Future Transport London campaigns for sustainable solutions to London's transport problems favouring public transport, walking and cycling over private cars.
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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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FTL
Future Transport London

No 55 SEPTEMBER 2025

Part 1, in the last issue, summarised how the private sector developers of London's Underground had successively used stairs and lifts before beginning to add escalators. Part 2 looks at the challenges of accessing underground rail stations

Lifts, stairs and escalators

London's competing private sector lines were merged into the London Passenger Transport Board (LPTB) in 1933, although they were not nationalised until 1948.

The LPTB inherited assets up to 70 years old, built by multiple private companies, with many stations built with lifts but retrofitted with newer escalators.

1935: escalators

Moscow, in contrast, opened its first metro line in 1935, under a Communist government and hence in the public sector. Stations were to be to a high standard and some were deep, whether to be below the permafrost or for civil defence, with one 73 metres below ground. (St Petersburg's Admiralteyskaya is 86 metres deep, and I have endured the five-minute ride from platform to surface.) The design was informed by London's recent experience of the Piccadilly line extension to Cockfosters. At such depths, lifts were a non-starter, and separate stairs were pointless, so escalators were designed from the outset to cope with evacuation in emergencies, long operating hours, future lines, and demand growth, a very different starting point from London's inherited commercial and competitive heritage.

Moscow began with a public sector plan with deep stations using proven escalator technology, but London inherited a sequence of stairs, proven lifts, and novel and retrofitted escalators, always with a focus on commercial return, and still uses assets up to 160 years old. However, nationalisation in 1948 did not in itself resolve the problems, partly because money was often short, and the focus was often on capital costs rather than maintainability or whole life costs.

When the network began to expand again, lifts were seen as unnecessary. The 1969 Victoria line and the 1979 initial Jubilee line to Charing Cross had none. The Victoria line is still not step-free at nine of the sixteen stations it serves, including Euston and Oxford Circus.

1987: stairs and lifts

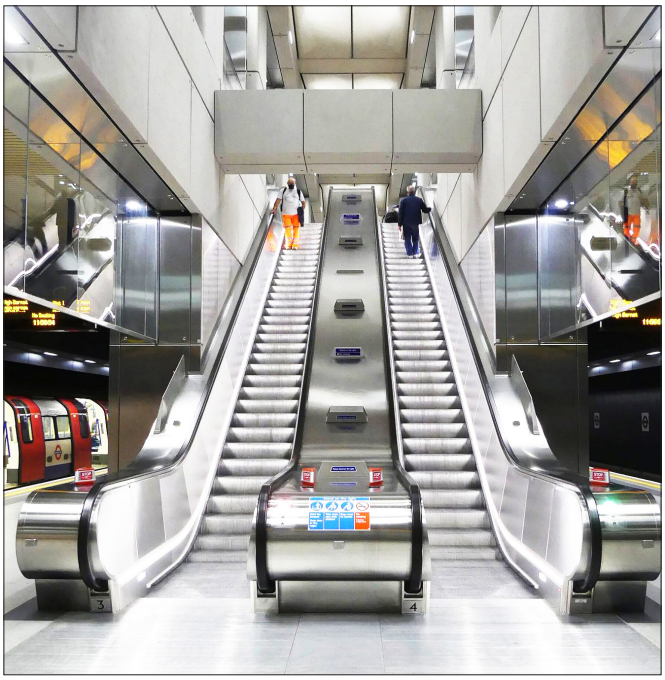
Arguably the turning point came with the 1987 Docklands Light Railway (DLR), built within a fixed budget, using mainly disused railways not far above ground. The default access was by stairs up from street level, but these were supplemented by small hydraulic lifts, which were seen as reliable but slow. By combining straight and level platforms and level boarding across a small gap, the system introduced step-free access for those in wheelchairs or with buggies.

1991: stairs and lifts and escalators

The DLR soon began to expand. The 1991 Bank extension tunnelled down to new platforms below the already deep Northern line, and had new escalators back up the existing stations at Bank and Monument. The 1999 Lewisham extension, like the Northern line, passed under the Thames. The station at Cutty Sark (for Maritime Greenwich) is, for many visitors, the gateway to the UNESCO World Heritage Site including the Cutty Sark, the Old Royal Naval College, the National Maritime Museum, and the Royal Observatory and Prime Meridian. However, it is barely 100 metres from where the DLR tunnels under the Thames, and hence necessarily very deep. It was built within a box, with street, concourse and platforms connected not only by a small lift, and two sets of stairs, but also by four escalators arranged in two flights.

Dick Dunmore

Part 3 of this four part series will update the situation of Cutty Sark's escalators and discuss the expansion of step-free access enabled by lifts.



Battersea Power Station Escalator

Listen to our latest podcast at https://www.futuretransportlondon.org/

In our latest podcast transport consultant John Barry examines the development of Superloop and considers if it indeed improves journey times across and around the capital.

LINKS ACROSS THE THAMES

The development of the Lower Thames road crossing, which has just been approved by the government, could cost up to £16 billion, will lead to the destruction of swathes of countryside and will bring traffic chaos to roads funnelling traffic into it.

A report commissioned by Transport Action Network has estimated that a range of alternatives would avoid the damage and cost in the region of £2 billion.

The tunnel is designed to mitigate two problems. The first is to ease the flow of HGVs, many of which are on international journeys using the ferry or tunnel across the English Channel, many of which then use the Dartford crossing. Although initially this might succeed, it is estimated that traffic growth would negate the gain in about five years, bringing more traffic and more misery to anyone living near the link.

It would be much better if this traffic could be diverted to rail. It is estimated that it should be possible to move between 25-50 per cent of HGV traffic onto rail. One issue is the cost of using the Channel Tunnel and HS1 to reach London, but this should be eased by the recent instruction by the Office for Rail and Road to significantly cut track charges for freight on HS1. HS1 is currently using only 50 per cent of its capacity so there is plenty of room for expansion.

A constraint on using HS1 for freight is the restricted loading gauge on most of Britain's rail network. Continental size vehicles can get no further than Ripple Lane yard in Barking before their contents need to be transhipped onto smaller vehicles. Widening the gauge to Wembley would get Continental size trains around London and would open up the West Coast main line, much of which has been cleared for larger vehicles.

A reduction in the number of trucks using the short sea crossing might also be achieved if alternative ports were made more attractive. This would be helped by the electrification of rail freight routes from Thames Gateway and Felixstowe, and improving the route between Felixstowe and the Midlands.

The other problem which the Lower Thames Crossing is designed to tackle is linking Kent and Essex. There has been no crossing lower than Dartford since the ferry between Tilbury and Gravesend was withdrawn in 2024 and there is little opportunity to make the journey without a car. The only connection by public transport east of Woolwich is an hourly bus service between the shopping centres of Lakeside and Bluewater via the Dartford crossing which serves no other points of interchange except for Greenhithe station.

There are four proposals to improve connections: a new ferry, a heavy rail connection, a light rail connection and the use of HS1.

The ferry proposed is from Grays to Greenhithe. It is a longer crossing than Tilbury to Gravesend but the difficulty of reaching the pier at Tilbury, which is cut off from the town and the railway station, makes reinstatement here problematic.

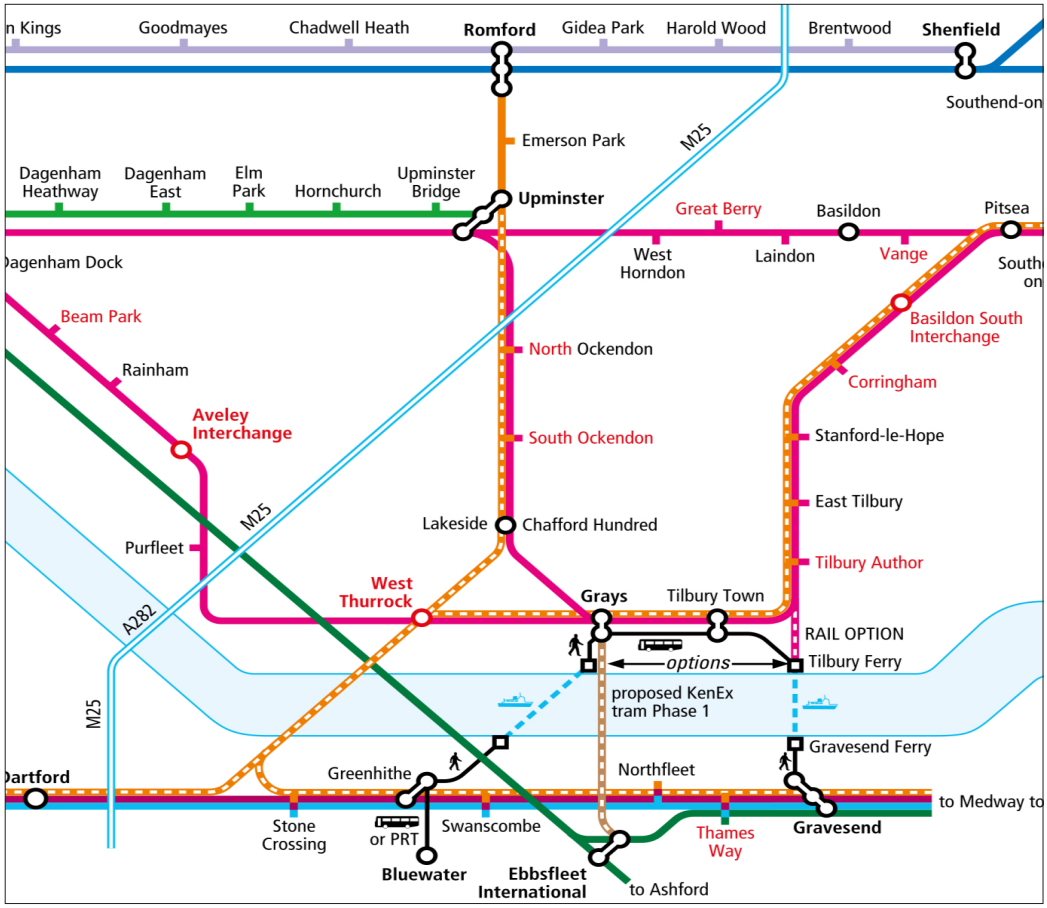
The heavy rail connection is the most dramatic proposal. This would be based on a tunnel starting at a new station at West Thurrock, diving under the river and, on the south side, providing connections to the North Kent line, eastwards to Stone Crossing and westwards towards Dartford. From West Thurrock there would be a new link to Chafford Hundred (with connection to Lakeside) and trains would continue to Upminster. If a new connection could be made trains might then take over the Liberty line to Romford. Other trains could continue from West Thurrock along the existing line via Tilbury towards Southend.

The light rail solution is the Thames Gateway Tramlink – KenEx – featured in our newsletter 47. This would tunnel under the Thames between Northfleet and Grays and would afford connections with Gravesend, Ebbsfleet, Chafford Hundred and Purfleet.

Finally there is HS1 which tunnels under the Thames between West Thurrock and Ebbsfleet. There was once a proposal to site a station on the north side near West Thurrock but the layout of the line now makes that impossible. However there is a proposal to site a new station near Maidstone to open up new journey possibilities into London and also into east London via Stratford.

As Tim Root argued in newsletter 53 the Lower Thames Crossing is a costly mistake. National Highways says it would have a cost/benefit ratio of 1.22 which is below the threshold where approval is normally given. Transport Action Network has estimated the ratio is actually only 0.48 which means that the cost is more than the benefit. This is a scheme which needs to be consigned to the dustbin.

Chris Barker



Website: https://www.futuretransportlondon.org/ Tweet @FutureTranspLon. https://transportactionnetwork.org.uk/the-roberts-report/

Trans Val de Marne.

Could we do this in London?

Express orbital bus routes were not invented with Superloop: the Trans Val de Marne (TVM), has been serving the south-east sector of the Paris suburbs for more than 30 years (since 1993) with a very high degree of segregation and very high level of patronage.

RATP (the Paris equivaled of TfL) operates TVM's low-floor, articulated vehicles between Saint-Maur-Créteil station (to the east of Paris on both RER line A and Metro line 15) and La Croix de Berny station (to the south of Paris on RER line B) 12.2 route miles away,
serving 30 intermediate stops, with a scheduled end-to-end journey time of 64 minutes. That gives an average speed of 11.4 mph. TVM carried 23 million passengers in 2019. By comparison, bus route 18 (Sudbury-Euston), one of the busiest in London, carried 12.6 million passengers in 2022-23

TVM is administered as a tram route and its stops provide interchange with actual tram routes and other public transport modes.

Over many sections, TVM (and other buses sharing its corridor) have exclusive use of the two segregated centre lanes of a six-lane road. So, passengers must cross two lanes of general traffic (at traffic lights) to reach the TVM platforms which are equipped with ticket machines, seating, shelters and Countdown-type displays and printed information. On other sections, TVM has its own bridges over roads, railways and rivers. All TVM stops provide wheelchair access to/from the buses

I did not witness weekday traffic because my journey was on a Sunday morning and TVM was operating a 10-minute frequency. At some stages of my journey, the articulated vehicles were full to standing. Many passengers were travelling to/from Sunday morning markets. Peak weekday frequency is every 3 minutes, (see the Fiche Horaire – timetable – at https://www.ratp.fr/sites/default/files/lines-assets/fiche-horaire/busratp/fiche-horaire_busratp_ligne-14.1719270035.pdf).

On boarding TVM at Pont de Créteil (where TVM crosses the River Marne, a tributary of the River Seine) a woman I soon realised was a plain-clothes ticket inspector had directed me to an on-bus validator to tap in my Navigo easy card. When she later came to scan my card, she told me how many journeys were left on my card. There were more ticket inspectors on RER line B after I boarded at La Croix de Berny. I can almost report that I have had my tickets inspected by staff more times on brief visits to Paris in recent years than in London while living here and using public transport daily.

Neil Roth

EUSTON EXPRESS AND EUSTON CROSS REVISITED

With the HS2 tunnelling stopped at Old Oak Common, is it time to revisit two proposals from over a decade ago, Euston Express and Euston Cross?

The ingenious Euston Express scheme proposed to save money and time by tunnelling the two miles from Old Oak Common to east of the Bakerloo line portals at Queens Park, instead of the 4.5 miles to Euston.

HS2 trains would take over the Intercity tracks to reach Euston, while Intercity trains would take over the Outer Suburban tracks, and the DC tracks would be shared by London Overground and remaining Outer Suburban trains.

On the other hand, the very costly Euston Cross scheme proposes new deep-level tunnels from a junction with HS2 somewhere between Old Oak Common and Queen's Park to a junction with HS1, somewhere between St Pancras International and Stratford International.

This would incorporate a deep-level station under the three National Rail stations: Euston, St Pancras and King's Cross, hence the name of the scheme. However, I see no mention whatsoever of an interchange between the proposed deep level Euston Cross station and TfL services, implying that passengers going to/from elsewhere in London are going to be ignored!

If the Euston Express scheme is implemented, I suggest it would be far cheaper (compared with Euston Cross) to link HS2 with HS1 via Primrose Hill and the North London Line; through trains between HS2 and Kent could reasonably call at both Old Oak Common and Stratford International.

Capacity on the North London Line could be increased by recommissioning the two disused tracks running from Camden Road eastwards. Given that both HS2 and HS1 are built to European gauge, the short link would ideally become European gauge in the longer term and then facilitate the through operation, for example, by double-deck trains.

The Euston Express scheme could be slightly modified east of Queen's Park, to connect HS2 more directly with Primrose Hill and HS1, as well as with Euston.

Neil Roth

LTNs work

Research by the University of Westminster and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine have shown conclusively how Low Traffic Neighbourhoods reduce the risk of injuries. In London between 2015 and 2024 the reduction was 35 per cent for all injuries and 37 per cent for deaths and serious injuries, with smaller reductions in outer as opposed to inner London. This equates with a reduction of 600 injuries including 100 involving death or serious injury. Where LTNs have been removed figures revert back to pre-intervention levels.

It is often said that traffic is diverted to boundary roads and that injuries would therefore increase there, However, the research shows that overall there is no change but the rates for cyclists and pedestrians actually decreased.

The Conservative government commissioned a report on LTNs hoping to show that they were ineffective. Like the present report this showed the contrary and the report was quietly shelved. The Conservative government also alleged that LTNs were unpopular but this is also rebutted by the report.

VISION ZERO ACTION PLAN 2

The GLA issued its Vision Zero Action Plan in 2018. The aim was that no one should be killed or injured by road collisions on London's streets by 2041. The plan proposed reducing the dominance of motor vehicles and creating streets safe for active travel by lower speeds, creating street layouts which are safer for non-motorised road users and installing safety features on vehicles.

Caroline Russell, Green Greater London Assembly member, has produced a report building on the GLA document. She advocates more pedestrianisation, building on the proposals for Oxford Street, more streets with lower speed limits including the use of 10mph zones, more Liveable Neighbourhoods schemes and parking surcharges for SUV type vehicles. She also praises the installation on street corners of simpler and cheaper zebra crossings without the need for zig-zag lines and flashing lights. Despite the fact that these are not currently approved by the DfT they are being trialled in Manchester and Westminster.

The full report makes 25 recommendations and the hope is that they will be incorporated in an update of the Vision Zero Action Plan.

Holding boroughs to account

Each year Healthy Streets Scorecard records the London boroughs' performance in six areas (LTNs, 20mph zones, CPZs, protected cycle lanes, school streets and bus priority measures). The scorecard for 2025 was published in July and shows that, slowly, London streets are getting safer and healthier.

Islington is the overall winner in inner London for progress it has made, and Waltham Forest wins for outer London. Newham is praised for a dramatic increase in its place, rising from 13th to 8th. The borough expanded 20 mph limits from 41.0 per cent to 99.0 per cent of borough-managed roads, putting it alongside a number of other inner London boroughs for which 20 mph covers the entire borough. CPZ coverage in Newham remains effectively total.

This year saw the introduction of 98 new traffic-free school streets across London. Five boroughs increased coverage of 20mph speed limits and six extended the coverage of Controlled Parking Zones.

The City and Hackney are praised for the increase in LTN coverage and Kingston and Brent for 20mph coverage. Although it is not part of the Scorecard's coverage, TfL is also praised for the extension of 20mph limits on many of their trunk roads.

There are several boroughs on the extreme edge of London which are hardly advancing in the implementation of measures to calm traffic and improve road safety and air quality. Bexley, Bromley, Hillingdon and Havering perform particularly badly on most measures.

Full results can be seen at https://www.healthystreetsscorecard.london/results/.

Judgment on West Dulwich LTN scheme

In a much publicised ruling, the High Court ruled that Lambeth Council's consultation on Experimental Traffic Orders (ETOs) was unfair and had not taken into account all material considerations.

This followed a campaign by West Dulwich Action Group (WDAG) who claimed that the proposed scheme would increase pollution and that 67.5 per cent of local residents were opposed to it.

The Pro-LTN group, Better Streets West Dulwich, quoted a study by Imperial College which found quality improved inside LTNs, and that there was no increase on boundary roads. They also questioned the claim that 67.5 percent opposed the scheme pointing out these were the people who felt unhappy with the current situation and which could have included those both for and against the scheme.

The judge has given both sides the opportunity to make 'further submissions' on what should happen with the ETOs for the LTN. Better Streets West Dulwich are working on that.

TfL to Stop SUBBs

The government has announced that it is asking local authorities to pause the rollout of Shared Use Bus Boarders (SUBBs).

There are two types of 'floating bus stops.' The first, bus bypasses, route the cycle lane behind the bus stop, allowing passengers to board and alight without crossing the cycle path. The second type, Shared Use Bus Boarders (SUBBs), place the cycle lane between the bus stop and the bus itself—increasing the risk of collisions between cyclists and passengers getting on or off the bus.

Many disability groups, along with other organisations (including us—see our article in Newsletter No. 51), have long campaigned against SUBBs, and some oppose floating bus stops entirely. However, cycling groups continue to defend their use. Simon Munk, Head of Campaigns and Community Development at the London Cycling Campaign, stated that 'there is no evidence that visually impaired, other disabled, or elderly people are finding floating bus stops so difficult to navigate that they are avoiding them.'

The challenge of managing safe interaction between cyclists and bus passengers remains unresolved. While designated cycle lanes separated from both pedestrians and vehicles are standard and effective in many places, SUBBs present a unique issue: pedestrians must cross the cycle lane at right angles to board the bus, rather than moving parallel to it.

Some proposed solutions include warning signs for cyclists, mini pedestrian crossings, or even small traffic signals that activate when a bus is present. However, campaigners question whether such rules would be consistently respected in practice

SILVERTOWN AND BLACKWALL TUNNELS

Traffic volumes through the Blackwall and Silvertown Tunnels have fallen from 91,000 to 88,000 vehicles per day since the opening of the new Silvertown Tunnel.

As a result, traffic is now flowing more smoothly through both tunnels. Campaigners argue that the introduction of tolls on both routes—rather than the addition of new capacity—is the likely reason for the improvement, suggesting that congestion could have been eased without building a new tunnel.

Meanwhile, traffic has slightly increased through the Rotherhithe Tunnel, and the Woolwich Ferry has seen a 36 per cent rise in usage since tolls were introduced—indicating that rather than disappearing, some traffic is simply being diverted to other crossings.

The shuttle service for cyclists using the Silvertown Tunnel is seeing low usage and may be withdrawn if numbers do not improve. Cyclists argue that the shuttle's terminal locations are poorly situated. Chris Todd from Transport Action Network commented: 'The problem with this service is the quality of the cycle infrastructure on either side of the tunnel, which is unattractive and indirect, involving large detours and multiple road crossings.'