearing and more is being planned. Old Oak Common will add passengers from HS2 'after 2029-2033' until at least 2040. It may be the late 2030s before we know how the Elizabeth line copes, or whether stopping all Main Line trains at Old Oak Common provides material relief. If Elizabeth line services from Heathrow and the west reach Old Oak Common already busy or full,

passengers from HS2 may prefer to wait for a train which starts there empty.

Longer Elizabeth line trains would add capacity, and the new platforms in the core have provision for extension from 9-car/205 metres to 11-car/250 metres. However, platforms at Heathrow are only 203-217 metres long and could need major work to handle longer trains.

More frequent Elizabeth line trains are possible, with scope to increase services through the core from 24 to 30 trains per hour, probably the upper limit of what could be operated, particularly as vitors with baggage may slow boarding and alighting times. However, operating more trains in the core would not create more paths west of Old Oak Common.

There has long been talk of six-tracking at least some of the Great Western Main Line. It is difficult to see how this could be done quickly, but the most pressing need seems likely to be between Acton West, where freight joins Elizabeth line services on the Relief Lines, and Airport Junction. If Main Line services could be put in tunnel between east of Acton West and west of Airport Junction, Elizabeth line trains could also operate on the Main Lines with limited stops, such as at Ealing Broadway and Hayes & Harlington, which already have Main Line platforms.

Where could the portals for the Main Line tunnels be? West of Airport Junction, there is open land between Iver and Langley, where the proposed Western Rail Link to Heathrow (WRLTH) would emerge. East of Acton West is much more built up, but the Main Lines are already being spread at Old Oak



*'Heathrow Express goes all out to attract passengers'*

Common to create four platforms on two islands. There is a growing suspicion that they will be used by too few people to justify the cost and time required to stop and restart every train.

Perhaps the inner two should be closed, or ideally never built, and the space between them used as a ramp down to a new tunnel?

*Dick Dunmore*

**PEDICABS**, regarded by some as a niche, bit-of-fun form of transport, are looked upon by others as a menace, clogging up the streets and ripping off tourists. Steve Macnamara of the London Taxi Drivers' Association, sees them as 'a fairground ride, only used by drunks late at night – except a fairground ride would be regulated and checked. The only possible thing is to ban them

On the other hand, Will Norman, TfL's Walking and Cycling Commissioner, says 'Pedicabs should be a fun and sustainable way for people to see London but, without regulation, some drivers are behaving unsafely or antisocially, and charging extortionate prices

It is a peculiar quirk that pedicabs are not regulated in London. Elsewhere in the UK they are classed as Hackney Carriages and are licenced as taxis. The resulting free-for-all means that pedicabs in London and their drivers are uninsured and there is no means of assuring that they are safe for their passengers and other road users. Although there is no attempt to ban them altogether TfL recognises the



# Lime bikes



**With the increased popularity of bikes for hire comes a rapid increase in the inconvenience and danger of badly parked bikes. Lime has now promised to deal with the problem.**

They are creating 750 parking spaces across London and the team charged with removing badly parked bikes is to be expanded. The team is to be equipped with cargo

bikes each of which can transport five bikes.

In February more than 100 Lime and Forest e-bikes that were blocking pavements in central London were seized by council officials. They were stored in a 'safe place' and their owners were charged a fee of £235 per bike for their recovery. Lime paid £25,000 to get their bikes back.

Islington Council has announced 78 new parking bays and restrictions for dockless bikes as it looks to address concerns about safety, noise and obstruction to public spaces. They are also introducing measures to shrink the size of fleets.

Technology is being introduced which will be able to detect bikes which are badly parked, and riders

will be unable to conclude the hire until the bike is parked in a satisfactory manner. Bikes will be equipped with scannable QR codes on wheel covers for the public to report badly parked bikes. Lime is also funding a £250,000 safe riding campaign, to focus on deterring illegal behaviour, such as running red lights and riding on pavements.



# Left Behind Londoners

**In 2023 London TravelWatch published a report exploring the impact a digital-first approach can have on people and who was most affected by it, reported in newsletter 48.**

A new report, Logged Out, assesses the progress transport operators have made to reduce digital exclusion and disadvantage for people travelling.

A key finding is that passengers often have to pay more if using cash than if they used an electronic method. This reaches extreme levels in London where buying a paper ticket can be much more expensive than using pay-as-you-go (PAYG). A one-zone single ticket on the underground costs £7 whereas with PAYG the cost, depending on distance and time of day, varies from £2.10 to £3.50. A single off-peak ticket from Maidenhead to Paddington costs £16.40 whereas with PAYG you would pay £8.30. To make matters worse this penalty is most likely to hit people who struggle financially. Ticket machines are still difficult for people to use and often fail to give information about the cheapest fares. In other areas London TravelWatch detected some improvements.

Most train operators have made some effort to make staff or helplines available for people who need advice or assistance. On the other hand a report from the House of Commons Transport Select Committee said it was thought that 'since COVID, it feels to some extent things are not progressing the way they were' on improving accessibility. The report found that 65 per cent of 825 people surveyed had some difficulty on trains.

TravelWatch concludes that there is still much more that needs to be done to reduce the barriers hindering and stopping people who are digitally excluded and disadvantaged from travelling.

In other news it is reported that a recent FOI request revealed 441 complaints were made in 2024 about buses being inaccessible to wheelchair users, comprising 385 complaints because of a refusal to admit the wheelchair user and 56 because of ramp failure. Mark Evers, TfL's Chief Customer Officer, called the number of these incidents 'completely unacceptable' and said TfL are 'working closely with all bus operators to make sure every driver knows what's expected of them.'



## STOP THE SCHOOL RUN

Air quality around private schools is worse than around state schools according to research conducted by charity Stop the School Run. This appears to be because students are more often driven to private schools. The charity suggests there should be more school street closures around private schools and that staffed 'walking bus' routes should be introduced to encourage parents to leave their cars at home. They also suggest investment in school buses and cycle storage facilities.

Nicola Pastore, the charity's founder, described its work in our newsletter (52, September 2024) and also contributed a podcast which can be heard at [futuretransportlondon.org/podcasts](https://futuretransportlondon.org/podcasts).



# Greenwich Waterfront resurrected?

**Slower buses mean fewer passengers using them. TfL is fighting the decline in average bus speeds with a second tranche of 10 'Superloop' express bus routes.**

The latest idea to go out for public consultation would replace existing route 472 (North Greenwich-Abbey Wood) with SL11, a more direct, limited stop route operating from 05.00 until midnight. All existing route 472 stops would be served by other routes during the day and by route N472 from midnight until 05.00.

The SL11 scheme bears a striking resemblance to the Greenwich Waterfront Transit scheme (GWT-please see 'The Rise and fall of the Greenwich Millennium Busway' in Newsletter 47 January 2023). Both GWT and SL11 were designed to reduce journey times between Thamesmead and North Greenwich/Woolwich Town Centre/Abbey Wood. [https://www.fromthemurkydepths.co.uk/2019/02/26/greenwich-waterfront-transit-the-history-cancellation-and-rebirth/#google\\_vignette](https://www.fromthemurkydepths.co.uk/2019/02/26/greenwich-waterfront-transit-the-history-cancellation-and-rebirth/#google_vignette)



*A route 472 bus calls at the Warspite Road stop but Superloop route SL11 (proposed to replace the 472 between 05.00 and midnight) is NOT due to call here.*

*FTL member Cllr. Asli Mohammed is campaigning for an additional stop here, so SL11 can serve what will be known as Trinity Park, the new, high-density development on the right of the photo*

## ROWING BACK ON SUSTAINABILITY

**Rachel Reeves is preparing to put short-term economic growth ahead of tackling the climate crisis, despite the growing signs of natural disasters, caused or exacerbated by climate instability.**

Her most recent announcements support the building of Heathrow's third runway and the expansion of Luton, likely, according to Ed Miliband, to put the UK in breach of its legally binding carbon budget. Not content with that she also advocates expansion at Gatwick as well.

The argument for airport expansion rests on the proposition that seamless air travel is essential for economic growth, but does this mean that we need more airport capacity? Business travel has been reducing for the last 20 years, perhaps as a result of meetings moving on line. Research shows that, in 2022, only 19 per cent of travellers from Heathrow were on business<sup>1</sup>. For the rest of the population air travel is far too cheap because of the difficulties in taxing airlines properly. If aviation paid tax and VAT on its fuel at the same rate as

motorists pay on theirs, the potential revenue would amount to over £11 billion a year. The only tax on air passengers in the UK, Air Passenger Duty (APD), raises only £4 billion a year. A levy on frequent flyers would raise additional funds. 70 per cent of all UK flights are made by just 15 per cent of passengers<sup>2</sup>. There are difficulties in taxing air travel due to the ability of airlines to buy fuel in other countries, but we could tax fuel used for domestic flights and negotiate bilateral agreements with other countries<sup>3</sup>. Private jets are seriously undertaxed despite a 50 per cent increase in APD for private jets in the Autumn budget. Campaign for Better Transport advocates a kerosene tax on domestic flights, a 'super' rate of APD for private jet passengers and VAT on all private flights. They reckon this could raise £2.4 billion a year<sup>4</sup>.

Many UK and European cities could be reached conveniently by train, obviating the need for a large number of flights. There is capacity to double or triple the number of international passengers on HS1 and a recent study cited a number

of cities which could be reached in under eight hours including Frankfurt, Geneva and Bordeaux. The French government has banned internal flights where rail alternatives are available, originally up to a four-hour train journey but since reduced to two-and-a-half hours<sup>5</sup>.

It has been suggested that the use of alternative fuels – Sustainable Aircraft Fuel (SAF) – could reduce pollution from aircraft by up to 80 per cent. The fuel most often proposed is biofuel made from crops or used cooking oil. However, it is estimated that the area needed to grow sufficient crops would need half the available arable land in the UK, to the detriment of growing crops for food. Other fuels such as electricity from batteries or hydrogen are not viable in the foreseeable future because of their weight.

It is not only in the air that the government is rowing back on sustainability. The future of new rail investment is under threat. It is suggested that no new rail investment is needed except for the Pennine upgrade and the Oxford to Cambridge link. Meanwhile the £9

billion Lower Thames Road Crossing is scheduled to go ahead. Sir John Armitt, chair of the National Infrastructure Commission is now favouring road building over railways. Roads, he says, are becoming no more polluting than rail and that the bulk of the population is totally reliant on roads.

We are living in dangerous times. Although the UK was the first major economy to establish a binding target to reach Net Zero by 2050, emerging policies are moving us further away from achieving it. They need to be reversed.

*Chris Barker*

<sup>1</sup><https://www.statista.com/statistics/305116/purpose-distribution-of-air-passengers-by-airport-uk-united-kingdom/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wearepossible.org/frequent-flyer-levy>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.aef.org.uk/uploads/2024/10/FULL-INFOGRAPHIC-AEF\\_graphic02\\_R3.png](https://www.aef.org.uk/uploads/2024/10/FULL-INFOGRAPHIC-AEF_graphic02_R3.png)

<sup>4</sup> <https://bettertransport.org.uk/media/tax-private-jets-and-domestic-flights-and-use-2-4bn-to-reopen-railways-instead-says-transport-charity/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-65687665>



# Lifts, stairs and escalators

Over the years, urban transport systems such as rail and light rail, have been built further and further from ground level, facilitated by the successive invention of stairs, lifts and escalators. Over a four part series Dick Dunmore looks at the history of these approaches in London and the possible future challenges.

## Part 1:

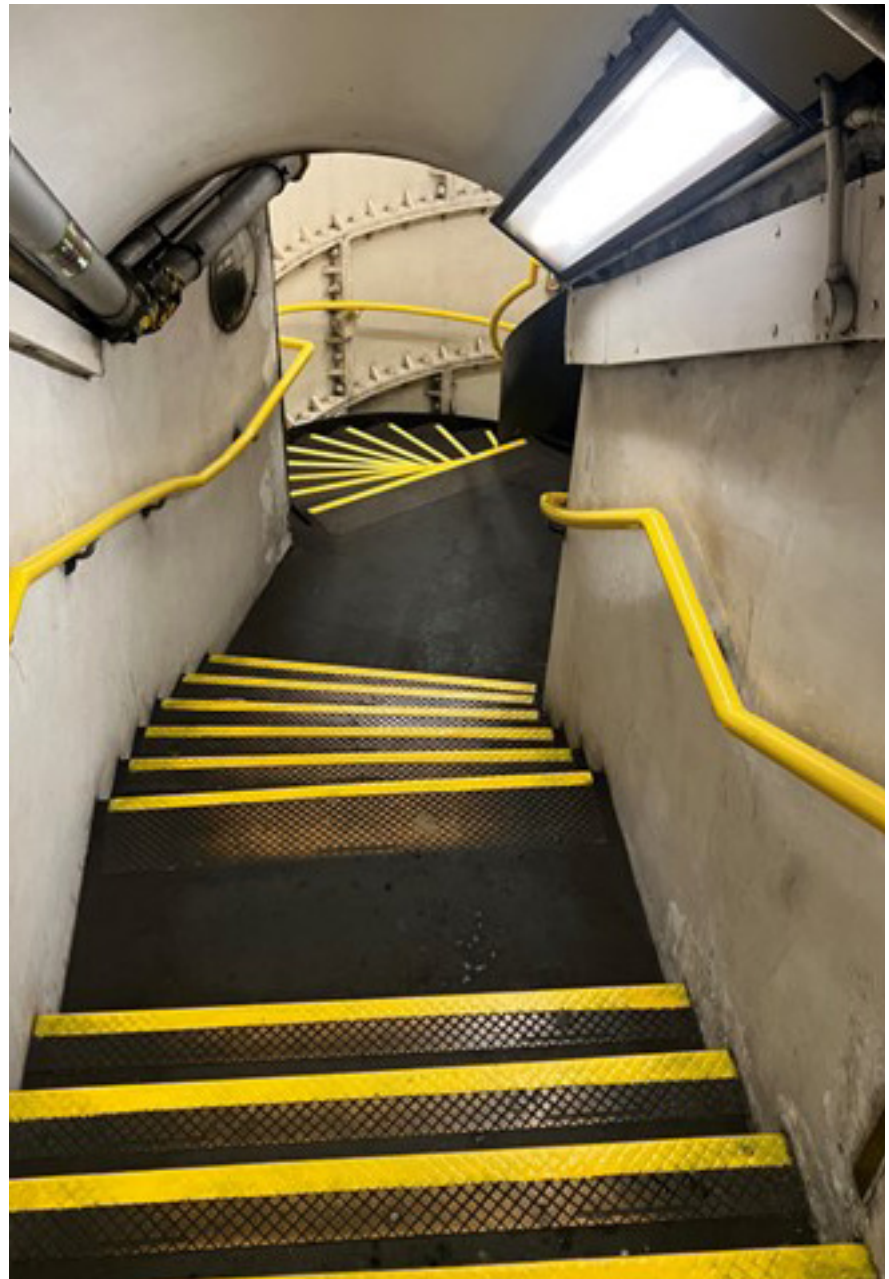
### 1863 stairs

London gained, in 1863, the world's first underground railway, the Metropolitan line between Farringdon and Paddington. It was built as a commercial venture by cut and cover, generally just deep enough to squeeze a pedestrian cross-passage below the road and above the trains, as at Euston Square. Access from street to platforms was stairs. The line was successful, and soon other cut and cover lines were built, including the whole of the current Circle line. Other early systems such as Paris (1900) and New York (1904) began with a similar approach.

### lifts and emergency stairs 1890

1890 saw the first deep tube railway, the City and South London Railway, which went beneath the Thames and hence had deeper stations. The 1884 Bill specified that there be hydraulic lifts, which had first been tested in 1823 and had become seen as a proven technology, often with short flights of steps to platform level. Much of the line is now part of the Northern line, and Borough station's lift still use the original 17-metre deep lift shaft.

One limitation of lifts is that their hourly capacity declines both with depth, because each round trip up and down takes longer, and with size, because more time is required for passengers to board and alight. Capacity is therefore maintained or expanded by adding lifts, which also allow more frequent departures and shorter waiting times. At the deepest tube station, Hampstead, 55 metres beneath Hampstead Heath, there are three, and at Bank there



are four down to the Northern line. Lifts can also have entry at one end and exit at the other, allowing boarding to begin before alighting has ended. Motor and other equipment can be above ground level, parts and equipment can be raised and lowered in the shaft, and lifts in separate shafts can be worked on independently.

### 1911: escalators, lifts and emergency stairs

A new invention, the escalator, first introduced at Earls Court in 1911, changed all that. Up and down journeys were always separated, boarding and alighting were always at opposite ends, and steps appeared at a constant rate, so although journey time increased with depth, hourly capacity remained fixed and waiting time was almost eliminated. Escalators were, in effect, an enormous bank of tiny lifts, offering not only more than one departure every second but also the option of walking forwards onto an earlier 'departure'. They required shafts to be inclined, rather than vertical, but capacity could

be increased with larger shafts holding more escalators. Holborn gained a bank of four in 1933 with a 23.4-metre rise, exceeded by the bank of three at Angel in 1992 with a 27-metre rise.

Over time, passenger volumes grew, and depths increased as new lines had to pass beneath existing ones, with exceptions such as the 1960s Victoria line at Kings Cross, and the 2020s Elizabeth line at Tottenham Court Road, both above the earlier Northern line. Stations which were becoming busier, or served by more lines, required additional capacity, and often had escalators retrofitted to replace or complement the original lifts. The engineering was not always ideal: in some cases, the escalator was part of the structure, rather than an independent item resting on a solid base.

**Part 2: 'the rise and fall of the escalator' will describe how escalators may now be falling out of favour.**