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December 2011

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# transporttimes

issue no: 88 December 2011

## Chancellor puts transport centre-stage

**W**ell done George Osborne and Justine Greening. The 2011 Autumn

Statement will go down in history as the Transport Budget.

For years we have scrutinised budget statements to see if transport is mentioned and usually bemoaned the fact that our sector has been ignored, or at best neglected. We have monotonously banged the drum for transport investment only to be given titbits from the Treasury table.

We have watched with envy at the way education, health and defence have consumed the lion's share of the Government's capital budget with transport dining out on scraps. We have been bemused at how we lag behind our international competitors in transport investment as a percentage of GDP. We have made it clear that this infrastructure deficit was damaging to UK plc.

Transport was at the centre of last month's autumn statement. New projects were announced, schemes which had been moth-balled were brought back to life and those which were in the pipeline were brought forward.

Transport Times has been at the forefront in arguing for a transport investment led economic recovery. Two years ago we pleaded with the Government not to turn off the investment tap, as has been the norm during past recessions. Last month we urged the new Secretary of State for Transport, Justine Greening, to make her legacy a Roosevelt-type, Keynesian investment boost to our economy. We could not have predicted just how quickly and boldly she and her colleagues in the coalition would deliver.

The arguments that many of us have been making over the years about how crucial transport is to the economy have registered. Not only will the long list of capital projects boost employment right down the supply chain, it will also help to bridge the infrastructure deficit. This is about demand-

George Osborne's statement drew praise from a diverse range of stakeholders



**The arguments that many of us have been making over the years about how crucial transport is to the economy have registered**

side economics and improving the supply side of the economy. When the economy picks up, it will be easier to get goods to market and people to work.

Last April, the Business Infrastructure Commission – which I had the honour of chairing but can take little credit for, as the heavy lifting and inspired thinking was done by Commission members – published its report *Tackling the Infrastructure Puzzle*. We recommended a major boost to transport infrastructure funded by a combination of public and private finance. We specifically highlighted a huge untapped source of funding that could be provided by pension funds. It's encouraging that the Government has responded so quickly to our recommendations.

I have never known a budget statement that has received so much support from such a diverse range of stakeholders and pressure groups. The business community has been given what it has asked for, the aviation community will be relieved that the case for

hub capacity has been accepted, environmental campaigners welcome the commitment to rail schemes and the lower cap on rail fares, and motoring groups welcome the targeted improvements to roads and the postponing of the increase in fuel duty.

If I was being critical my main worry is that while the Government has responded to concerns from motorists and rail passengers, it is bus passengers who face the largest increase in fares – not to mention cuts in services – due to a combination of BSOG cuts and reduced local authority spend. Watch this space!

But for now, it's high marks to the Government for making 2011 the year when transport infrastructure was at the forefront of our economic stimulus.



David Begg

**Professor David Begg is publisher of Transport Times**



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# RECRUITMENT

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# Infrastructure backed to boost the economy

By David Fowler

**C**hancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne embraced investment in infrastructure as the route to economic growth in his autumn statement last week.

He announced an immediate £5bn boost to get a range of projects under way, with the aim of leveraging in £20-30bn of private investment in the longer term.

The chancellor unveiled a new National Infrastructure Plan setting out a forward programme of 500 key projects worth £250bn in total, and identifying 40 projects of national importance whose progress the government will closely monitor.

The plans endorse the arguments on which *Transport Times* has campaigned for the last two years: that investment in infrastructure creates jobs in the short term and boosts economic productivity in the medium and long term. The strategy also adopts an idea put forward in February's British Chambers of Commerce Business Infrastructure Commission report – to tap into the resources of pension funds as a source of investment.

"Infrastructure networks are a major determinant of growth and productivity", the National Infrastructure Plan states. "However, historically the UK's approach to the development of these networks has been fragmented and reactive." Infrastructure provision has not kept up with the needs of a growing population and the UK "has never before had a clear long term plan for maintaining and improving its infrastructure".

The plan has three elements. First, the Government will plan for the medium term across sectors – including transport, power and communications – to set out a programme of projects that aim to improve the UK's infrastructure performance over time and address areas of weakness.

Second, there will be a new approach to co-ordinating public and private finance, with the Government using "all the tools



at its disposal" to facilitate private investment, with the aim of two-thirds of the investment between 2011 and 2015 coming from the private sector.

Third, the Government will take an active role in "ensuring the infrastructure in the plan is delivered efficiently and on time" through a new cabinet committee, chaired by the chief secretary to the Treasury.

On funding, Mr Osborne promised "a fundamentally new approach to coordinating public and private investment in UK infrastructure".

Difficulties in attracting private investment range from instability in financial markets disrupting the supply of long-term bank lending, while few institutional investors have developed the capability to assess direct investment opportunities in infrastructure projects.

With the aim of bringing in new investors, the Government has signed a memorandum of understanding with two groups of UK pension funds including the National Association of

turn to page 6

## Action on metal

Under the heading of reducing costs the infrastructure plan recognises the growing problem of the theft of copper and other metals from railway signalling systems and elsewhere. A dedicated £5m national taskforce led by the British Transport Police is to be set up to tackle the problem. It will begin with an immediate programme of targeting scrap metal dealers suspected of trading illegally in stolen metal.

## from page 5

Pension Funds and the Pension Protection Fund to support investment in infrastructure. It is also working with the Association of British Insurers to set up an Insurers Infrastructure Investment Forum. The Government aims to raise £20bn from these initiatives.

The Government will also explore new sources of revenue. The new expert panel on the A14 will be a test bed for this. It will "explore innovative ways" of financing improvements, including tolls; tolls "will also be investigated for other new capacity proposals". The Government aims to agree proposals for the A14 and associated transport networks in the area with local partners by spring next year.

Local authorities will be given more flexibility to support major infrastructure. For example, the Government will consider allowing local borrowing against future receipts of community infrastructure levy to support the extension of the Northern line to Battersea. The Government also will consider allowing city mayors elsewhere in the country to adopt this approach.

Government guarantees will be considered for projects where private investors cannot accommodate certain risks.

A call for evidence will be launched this month to consider new models for using the private sector in the provision of public assets as the first step in reforming the private finance initiative.

Progress of 40 infrastructure projects of national significance will be monitored by a new cabinet committee bringing together the chief secretary to the Treasury with representatives from the appropriate departments. This will review progress and make sure projects are on track to meet time, cost and performance targets, as well as facilitating the relationships between the Government and private investors and addressing areas of government policy that need to be resolved or changed to help speed up project delivery.

In addition the findings of last year's Infrastructure Cost Review, which argued that problems faced by individual projects often have "deeper, more systemic roots", will be pursued. The review found "a clear opportunity to realise savings of £20bn-30bn" over the next decade.

# New projects get the go-ahead

opinion

## This road scheme is too important to shelve

Improvements to the A453, one of Nottingham's arterial routes, have been deferred as part of a £6bn of cuts. But it is an essential component of the city's economy, argues Jane Ure

investment campaign

## Mutual support could unlock funding for city regions

The Northern Way has looked at a wide range of alternative approaches to funding infrastructure. Bonds are not the answer, says John Jarvis



Bond finance and local authority mutual banks require a new form of active partnership with the Treasury to succeed

What if we could find a way to fund the infrastructure that we need? It is a question that has been asked many times over the years. But it is a question that has not been asked in a way that would allow us to find a solution. The answer is that we need to find a way to fund the infrastructure that we need. This is a question that has been asked many times over the years. But it is a question that has not been asked in a way that would allow us to find a solution.

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## Transport Times has campaigned to protect infrastructure investment over the last two years

The National Infrastructure Plan will focus on addressing road congestion, train punctuality and, in the longer term, airport capacity in South East England. A number of road schemes in particular which had been stalled since last year's public spending review have been revived.

An immediate £5bn, transferred from current spending, is being made available. A £1bn boost for road improvements will include two new managed motorway schemes on the M3 in Surrey and part of the M6 between Birmingham and Manchester. There will be immediate investment on the A14 to reduce congestion, including junction improvements. Also funded are the A14 Kettering bypass and improvements to the M1/M6 junction 19. Widening of the A453 between the Nottingham, the M1 and East Midlands Airport, shelved in last year's spending review, is revived. There will be a new dual carriageway linking the M56 at Manchester Airport to the A6 near Stockport, and the planned improvements to the M25 junctions 23-27 and 39-42 will be accelerated.

An extra £1.4bn for rail will go into electrification of

investment campaign

## A sound investment in Britain

The view is growing that, whatever spending cuts are needed under the next Government, investment and long-term benefits to the economy. On the next six pages, a range of industry leaders we begin with James Drummond on research that shows investment in the UK rail sector



investment campaign

## New approaches to funding

Andrew Markides offers some ideas on how to tap into new sources of investment, and make what money there is further



investment campaign

## Bridge in Leeds; the Lincoln eastern bypass and four new trams for Sheffield.

The Top 40 priority schemes whose progress will be closely monitored include Crossrail, Thameslink, High Speed 2, the Reading upgrade programme, Intercity Express, Great Western Electrification, the Mersey Gateway bridge.

The expert panel charged with developing alternative approaches to resolving congestion on the A14 corridor around Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire – after a planned widening of the road was scrapped last year on the grounds of expense – is expected to report by spring.

On aviation the plan reasserts the aim of developing a long-term aviation strategy to address capacity constraints, with a consultation next March. This will explore "all options for maintaining the UK's aviation hub status, with the exception of a third runway at Heathrow". This is understood to include looking at proposals for a Thames Estuary airport.

Details of the full programme of 500 projects are available at [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/infrastructure\\_pipeline\\_data.htm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/infrastructure_pipeline_data.htm)

investment campaign

## The hard lessons of short-term cuts



investment campaign

## Infrastructure planning 'must be beyond politics', says commission

Infrastructure planning must be beyond politics, says the Commission on Infrastructure. The commission, which was set up by the Government in 2010, has published its final report. The report calls for a new approach to infrastructure planning, one that is based on long-term thinking and that is not subject to the whims of political parties.

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# RAC Foundation calls for long-term roads plan...

**T**he UK needs a long-term strategy for roads in the same way as rail, with its programme of prioritising investment over a five-year cycle, says the RAC Foundation.

Without this the Department for Transport's own figures point to inexorably rising congestion and delays, the thinktank says in its latest report, *Keeping the Nation Moving: Time to Face the Facts* published two weeks ago.

The foundation welcomed the first signs of a more coherent approach to roads in the chancellor's autumn statement and infrastructure plan and the Cook review of the Highways Agency, which echoed the call for long-term planning (see below).

Foundation chairman David Quarmbury said: "Our contention is that there is neither adequate funding of the infrastructure nor effective management of the traffic that uses it. Perhaps most importantly there is no strategy for the future."

There will be at least four million more cars on the UK's roads in the next 25 years as the population grows by more than 10 million. The DfT forecasts 25% more traffic over the next 15 years and over 40% by 2035. Over the same period average delays will rise by 54%.

RAC Foundation director Professor Stephen Glaister said: "There needs to be a fundamental look at how the strategic and main roads are planned, developed,

funded, operated and maintained; how the traffic that uses the road network is managed; and how that use is paid for."

The foundation's strategy would have four elements. First, squeezing extra capacity out of the existing network through the wider use of initiatives such as the managed motorway programme would buy "a little time".

Modal shift to car, bus, walking and cycling as achieved by smarter choice initiatives would help with shorter journeys of up to around five miles. For longer journeys some behaviour change could be brought about by the introduction of pay as you go charging. But this would not be an extra charge – it would replace "a significant part" of fuel taxes

and vehicle excise duty, and in time is likely to be forced on the Treasury by falling fuel duty receipts.

Finally, the strategy would include improvements to the road system, planned and prioritised according to benefits and value for money.

The foundation has welcomed the fact that, of the top ten road projects ranked in the report according to benefits, all of which have a CBR of greater than six, five were given a green light in the autumn statement. The projects include widening the A453 from junction 24 of the M1 near Nottingham and the Kingskerswell bypass in Devon.

David Quarmbury, page 17

## ...while Cook calls for 'clear break' from stop-start investment

**R**eforming the Highways Agency to put its relationship with the Department for Transport on a more businesslike footing could yield savings of at least £200m a year within five years, according to a new report.

The DfT should adopt a more long-term strategic role, issuing specifications and performance levels and agreeing a funding package over a five-year period, says the review by Highways Agency chairman Alan Cook.

The report, *A Fresh Start for the Strategic Road Network*, also says any new additions to the network should initially be investigated to see whether they would be viable as private toll roads.

Cook points out that the highway network is "the only major item of economic infrastructure in England still run by the civil service, with annual budgets allocated by the DfT".

This has resulted in "an unpredictable, stop-start investment climate" with little pressure for the Government to take long-term

decisions and no continuous external pressure for efficiency.

"If motorways and trunk roads in England are to meet the needs of a growing UK economy, we must make a clear break from this pattern of short-term thinking and stop-start investment," says the report.

Its central recommendation is "a transformation" in the management of the network to bring it in line with the best-performing infrastructure providers in other sectors. The Highways Agency, as network manager, should be re-constituted with a new, independent board and the ability to make "freer commercial decisions".

Coupled with a new strategic role for the DfT, in which it sets out expectations for capacity, performance levels, reduction in delays and so on, and acts as a "champion" of road users and taxpayers, this would produce a structure capable of making decisions more closely in line with the needs of the economy, Mr Cook says.

The new structure, drawing on best practice in the regulated



Alan Cook: "DfT should make five-year funding commitment"

utility sectors, "has been designed to be relatively quick and cheap to implement".

The report recommends that the DfT should publish a long-term strategy for motorways and trunk roads within six months of the Government's response to the review. Within 12 months, it should set out an outcome-based specification for the network, detailing firm commitments for the next five years and setting out levels of capacity, performance, safety and environmental stand-

ards it requires.

With the Treasury, the DfT should set out a funding package alongside the specification, committed for five years. The Highways Agency should be given the commercial freedom to manage its own budget.

A further recommendation says that "if ministers decide that new routes and connections not provided by the current network are required, the DfT should examine the business case for building and operating these as private toll roads in the first instance." However, the review adds that the network is "largely complete" and "there are likely to be few opportunities for entirely new connections".

The focus should be on improving existing routes, and the network manager should develop a new generation of route-based strategies, analogous to Network Rail's route utilisation strategies.

The review does not recommend that the road network is privatised or that make any recommendation about road pricing.

# A14 panel gets green light to consider radical solutions

**T**olling of any new capacity should be considered among possible solutions for the A14 corridor in Cambridgeshire, chancellor George Osborne said in his autumn statement.

The move follows the DfT's announcement last month that funding would be made available for a new study by a panel of experts. The road, which runs from East Anglia to the M1/M6 junction at Rugby, is heavily congested near Cambridge.

Establishment of the expert panel follows intense lobby-

ing by Cambridgeshire County Council, with neighbouring councils and the Local Enterprise Partnership, to convince the DfT of the importance of finding a solution. An existing plan to widen the road on a new alignment was cancelled in last year's spending review on cost grounds.

The expert panel will review the problems affecting the corridor and will propose solutions, agreed by local partners, by next spring. It will not revisit the earlier Cambridge-Huntingdon multi-modal study but is ex-

pected to look widely at possible solutions. In addition to tolling new capacity, these could include diverting more freight to the parallel Felixstowe-Nuneaton rail line as well as expanding use of the recently-opened Cambridge guided busway.

Mr Osborne said in the autumn statement that tolling would also be an option to be considered for other new road schemes in the future.

The county council and its partners have argued that improving the A14 corridor is critical if the economic growth

of the area is to continue. The region round Cambridge is home to clusters of high-tech industries including spinoffs from the university. A new housing development at Northstowe and a local enterprise zone at Alconbury will add further to pressure on the road.

Cambridgeshire County Council leader Nick Clarke said: "I am very pleased to see the new secretary of state has listened to us and given the green light for the funding of this survey."

**The A14 Challenge, p22**

## HS2 announcement postponed to January

Construction of California's high speed line will start next autumn



**T**ransport secretary Justine Greening has postponed announcement of the outcome of the government's consultation on the planned High Speed 2 route from London to Birmingham.

In a written statement she said she expected to make an announcement in January. It had originally been scheduled for this month.

The move comes amid reports that the DfT is considering adding a new £500m length of tunnel in the Chilterns where the plans have met strong opposition.

It is thought the new 1.5 mile bore would connect two other currently proposed tunnels.

Since taking office the new transport secretary has also met

a delegation of MPs to listen to their concerns over the route. Last month Labour shadow transport secretary Maria Eagle reopened the question of whether the line would be better routed via Heathrow, then following existing transport corridors through the Chilterns.

Justine Greening's statement said: "Since taking up office in October I have been considering the issues raised as part of the consultation and have listened to the views of honourable members.

"To ensure that my decision is based on a careful consideration of all relevant factors, I have concluded that I should allow myself until early in 2012 to announce my decisions."

Backers of the Heathrow Hub option say their route is cheaper, on the Government's own figures, than the currently proposed route plus a Heathrow spur. They argue that adding a new tunnel would make their scheme even more attractive, though reports suggest the additional cost could be recouped by savings elsewhere in the scheme.

Meanwhile the Scottish infrastructure minister Alex Neil has said Scotland would consider building a high speed rail line from Scotland to meet HS2. Speaking to the BBC he said: "We are willing to look at that if we get a guarantee in particular that the gap in England between Birmingham and the north of England is going to be closed."

• California High Speed Rail Authority has reached agreement with the Federal Railroad Administration which will provide \$928m in federal funds for the construction of the project's Central Valley section. This clears the way for the construction of the 130-mile initial section to start in Fresno next autumn. Up to 100,000 jobs are expected to be created over the five-year construction period.

Total funding committed for construction of the Central Valley section is \$6bn. The route will eventually run from San Francisco bay to Los Angeles and Anaheim, operating at up to 200mph.

**HS2, p18**



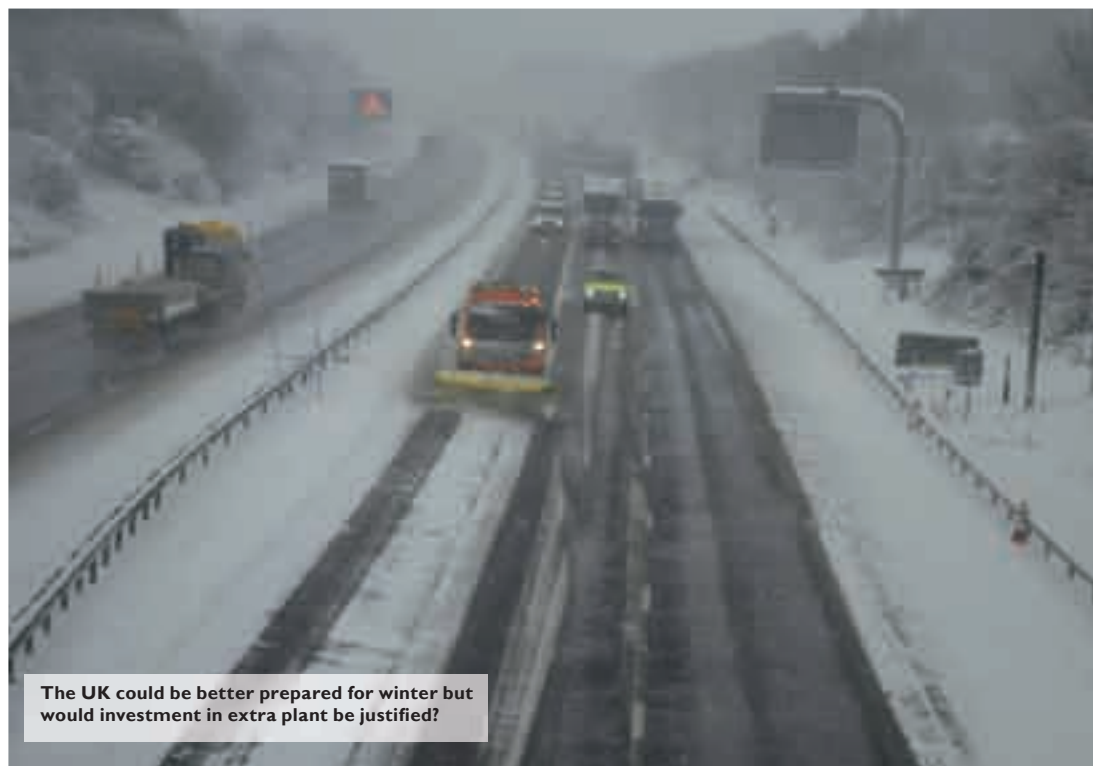
# More investment needed to cope with winter conditions, say executives

**M**ore people, more equipment and better monitoring are the key preparations the transport sector should put in place to ensure Britain's roads, railways and airports run as smoothly as possible this winter, according to latest findings from the Accent/Transport Times executive panel survey.

While 22% of the respondents agreed keeping enough stocks of grit and de-icing salt should be the main focus for the road planners, one executive offered a more strategic view suggesting "priority should be given to strategic corridors and transport interchanges, especially road access to Heathrow, as the UK's international hub airport." Another added it was important to monitor the weather and manage changes in the situation by investing in "increased and more accurate information using a variety of delivery tools". The common view of the panel was that investing in more machinery would better equip the rail and air industry.

Following various inquiries into winter resilience over the last two years, 75% of the panel stated they felt the railway was well-prepared to deal with severe weather than the roads or airports. However, one executive explained he did not believe any of the transport services were better prepared "because both the infrastructure and rolling stock would need a fundamental change to cope with such conditions and the fundamental change hasn't happened because it would cost significantly more than we have available to spend."

When asked if the public should be compensated as a direct



The UK could be better prepared for winter but would investment in extra plant be justified?

result of the transport system failing due to bad weather, 87% of respondents said no and only 13% said yes. One respondent said "People have to understand that the weather exists; we are not independent of it. Many of the problems arise from individual motorists and passengers failing to take adequate account of severe weather warnings. Common sense is the alternative to compensation."

While there may be a common perception that other countries deal with winter conditions more successfully than the UK the panel did not agree. One member suggested that "countries with regular snowfall get a return on costly preparation. What may be

needed is a careful assessment of whether the last few winters were exceptions or the future norm. Then a risk analysis and cost-benefit assessment can be made of the required investment."

If more investment is needed, who should pay? The panel suggested a combination of the Government, local authorities, the Highways Agency, Network Rail and the airport authorities themselves should fund it. Overall, the most common view from the panel was the Government should pay.

Rob Sheldon, MD of Accent, co-sponsors of the research programme, commented: "Since 2009 the UK has experienced severe winter weather and as we are

poised for another hard winter it is timely we understand how the transport industry is preparing. We hope the predictions of these senior executives are correct and that our journeys during winter months, whether by road, air or rail, are less affected."

**If you are a senior executive working in the transport industry and would like to be part of this bi-monthly poll on hot topics, please contact Katrina Van-Loon (katrina.van-loon@accent-mr.com). Each survey will take no more than five minutes to complete and all answers will be treated in complete confidence unless you give your permission for us to quote you.**

## Management buys out roadworks portal

**T**he nationwide portal for local roadworks information, [www.elgin.gov.uk](http://www.elgin.gov.uk), has been acquired in a management buyout from Jacobs. Shane O'Neill has been appointed chairman of the new company set up for the purpose, Roadworks Information Ltd.

The new company will maintain Elgin as a free-to-view portal

providing up to date roadworks data.

The portal was set up in 2005 with government funding on behalf of local authorities which were given a statutory duty to publish roadworks data under the 2004 Traffic Management Act. It has suffered in recent years from a lack of funds, but nevertheless has 50 local councils

and 33 London boroughs as subscribers.

Mr O'Neill said the importance of Elgin was as a neutral provider of data, fitting in with the government's aim of making public data more widely available. In July this year David Cameron said that all local streetworks data should be made openly available in a reusable format by

2012. This aim was reiterated by George Osborne in last week's autumn statement, setting a deadline of December next year. In fact, said Mr O'Neill, Elgin is 55% of the way to meeting that objective already.

The company plans to introduce new services and expand its range of subscribers early in the New Year.

# London needs more cross-city links. But what sort?

Before we rush to endorse Crossrail 2, we should make sure it will provide capacity where needed – and whether a number of smaller-scale improvements would produce a better result



**L**ondon wants another big rail project. Crossrail may have another six years' construction ahead, but the big guns are being readied to unleash the next one: what was once called the Chelsea-Hackney link. Lord Adonis will chair the London First-led lobbying effort.

Transport for London, meanwhile, is consulting to establish what kind of new cross-London line is needed. The choice put out to consultation is between a self-contained metro (possibly fully automated) and a much more extensive network, the tentacles of which would absorb existing commuter routes in the south west and north east.

The first would no doubt be cheaper; the latter would certainly be in the £20bn+ category.

Driving the ambition is a projection of an extra 1.3 million population and 0.75 million jobs by 2031. With the road network saturated, this translates into an increase in rail/tube use of 40-50%.

London has the great advantage over other British cities of having a statutory plan to show how and where this expansion will happen. (Lord Heseltine's renewed call last month for proper powers to be passed to our major cities resonates for those who look longingly at the rail-based public transport on offer across mainland Europe. But this is not the time for Northern cities to get envious; better to get equipped.)

The central section of the second Crossrail route has been safeguarded for nine years, and that means that already

substantial sums have been paid out to protect the route from encroachment. So it will probably be 30 years from the start of that process to project completion, and apparently modest changes to the route (a diversion via Euston is being touted) will only add to overall costs.

In these lengthy processes, therefore, asking whether this is the right next-big-scheme tends to raise eyebrows. But we have to be sure that it will meet the pattern of London's expansion for the decades ahead. The painful truth is that Crossrail as originally promoted in the early 1990s ignored the development of Canary Wharf/Docklands – and ten years was wasted before this oversight was corrected.

**Extension to Paddington would enable the high frequency/high reliability DLR technology to incorporate the Hammersmith and City branch**

Looking around for new stimuli, the arrival of HS2 at Euston is seen as a particular challenge. But this can be addressed with much more modestly-priced schemes, as we shall see; instead, the second Crossrail needs to respond to identifiable network pressures and to the next generation of major developments.

These are not entirely a matter of guesswork. There will be airport expansion somewhere – the Thames Estuary and Stansted now seeming the most likely – and either will generate the need for a major new rail facility. After HS2 may well follow HS3 – and this will very likely be a route approaching London from the north on its eastern side. It

would be crazy (but British) to fail to join up the dots.

It is traditional, when a new underground line was in the offing, to debate whether it wouldn't be better to spend the capital on upgrading existing underground lines instead. This time, with the post-PPP programmes increasing capacity and reliability, it might be thought this isn't a serious question. But do we really think that the sub-surface lines are sensibly configured for the 21st century (the clockwise Circle line negotiates six flat junctions each gyration)?

The users of the District, Metropolitan, Circle and Hammersmith & City lines deserve something better. A faster, more reliable service needs major junction rebuilds – but their cost is modest in Crossrail currency.

And this is true as well of the westward extension of the DLR from Bank to Euston, which remains a candidate. The currently favoured version somehow manages to avoid Kings Cross, and possibly have just one intermediate stop. Since it is the City branch of the Northern Line that is projected to come under most pressure from HS2 at Euston, here is a much lower cost means of addressing that challenge.

And why stop there? Extension to Paddington would enable the high frequency/high reliability DLR technology to incorporate the Hammersmith and City branch. Now that really would resolve a lot of the problems of the sub-surface network.

Such schemes will end up costing over £1bn (the whole DLR network, starting from its toy railway £77m base, has cost £1.4bn) but it might make sense for London to press for projects of this scale, for which funding might be more readily available.

**Jim Steer is a director of Steer Davies Gleave and was responsible for strategic planning at the erstwhile Strategic Rail Authority.**



# Back once more to the dreaded bidding process

Yet another new local government funding pot is not the way to boost infrastructure, unlock development or stimulate the economy. A cohesive strategy is needed

**T**he Government continues to promote growth as a top priority, in part through targeting new investment funds to promote key infrastructure projects to help unlock development. It is interesting to see what local government considers in parallel will be its dominant themes over the next year or so, given that it is expected to be an important part of the delivery chain.

The new £500m Growing Places Fund is the latest in a line of announcements and changed governance arrangements that have been introduced over the last year. But the question remains whether or not this will make any significant difference in time to tackle today's urgent problems.

Growing Places is designed to stimulate economic development, mainly through housebuilding and infrastructure projects. The money will be shared between the 38 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), although local authorities will still need to be designated as accountable bodies to manage the funds.

Indicative allocations to LEPs have been announced, but the dreaded bidding mechanism is still to be used to draw down on the fund – though the Government has promised that this will be a light touch assessment.

The caveat is that it is a “revolving” fund to be repaid by the private sector when land value increases and capital receipts begin to flow as projects unlock development. What impact this will have on Section 106 agreements, which many authorities rely on for contributions towards transport projects, will be interesting to see, given that developers will certainly not want to pay twice for related infrastructure and access.

While the new fund is to be welcomed, in the world of transport infrastructure it will not go very far. Indeed, the fund is comparable in size to the £250m

set aside to increase bin collection.

Moreover, the approach of releasing money for infrastructure in separate funds for specific outcomes continues to miss the point. Transport infrastructure and services need to be fully integrated into a cohesive strategy embracing economic development and spatial planning. Breaking funding down into individual pots is unlikely to achieve best value. If only Growing Places had been added to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (£500m), which also has growth as an objective, authorities could have had a better stab at achieving the Government's aims.

The sad point about the Growing Places Fund is that it has been assembled from underspends on

**Releasing money for infrastructure in separate funds for specific outcomes continues to miss the point**

major projects within the DCLG and DfT, which tends to suggest lack of delivery rather than efficiency savings on infrastructure. We cannot afford to waste time while bids go through the LEP mechanism.

It is worrying, therefore, that a recent study of LEPs by the Centre for Cities thinktank warned that “alarmingly slow progress” has been made since their introduction about a year ago. It found that, of the first 24 LEPs that the government approved last October, only two had produced long term strategic plans, eight had not had their boards recognised by the Government and five had no websites.

Councils will have to work hard as the accountable bodies for the fund to ensure that from now on decision-making in LEPs is not undermined or hampered

by “bureaucracy and process” and “huge boards and advisory teams” as suggested by the study report. There is a real danger that the business community will walk away from LEPs if they are seen to be ineffective.

All these new demands and pressures are emerging in the face of a continued economic downturn that is having the most profound effect on local government finances and service provision for decades. Remarkably, a recent Audit Commission report (*Tough Times*) revealed that despite this, most councils have risen well to the challenge. As many as 90% are expected to balance their 2011/12 budgets through a combination of improved efficiency, service cuts, increased fees and charges, and the use of reserves.

However, this obscures the issue of potentially unsustainable levels of cuts in the “smaller” services provided by local government such as planning and transport. Ironically, the public often sees services such as highways and transport as a top priority.

In this context, a recent quarterly survey of 239 chief executives, directors and senior managers suggested that the role of local government has been reduced to such an extent that it is close to losing its critical mass in some areas. Respondents indicated that the dominant theme for them over the next 12 months would be making spending cuts (95%), reducing the workforce (69%), joint working (44%) and shared services (34%). Only 1% saw transport as a key area of focus – a far cry from the priorities of both the Government and the public.

**Tony Ciaburro is corporate director for environment, growth and commissioning at Northamptonshire County Council.**



# Let's focus on building an airport for the future

A third runway for Heathrow would have brought only temporary respite. A Thames estuary airport could be designed to meet the demands of the next century



**A**fter half a century of political dither and denial, there is, at last, a consensus that Heathrow is not fit for purpose.

Not before time. An international hub airport in the 21st century needs at least four runways, and must be able to operate 24 hours a day. Heathrow is incapable of meeting these requirements, quite apart from the fact that no one in their right mind would further develop an airport whose flight path over the nation's capital pollutes the lives of millions of people.

Heathrow is already desperately overcrowded, often running at 99% capacity, which is why it has longer delays and poorer reliability than any of its competitors.

The construction of a third runway would solve nothing. Within a generation, the airport would again be at maximum capacity. Under current growth assumptions, Heathrow would be meeting only 70% of unconstrained demand by 2030. What then? A fourth runway, a sixth terminal? There is nowhere to put them unless the government was prepared to destroy large parts of west London.

Heathrow's history of staggering from one bitterly contested planning appeal to the next is one of the country's truly great planning disasters.

Now that Labour has abandoned its damaging aviation policy, all three major political parties accept that the planned third runway for Heathrow should be abandoned. But there is still no agreement on where a new runway should go.

I believe that a new airport situated somewhere in the Thames estuary is the only

realistic option. Expansion at Gatwick or Stansted would run into the same problems faced by Heathrow, as would the idea, floated by the former transport secretary Philip Hammond, of a joint hub between Heathrow and Gatwick. None of these would be able to operate 24 hours a day or be capable of being expanded into a four, let alone six, runway airport without huge public hostility.

That is not to say that creating an airport in the Thames estuary would be easy. The estimated cost of the new airport on reclaimed land on the Isle of Grain, proposed by the architect Lord Foster, would be £40-£50bn. This includes £20bn for an orbital rail link around London and £10bn

**“The idea that losing its hub status would devastate the fast-growing economic area around Heathrow does not stand up to examination”**

for a barrier crossing and other infrastructure improvements.

The claim, however, that the cost of a Thames estuary airport is unaffordable is absurd for one of the richest countries in the developed world. Much of the cost could be privately financed. A new airport backed by the Government would be attractive to pension funds, venture capitalists and sovereign wealth funds. The capital costs could be recouped over 50 years or more. A small levy on outgoing and incoming passengers could also raise considerable sums.

This is not a perishable item with a short shelf life. The new airport should be aimed at Britain's future, and be capable of expansion to meet the demands that will be made on it over the next century.

Counter-arguments include the impact on wildlife, the danger of bird strikes, unexploded munitions in the estuary and conflicts with Schiphol's airspace. All these obstacles could be overcome given political will.

The Labour opposition, unfortunately, still appears to be in denial in its confused insistence that Heathrow must be on the direct route of the high-speed rail link to Birmingham. That makes no sense if Heathrow no longer has a future as a hub.

What to do with Heathrow once a new airport has been built? The simplest answer would be to run it as a regional airport serving UK destinations.

The idea that losing its hub status would devastate the fast-growing economic area around the airport does not stand up to serious examination. The land occupied by Heathrow is so valuable that some of it could be used for much-needed housing. Development in the Thames Estuary need not be at the expense of London's overcrowded western corridor.

Until recently, the airline industry has dismissed plans for phasing out Heathrow and building a new hub airport as “fantasy”. It has failed to appreciate that high-speed rail has changed the concept of distance. We now have to consider the solution adopted by cities including Hong Kong, Paris, Milan, Washington and Bangkok, which have successfully moved their hub airports further from the city centre.

We need to take this decision now. The government cannot afford to waste another 20 years and billions of pounds on a patch-and-mend policy.

**Adam Raphael, a former executive editor of *The Observer* and transport correspondent of *The Economist*, is the associate editor of *Transport Times*. He is a former presenter of BBC's *Newsnight* and an award-winning investigative journalist.**



# UK policymaking suffers from a lack of perspective

Big infrastructure projects bring a host of other policy issues in their wake. Since World War II, we have struggled to find an adequate way to address them

**A**s if we don't hear enough from politicians on the issue, readers may wonder why I felt the need to call yet another debate in Parliament on High Speed 2 the other week.

Surely the decision will come when it comes? Surely the Transport Select Committee's report was enough of a contribution?

It was partly because I wanted to try and focus minds on the wider issue of what you do once you have a high speed line, which I don't feel has had enough attention. What other inputs do you need to make a high speed rail line successful? Or do we just build it and hope they come?

If I were given billions of pounds to spend on transport in the north of England, would I immediately reach for high-speed rail links to London? Perhaps not. When the Northern Way transport compact first got going in 2006-07, it did not mention high-speed rail because that was simply not on the agenda. It focused on improved connectivity within northern England, rather than merely on getting to London that bit faster.

We hear a lot about Europe, prayed in aid by both sides. For your Lille, I offer my Lyon. Pro and anti can find comfort in just about any example. For me, what matters about the European experience is what local governments did when they found out high speed rail was on the way, particularly the overarching strategies they put in place to extract the optimal local economic benefits from the lines construction.

Germany's policy watchword when it comes to transport is "polycentric". With at least five key cities of equal importance for different economic centres, good links between all five are a prerequisite. Somewhere like the Rhine-Ruhr region manages to achieve high quality links

despite covering a number of different *Länder*.

If they can meet the challenge, surely we can? If we know that a high-speed rail link will go to the centre of Manchester, Manchester will have to deal not only with issues of dispersal, an integrated transport system and whether the buses and suburban trains interlink, but wider policy issues about housing and jobs, and skills policy in particular, which is often overlooked in transport planning. What level that is decided at – city council, city region, Transport for Greater Manchester – is perhaps the biggest question in regional transport policy.

**It is a shame that the local bodies which had the chance to fund the Northern Way after the closure of the RDAs chose not to**

Quality of policymaking is crucial; it is what I came into politics to try to improve, and no matter which party is in power, I think that the quality and detail of public policymaking in this country has been bad in the post-war period.

The quality of our understanding of transport in the north of England is, to my mind, entirely due to work by the Northern Way over the past five years or so. I mourn its loss greatly.

I do not blame the Government entirely for that loss and I wholly support its decision to abolish regional development agencies (RDAs). However, it is a shame that many of the local bodies which had the chance to fund the Northern Way after the closure of the RDAs chose not to.

The consequences of this are slowly emerging. We have lost the pan-northern perspective

that allowed us to weigh up differing priorities in Yorkshire, the North West and the North East. We risk seeing a retreat to lists of regional priorities, with Manchester wanting one thing, Liverpool another, and Leeds something else; there is no body that tries to pull those things together and says, "Your proposal is slightly better than that one."

We need some form of co-ordinating body that would allow such prioritisation. I would like the Government to convene something analogous to the Northern Way, be it a ministerial committee for transport in the north of England, an advisory group or whatever. It should be something that will bring together all the different voices in the north for the purposes of evaluating and recommending what would have the greatest positive impact.

As a member of Transport Committee, I participated in the inquiry into high-speed rail. It was apparent from the inquiry that we have not seen such controversy over a single infrastructure project since, well, the last controversial piece of infrastructure. But the debate was based on the single premise – the single fallacy – that merely building infrastructure automatically promotes economic growth. It does not.

It is not a case of "build it and they will come"; we need look only at so-called Stratford International station to know that. Stratford is remarkable in having no international train services despite its name: a classic example of the sort of white elephant that those of us who are concerned about levels of public expenditure and high quality public policymaking do not wish to see.

**Paul Maynard is Conservative MP for Blackpool North and Cleveleys and a member of the Transport Select Committee**



# Airports, railways and the marginal seat syndrome

Too many infrastructure projects are stymied by the objections of a vocal minority. Politicians need to find the courage to make decisions on the basis of what is right for the country as a whole



One of the so-called perks of being chairman of the European Parliament's Transport Committee is that when you go anywhere, there is a great desire on behalf of the countries you visit to show off their latest and greatest airport developments.

Recently, Chicago acquainted me with its plans for a ninth runway, Frankfurt with its fourth; Paris Charles de Gaulle showed me its new terminal, as did Incheon in Korea, even though its "old" one is only 10 years old, as well as its new runway; and so on.

The Chinese politely asked what Britain's plans were for aviation, after they had explained to me that they were planning 12 new airports, including a brand new one in Beijing. I, of course, replied that we in Britain are not even planning 12m of new runway, never mind 12 new airports. Shakes of the head from the Chinese and the conversation rapidly switches to another subject.

So why does the UK take the view that airport capacity is not a problem, that we don't need to expand in order to survive and that investing in our aviation infrastructure is not a good thing for UK plc?

Is it because the transport need is not there? I don't think so. Everybody you talk to talks about the "nightmare of Heathrow" and certainly north of Watford the "avoid Heathrow club" is alive and well.

Is it because our regional airports can develop more? No, it isn't, because the airlines will tell you that if they can't get into Heathrow or Gatwick they look to Amsterdam or Paris, not Manchester or Glasgow. There is a myth that circulates in the corridors of power that says that if London is full, airlines will still want to fly into Britain. The fact is that they won't.

Is it because it is too expensive? If you were to build Boris Johnson International in the middle of the North Sea, there may be a point here. But if you develop existing airports then the benefit to the country far outweighs the costs involved. This carries what transport boffins call a very high cost-benefit ratio.

So is it political? Bingo, now we're talking!

The reason Heathrow will not be allowed to extend its runway capacity has nothing to do with transport needs, nothing to do with developing regional airports, nothing to do with cost, but all to do with marginal seats in and around London that don't want expansion.

**What is needed is for the Boundary Commission to extend its role and ensure that only rock-solid safe seats border on Heathrow**

Clearly, what is needed is for the Boundary Commission (which is already busy gerrymandering on behalf of the Government) to extend its role and ensure that only rock-solid safe seats border Heathrow.

Seriously, though, why is it that in the UK, infrastructure projects that could not just help the economy to grow but also enhance and address our transport needs often fall victim to political pressures? Is it a lack of courage on behalf of politicians to do something that is for the betterment of the majority if it means that they have to face a vocal minority?

I remember the battles for runway two at Manchester, the Newbury bypass, the Manchester Metrolink, all of which attracted protest; all of which

are now seen as great successes. And the same will be true of High Speed 2.

I recall a gentleman who lived alongside our cricket field in Golborne (a cricket field which had existed 80 years prior to his bungalow being built) complaining that cricket balls might come into his garden (and let me tell you it would have been some hit!). Yet when he sold his bungalow, positive he used the view of the cricket field as one of its great features.

The same happens in transport. Everybody wants access to airports, rail stations and motorways, providing it doesn't affect them. In the case of airports, they bring jobs – thousands of them – and nobody can tell me we don't need more jobs at this moment in time.

Politicians should have the courage to take decisions that solve our problems and are in the best interests of our country as a whole. In transport terms, that means not just building a third runway at Heathrow, but building a second one at Gatwick as well as building HS2.

For me, this is not an either/or decision. If Britain is to remain at the forefront of civil aviation and railway provision we need all these projects and we need them urgently.

In Britain, major transport infrastructure projects will always fall foul of the "tail wagging the dog" syndrome. We need courage from our politicians to do what is right for transport, not what is right for party politics; and having said that, as a politician I fully recognise that miracles may take a little longer to achieve.

**Brian Simpson is MEP for the North West of England and chairman of the European Parliament Transport and Tourism Committee.**



# Has Mr Osborne found the road to recovery?

The government's plans to attract investment from pension funds could finally spell the end for the 60-year old infrastructure deficit, says **Mark Prior**

**A**t the start of last month David Cameron announced that investment in infrastructure would form a key part of the coalition's broader strategy to revive the UK economy. The autumn statement and the second iteration of the National Infrastructure Plan, published at the end of November, reaffirm this commitment.

However with the Office for Budget Responsibility and the OECD both publishing reports that highlight the perilous state of the UK economy, the government can ill afford to get wrong any attempts it makes to make good the UK's infrastructure deficit. In cash-constrained times, available funding must be spent wisely.

In his conclusion to the autumn statement George Osborne talked about "leadership for tough times". By promoting a renewed focus on highway schemes he has shown a willingness to admit to previous mistakes: given that many of these schemes were shelved during last year's Comprehensive spending review, this policy U-turn is a tacit acknowledgement that the government got things wrong on that occasion.

More importantly, however, it is the right decision.

From a transport perspective, the need for "quick wins" means the government is absolutely correct in focusing on highway projects – not only do they deliver rapid economic benefits and create additional jobs, they also offer a particularly attractive cost-benefit ratio. A recent report by the British Chambers of Commerce confirms this, with its estimates suggesting that junction improvements and road widening on the A303/A358 to junction 25 of the M5 would deliver six times the return on investment. In real numbers it would provide £1.1bn worth of economic benefits for an investment of just £184m.

What is still a little unclear is

the role of the pension funds and the role of the agencies managing their involvement. Last week's Cook Review recommended that the Highways Agency be shaped along the lines of other regulated industries, so whether or not the agency will be procuring and managing private investment in the schemes announced last week will require some clarification and definition over the coming weeks and months.

While giving highways projects the green light will provide the UK economy with a much-needed shot in the arm, it also contradicts the government's carbon reduction commitments. So it was no surprise to see rail schemes

**From a transport perspective, the need for "quick wins" means the government is absolutely correct in focusing on highway projects**

also feature heavily in the list of priority schemes in the National Infrastructure Plan.

One other way in which the government may look to offset the environmental impact of new highway schemes would be to shift some of the freight that currently travels on UK highways on to the rail network. In order then to ensure this doesn't create capacity problems, it should look to consider more innovative solutions such as transporting the vast majority of freight at night rather than during the day, thus creating a truly 24/7 railway operation.

Clearly, this would require changes in working practices. However the economic and environmental case make it a viable proposition in the short and long term. Displacing freight travel on to the rail network would not necessitate any additional invest-

ment and could also help to create additional jobs, as staff would inevitably be required to run this round the clock activity.

The announcements at the end of last month also provided a bit more clarity on how the government hopes to finance an overhaul of the UK's infrastructure portfolio. The move to more heavily involve UK and overseas pension funds is welcome as they currently enjoy much greater access to readily available capital than the UK Treasury currently boasts.

That said, the lack of precise detail on how exactly the government will entice these bodies to commit the reported £20bn in funding makes it difficult to be completely satisfied. Suggestions that the UK banks will provide the development finance for a project, while pension funds finance the operational phase, could be one option as it strikes a better balance of risk between the private and the public sector, and is a good example of the type of joined-up thinking that will be required to get things moving.

The fact that the chancellor felt bold enough to announce pension fund involvement suggests that discussions are already pretty advanced and if he can pull this off then it truly could signal the creation of 21st century infrastructure for the UK.

As Philip Hammond correctly pointed out at this year's Conservative Party conference, the UK's infrastructure deficit has existed for well over 60 years. But the need to tackle it has never been greater.

Without better transport infrastructure the government's growth plans are in danger of stalling and the UK's position as a major player within a fast-evolving global economy could be under threat.

**Mark Prior is head of transportation at consultant EC Harris**



**Mark Prior: "Move to involve pension funds is welcome"**

# Roads, like rail, need a long t

Greater use of managed motorways, pay as you go charging and a prioritised package of improvements must be made to our highways, argues **David Quarmby**



**David Quarmby:** "Lack of a strategy is not compatible with sustained economic recovery"

In November, the RAC Foundation published its report *Keeping the Nation Moving: Time to Face the Facts*. Its main contention is that the Department for Transport has no strategy for England's roads – neither for its own roads managed by the Highways Agency, nor even guidance and advice for local authority roads, now firmly embedded in the localism agenda.

By comparison, rail has the now well-established five year HLOS-SOFA process, supported by carefully prepared Route Utilisation Strategies which identify capacity problems and opportunities over a much longer timescale. Meanwhile, 91% of passenger mileage takes place on our roads.

Does it matter? Five years ago the Treasury-sponsored report by Sir Rod Eddington put a cash value of £17bn on the cost to all road users of congestion – and that doesn't measure the stress and frustration experienced by millions of drivers every day. Already Britain's roads are the most heavily congested of any European country. Every day millions of hours are lost by business and individuals. On our strategic networks the periods of stop-start traffic flow are becoming more frequent and journey times are increasingly unreliable.

For example, on the M5 at J8 with the M6, traffic is congested for some ten hours on every weekday, with an average speed through this period of 14 mph. The Queen Elizabeth II Bridge at the Dartford Crossing sees nine hours of congestion every weekday, with an average speed of 16 mph. And on a section of the A1 in Newcastle, there are four hours of daily congestion with an average speed of 17 mph.

It will get worse. Whatever you believe about "peak car" and the prospects for economic recovery, an underlying population growth of over 14% by 2030 helps to drive the DfT's estimates of traffic growth to 27% over 2003 levels by 2025 and over 50% by 2035.

The lack of any plan or strategy to address the consequences of what we experience today and of these big increases is simply not compatible with the sustained economic recovery we all desperately want.

Meanwhile, capital expenditure on roads has been cut sharply, and – until the Chancellor's autumn statement – almost a hundred road improvement schemes were on the shelf in Marsham Street, despite offering spectacular economic returns for every pound spent. At the same time capital expenditure on rail is being maintained at a far higher level.

The RAC Foundation is not arguing for a massive road building programme – everyone knows we cannot simply build our way out of trouble; no-one wants the consequences of that, nor could we afford it. What we are calling for is two things.

Help kick-start the economy by getting on with the road improvement schemes that are shovel-ready and most needed locally. This will immediately help employment, and the resulting

improvements will help business in those areas. The autumn statement recognises this argument, with the announcement of £1bn of investment in the strategic network, a new fund of £220m for small improvements including safety, and a number of local authority major road improvements released.

Next, we desperately need a long-term strategy – a package of measures which together address growing traffic congestion and the inadequate infrastructure.

First, we must squeeze extra capacity out of what we already have. The success of the managed motorways project demonstrates that – and there is much more that can be done. The autumn statement envisages accelerating that programme. But let's not imagine that this solves the long-term problem: at best it buys a useful but modest breathing space.

Second, for short journeys, modal shift will help, and pilot schemes have shown some transfer from car to bus, walking and cycling is achievable. This

Even in transport we understand and accept differential charging on trains, planes and coaches



Stop-start traffic flow is becoming more common

# term strategy

all form part of a long-term plan for the UK's

should be strongly encouraged. But the harsh reality is that there is no easy way of transferring the middle distance journeys – those between five and 50 miles that account for the vast bulk of travel mileage – to walking, cycling or bus, or for most people, to rail.

By the way, let's beware of viewing these issues through a metropolitan lens. One of the world's best public transport systems, and a rail network radiating to all parts of the country, are not available to more than 50 million people who don't live or work in London. Their choices are very different. Their dependence on their cars is very different.

Third, behaviour change can be brought about by a different charging mechanism for road use. Yes, we believe there is a clear role for pay as you go driving. Paying for the use of goods or services on the basis of the amount and time of consumption is entirely familiar to us all. It happens in the gas and electricity markets, the mobile phone market, and increasingly in water.

Even in transport we understand and accept differential charging on trains, planes and coaches. It's about nudging people towards making travel choices which benefit them and benefit others. Used intelligently it can also encourage the take-up of low-carbon vehicles.

This is not an add-on road pricing scheme of the kind that has proved so unpopular outside London. We mean replacing a significant part of the fuel taxes and vehicle excise duties with pay as you go charging.

And finally, the package will include some further improvements to our road infrastructure, planned and prioritised to reflect local need, and the high value for money they can offer.

Delivering all this will take time and requires a stability and consistency of policy – a consistency that through its rail planning the Government has shown it is quite capable of embracing.

As part of this, we need to look fundamentally at how our strategic and main roads are planned, developed, funded, operated and maintained; how the traffic that uses them is managed, and how that use is paid for.

Since the launch of our report, the Cook review of the Highways Agency has been published. It calls for a long-term strategy, development of outcome-based specifications, a new approach to funding, some related institutional changes for the HA, and greater recognition of road users – you and me – as customers who deserve a decent service. The review offers some welcome, fresh thinking, with which government can and must start to address these issues.

See [www.racfoundation.org/research/mobility/keeping-the-nation-moving](http://www.racfoundation.org/research/mobility/keeping-the-nation-moving)

**David Quarmby is chairman of the RAC Foundation, an independent transport policy and research organisation. In recent years he has been a consultant and director of Colin Buchanan, chairman of the Strategic Rail Authority, chairman of the Docklands Light Railway, and a Board Member of Transport for London.**



The UK's public debt precludes a programme of public works, as advocated by John Maynard Keynes (above) to boost demand, says Terence Bendixson

## Would Keynes have changed his mind?

David Begg urges Justine Greening, the new Transport Secretary, to go for "a Roosevelt-style, investment-led stimulus to the economy..." (TT, November) In doing so he is forgetting a cardinal difference between the state of government finances in the 1930s and today. Roosevelt was not faced by a mountain of public debt and could therefore borrow freely. Our Chancellor of the Exchequer does not have that luxury.

Stimulus must therefore be sought by low-cost means such as removing regulations, freeing up labour markets and, if any money

is available, spending not on the few men who would be employed on big infrastructure schemes, but on the many who would be encouraged by tax cuts targeted at employers, investors or entrepreneurs. Keynesianism may have been appropriate in the 1930s but it is doubtful whether Keynes would have advocated it today. As he himself notably said, "If the facts change, I change my mind."

*Terence Bendixson  
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# Capacity and connectivity should be the drivers

Rethinking the route of High Speed 2 will increase public support. And it could be done without causing any delay to the project, says **Maria Eagle**



“The focus on cutting the journey time between London and Birmingham has proved near-fatal for the scheme”

**T**he political consensus on high speed rail is strong. The Conservatives were right to get behind the vision that Labour first set out in government for a Y-shaped high speed rail line from London to Birmingham and then on to Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds. Now that we are in opposition, Labour will continue to provide that strong cross-party support to get this vital project on its way.

It is clear that whatever arguments are put forward about the precise route of this new line or the benefits of reducing journey times, there are simply no credible alternative options for resolving the capacity issues that a new line would address. The relatively recent experience of upgrading the West Coast main line demonstrates the complexity of upgrading a line while keeping it in use. By building the new line using the latest high speed technology it will be possible to cut journey times and create the potential for regeneration, jobs and growth.

That clear consensus should not prevent us from continuing to raise

serious issues about the precise details of the current proposals. It is vital that we get this right. That's why I have said that we were wrong to reject the proposal to create a major new transport hub near Heathrow that links HS2, Crossrail and the Great Western main line.

First, it has the potential to save taxpayers' money, by removing the need to build an expensive spur to Heathrow during the later stages of the HS2 project and opening up the potential for greater private investment in the scheme. Many of the opponents of this proposal have disingenuously been comparing its costs to those of the HS2 proposal before the decision was taken to build a link to Heathrow in the second phase of the scheme. The debate is not therefore whether money will be spent connecting to Heathrow, but when and how.

Second, it will benefit Heathrow itself by improving access to our major hub airport, especially from the South West and Wales. It makes considerably more sense than building a further expensive line to connect HS2 and Heathrow to the Great Western main line or relying on an interchange several miles away. Following cancellation of the third runway, we need to find new ways of expanding Heathrow's catchment area for passengers to fill long-haul flights as the short-haul flights that enable the hub to work are squeezed out.

Third, this opens up the potential for more of the country to feel the benefits of HS2, not least by improving connectivity to the South, South West and Wales. The focus on cutting the journey time between London and Birmingham has proved near-fatal for the scheme and the national public support it needs, when the driver of the scheme should be capacity and connectivity. The reality is that HS2 will benefit the nation as a whole, but those living in parts of the country that are not directly served by it need to feel that those benefits are real to them.

Fourth, taking the high speed line direct to Heathrow from the start inevitably changes the route and opens up the prospect for making greater use of existing transport corridors and avoiding the widest part of the Chilterns

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The current route has caused considerable concern and local opposition, and residents have, wrongly I believe, been characterised by ministers as Nimbys.

The new Transport Secretary has shown a willingness to address these concerns with proposed additional tunnelling through the Chilterns, yet this is a potentially hugely expensive way of mitigating the impact of a flawed route.

We should learn the lessons from building HS1 and, just as ministers were at the time, be willing to vary the route to secure wider public support. It's not possible for us, without the resources of a government department, to propose a precise alternative, but as we all know many alternative proposals exist within the DfT.

All these benefits could be realised while only adding around three minutes to the journey time for non-stopping services between London and Birmingham.

It has been claimed that by bringing forward an alternative proposal at this stage the intention is to delay or even wreck the scheme. Nothing could be further from the truth. I believe these changes will enhance public support while not requiring a single extra day to pass before work on constructing the line begins.

A fresh consultation should take place, but this time on a detailed plan for the entire 'Y' high speed route so the merits of the whole scheme can be debated and those affected by the entire route can have certainty about its impact. I believe that parliamentary approval for the scheme should then be sought in a single piece of legislation.

I hope that, even at this late stage, ministers listen to the case we have made. However, if they do not, then I have been absolutely clear that the cross-party consensus for this project will remain, including to get the necessary legislation through parliament.

It is better to have a high speed line that addresses the looming capacity problems we face, even if it is not exactly delivered as we would have chosen, than not to have it at all.

**Maria Eagle MP is Shadow Secretary of State for Transport**

# Hub is the right solution

Mark Bostock makes the case for a Heathrow Hub



**T**wo decades have passed since a Conservative Government backed Arup's proposal for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. I was privileged to be part of that team, and I remember well the intense controversy that preceded the decision. British Rail, then an important Arup client, was spitting teeth, furious that its proposed alignment had been exposed as higher-risk, environmentally destructive, and low on the cost-benefit ratio.

The Arup alignment became HS1, and is generally acknowledged to be a transport, economic and environmental success.

However, it was never our intention that HS1 should terminate at St Pancras. That compromise was a result of political expediency. Arup always argued that the UK's high speed rail network should be extended through London to serve Heathrow and the UK's regions.

Following the completion of HS1, we continued to promote this concept against a background of political indifference. Then, in 2008, a breakthrough: the Conservative shadow transport secretary, Theresa Villiers, seized the initiative, and confirmed that "A Conservative government would back

the innovative proposal put forward by the engineering firm Arup, to link Heathrow into the main rail network and a high speed link to St Pancras."

Caught on the back foot, it took Transport Secretary Geoff Hoon some months to respond, before announcing on 15 January 2009: "I see a strong case for (high speed rail) approaching London via a Heathrow international hub station on the Great Western line, to provide a direct four-way interchange between the airport, the new north-south line, existing Great Western rail services and Crossrail."

A political consensus had emerged, supporting a new high speed line connecting Europe, London, Heathrow and the rest of the UK. However, any celebrations that Britain has rediscovered its appetite for ambitious and creative projects proved premature.

When HS2 Ltd's vision for the alignment emerged, it contained no seamless link to Europe, and it bypassed, by just a few miles, the world's busiest international and the UK's only hub airport. It seemed the limited imagination which had produced British Rail's alignment 20 years back had returned with an alignment narrowly focused on saving every possible minute between London and Birmingham.

HS2 Ltd simply failed to learn the lessons of HS1. Using existing transport corridors, respecting environmental sensitivities, offering intermediate stations and regional high speed services – these were the ingredients that made HS1 a success: an integrated transport solution, not a point-to-point line in isolation.

The coalition government's revised remit to HS2 Ltd was therefore welcomed, requiring Heathrow and Europe to be properly considered. However, the perhaps understandable response by HS2 Ltd was to protect its alignment, and suggest a number of retrofits, in the hope that these would allow a hybrid bill to be processed within the lifetime of this parliament.

This approach is nothing short of mad. It is difficult to think of any other major project where bolting on bits here and there has arrived at a well-designed, cost-effective and elegant solution. If anything, this approach only serves to exacerbate the original flaws of HS2 Ltd's proposals.

Happily, the Government's own data makes the right solution obvious.

Heathrow Hub costs less – using the Government's own figures for its

High Speed 1 followed existing transport corridors

**The Conservative party got HS2 right in 2008**

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# High speed rail

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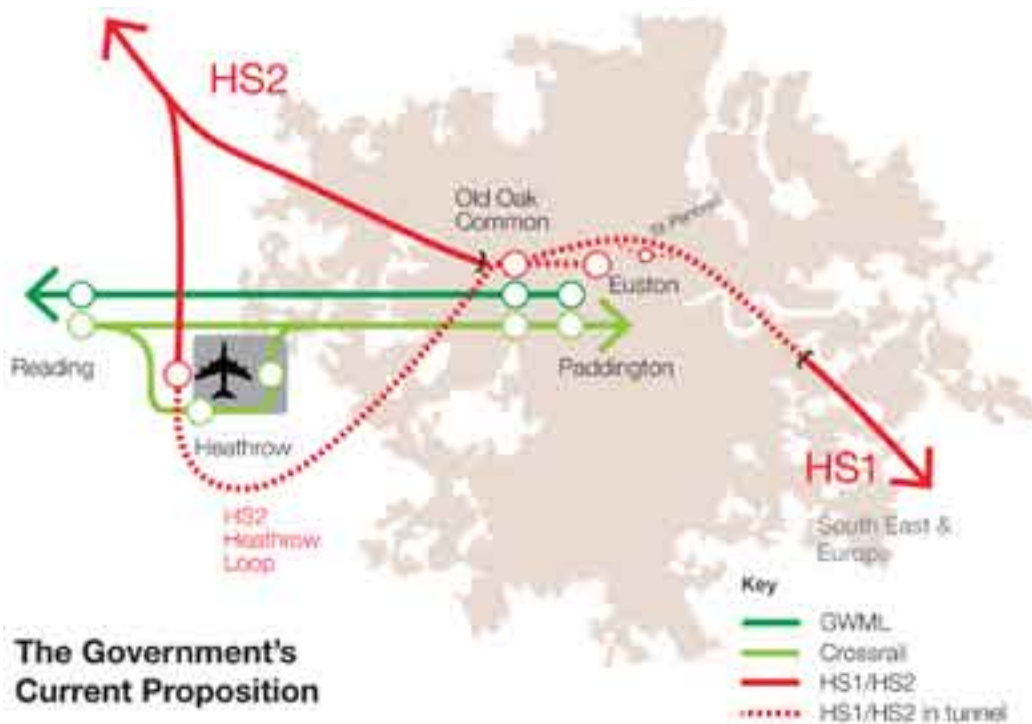
current proposal, phase one of HS2 between London and Birmingham is estimated to cost between £16.0bn and 17.7bn. To this must be added the cost of a Heathrow spur (£2.5-3.9bn) and a western connection between Heathrow and the Great Western Main Line relief lines (estimated by various promoters at around £0.7bn), bringing the total to £19.2-22.3bn. This increases to £23.3-27.7bn if the proposed spur is extended to form a loop to allow through running via Heathrow – a loop being essential, as without it, there can be no through trains from Europe to Heathrow, and hence no air/rail substitution.

For the Heathrow Hub proposition, the Government estimates an additional cost of £2.9bn. Adding this to the cost of the current route (£16.0-17.7bn) gives a total of £18.9-20.6bn. This includes the additional cost of extending the currently proposed HS2 tunnel beyond Old Oak Common.

A better solution therefore costs billions less – and there are further savings still to be made.

For example, the Government's costings of the Heathrow Hub (which assume that the Heathrow interchange must be underground) are clearly overstated. In addition the proposed (very expensive) Old Oak Common interchange can be omitted giving further savings (with HS2 dispersal taking place instead at the Heathrow Hub, via limited stop Reading-Heathrow Hub-London Crossrail services – or interchanging at Stratford). And Heathrow Hub Ltd proposes to privately finance the whole of the Heathrow interchange, further reducing the cost to the taxpayer.

Heathrow Hub has little or no impact on journey times. The route via Heathrow Hub would be 11km longer than HS2 Ltd's route. The Government



estimates that this would incur a three-minute journey time penalty (although this may be overstated since its route assumes a slow speed curve to the west of the Hub).

In any case, the provision of through lines at the Heathrow Hub allows non-stop services which would be one minute faster between London and Birmingham than the current HS2 proposal.

Heathrow Hub reduces HS2's environmental impacts – avoiding a surface route through London's suburbs, and allowing an alignment through the narrowest part of the Chilterns AONB (rather than the widest followed by HS2).

Heathrow Hub reduces Heathrow's environmental impacts – providing seamless integration, and enabling significant modal shift, from road and

air to rail (including air/rail substitution), in the first phase of HS2. The co-location of an "on-airport station" (terminal) with the rail interchange also releases space within the current congested and constrained airport, allowing more efficient aircraft operations.

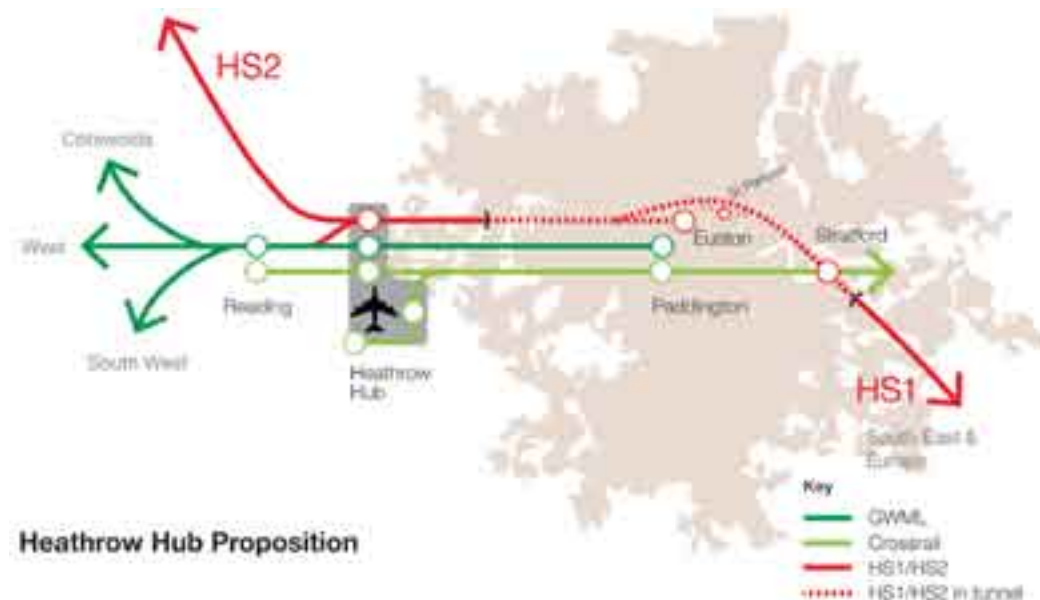
Heathrow Hub brings more benefits to the UK regions – connecting Heathrow to South Wales, and the West and South West of England, as well as enabling a network approach to transport planning in London and the South East.

Heathrow Hub assists HS2's business case – reducing its cost and allowing all trains to serve Heathrow, the UK's largest single traffic generator, and avoiding the need for an inefficient, infrequent service of dedicated airport trains over a spur, each taking up one or more train paths.

The Conservative party got HS2 right in 2008, and Maria Eagle and her team should be commended for having the political courage to recognise realities. The recommendations of the Transport Select Committee are equally clear. European experience is unambiguous. The Government should be delighted that there is now a consensus around a better, cheaper, less environmentally destructive scheme that can progress with all-party support.

And those of us who have held on to the vision of an integrated intermodal transport system that can promote economic prosperity in a low carbon economy can knuckle down to the job of delivering for the UK the best possible scheme at the least possible cost.

**Mark Bostock, a former director of Ove Arup and Partners, is an independent transport and economic consultant and advisor to Heathrow Hub Ltd.**





# An unnecessary diversion

**Jim Steer** argues that the studies by HS2 Ltd and Lord Mawhinney looked at the options and reached the right conclusions

**W**e should be wary of a posture that offers hope to those affected by the planned route of HS2 without being clear why a loosely-defined alternative might be better.

What is being offered by backers of the Heathrow Hub route conflates three ideas: that a better route would follow the M40 (not across the Chilterns, but further north); cross a "narrow point" of the Chilterns AONB; and serve Heathrow en route.

These ingredients can be mixed and matched – or indeed combined with elements of the preferred HS2 alignment. It doesn't follow that a route via Heathrow need take a particular route across the Chilterns, for example.

Each of these alignment features has already been studied. Let's go through them. As HS2 Ltd's chief engineer told the Transport Select Committee: "[Routes aligned with motorways] were ruled out on balance of longer journey time, higher cost, and being no better on sustainability".

The alternative route across the Chilterns has already prompted local High Wycombe MP Steve Baker to seek clarification from Maria Eagle. It brings high-speed rail closer to many more residential properties than the chosen route, and it is hard to see how this disadvantage would be mitigated by a shorter transit of the AONB, which, under current plans, would be crossed very largely in tunnel or deep cutting anyway.

Heathrow too has been studied at length by HS2 Ltd, since some connection to the airport was in its remit from the outset. The evidence to date shows that if HS2 is routed via the airport, the additional costs and extension of journey times entailed cannot be justified.

Nevertheless, stakeholders made clear to the recent Transport Select Committee that they saw merit in having HSR services direct to Heathrow as well as to central London. Others may question whether Heathrow is worthy of this level of attention. The recent interest in a Thames Estuary hub airport may bear fruit in due course.

But in the meantime, Heathrow is by far the nation's most important business link to the outside world. Surely northern cities are entitled to seek the same benefit as Heathrow confers on the capital? Connectivity to



**Heathrow Hub approach entails a longer tunnel from central London.**

**Some may question whether Heathrow is worthy of this level of attention**

Heathrow remains a serious issue and the question is how best to improve it using HS2.

There are three choices:

- as proposed by HS2 Ltd, junctions with HS2 would provide "spurs" into a new station at the airport itself, allowing services both from the North and from the continent (via the HS1-HS2 link) to go direct to Heathrow

- an HS2 alignment would be developed through the airport with an HSR station – this could either take the form either of a loop from the preferred HS2 route or the HS2 route could itself be shifted and run through the airport

- an HS2 alignment would be developed with an interchange station at Iver, on the Great Western Main Line, with passenger check-in facilities (so in effect a new terminal) and passengers would proceed by a transit connection built to connect T5 (2.5 miles distant) and T2 (4 miles). This is the "Heathrow Hub" proposal.

Spurs and loops would retain the existing choice of alignment for HS2. This is important. The currently preferred alignment into London is almost certainly the only way to avoid lengthy tunnelling, which would add to cost, lead to speed restrictions (HS1's London tunnels are traversed at "only" 200km/h) and add to the embedded carbon impact. The Heathrow

Hub concept is based on tunnelling – from central London to the Heathrow Hub station.

The choice has already been the subject of an independent review. According to Lord Mawhinney's 2010 report on this question, what is needed is a rail strategy for Heathrow that encompasses both HSR and conventional rail. Greengauge 21 had come to the same conclusion, and showed how an arrangement that learned from the success of the French experience with TGV services direct to Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport could be fashioned for Heathrow. The Greengauge 21 approach creates a set of cross-country routes that serve Heathrow airport (not central London), creating value for non-London train paths using HS2.

Lord Mawhinney supported the approach of building spurs from HS2 as the best option, and concluded that these should be built out once HS2 is extended northward to Manchester and Leeds. If the requirement is seen as more urgent than that, these linkages could be accelerated into the 2020s. But none of the Heathrow alignments has yet been subject to consultation.

If our politicians wish to proceed without delaying the programme, they have the necessary evidence.

**Jim Steer is founder and director of Greengauge 21.**

# We are ready to meet th



Finding a solution to congestion on the A14 in Cambridgeshire will require a wide-ranging search, but will benefit local, national and international prosperity, says **Graham Hughes**

**T**he A14 is both a chief topic of conversation and a source of consternation for Cambridgeshire residents, whose day and business grinds to a halt on it with annoying regularity, holding back the potential for economic growth in the area. Cambridgeshire is a key economic centre with a focus on high-tech industries spinning out from the university and it relies on the A14 for movement around it.

But it is not just of local importance. It is also the key link from the east coast ports into the heart of the country's transport infrastructure, taking freight onwards to the M1 and M6. If a solution to the A14 problem can be found, Cambridge has the potential to kick-start the UK economy and recovery from recession.

This is why Cambridgeshire

County Council has been leading, with other local councils, MPs and other partner organisations, the call for improvements. Dreams, however, were dashed when last year the Government announced there was no money in the coffers for the billion-pound scheme that had been agreed as part of the Cambridge to Huntingdon multi-modal study.

With a new Local Enterprise Zone announced for Alconbury near Huntingdon and plans starting to be considered again for the new 10,000-home development of Northstowe, the need for the A14 improvements are even more desperate. Fortunately, following intensive meetings and lobbying, the chancellor George Osborne has given the project a much-needed shot in the arm.

The road has been included in the newly released National Infrastruc-

## Rail freight has a crucial ro

There is great potential for removing lorries from the A14 corridor, with benefits for congestion and emission levels, says **Philippa Edmunds**

**I**t is not as widely appreciated as it should be that rail freight could be a big part of the solution on the A14 corridor. The Government must look at a multi-modal solution to the whole A14 corridor, from East Anglia to the West Midlands, and not just the section from Cambridge to Huntingdon. Freight makes up to 40% of the traffic on some sections of the A14 – so expanding rail freight, which has a parallel route from Felixstowe to Nuneaton, could help relieve road congestion and reduce accidents.

A proposed rail capacity upgrade, with impressive cost-benefit ratios and cross-industry support, to complement existing budgeted enhancements would offer a low carbon, energy-efficient, safer alternative to remove long

distance lorry movements from the A14, as part of the expansion of the Strategic Rail Freight Network.

Funded gauge enhancements and limited capacity improvements on the direct route between Felixstowe and Nuneaton and due for completion in 2014, boosted by an additional £55m worth of capacity projects announced in the autumn statement, are stage one of the route upgrade. These enhancements will provide the capability for larger 9ft 6 in containers bound for the Midlands and the North to be carried on normal wagons from Felixstowe to Nuneaton directly instead of having to go via the gauge-cleared London route.

Road congestion is now costing around £24bn annually, according to the Freight Transport Association; the DfT estimates the cost of congestion at £1 per lorry mile on the most congested roads. Rail acts as a freight bypass with each freight train out of Felixstowe removing up to 60 HGVs from the A14.

Currently, rail has around 25% of

the market from Felixstowe, the UK largest container port, with 29 trains going in and out of the port daily. There is considerable suppressed demand for rail out of the port because of the current limitations of the rail network.

If the £150m stage two capacity upgrade, which is needed to exploit this direct route fully, were provided, 50 daily trains could operate in and out of the port each day. This would remove 40 million long distance lorry miles from the A14 corridor each year, with rail's market share increasing to around 40%.

A further benefit of this project would be the release of valuable capacity on the London route for forecast freight traffic growth from Tilbury and London Gateway.

Rail's market share from Southampton port has increased from 29% to 39% since the gauge upgrade was completed in February this year, demonstrating the direct benefits of rail enhancements. This growth shows that rail freight is breaking out of its

# The A14 challenge

ture Plan 2011. For the first time since it was taken off the agenda, the Government has said it is committed to finding both short-term measures and more importantly long-term solutions to the A14 problem.

£20m of short-term improvements which the county council has been developing with the Department for Transport and Highways Agency are now to be worked up. These will

**By spring 2012, we need to develop a package of innovative measures**

mainly be improvements to congestion-blighted junctions, as well as improving warning of incidents and the ability to clear incidents quickly when they do happen.

But the main breakthrough has been the Government's willingness to back a longer-term solution and the fact it is looking at increasing the capacity as well as the performance of the existing road. It means that

the Government has recognised our arguments that Cambridgeshire has huge economic potential and the lack of a better A14 is a barrier to this.

It also means it agrees that the road is needed to unlock development and therefore create business opportunities and improve the quality of life for residents.

But with this great news comes a great challenge. By spring 2012 we, the Government and our partners need to develop a package of innovative measures, including examining road tolling and funding sources. This is a major challenge and a very tight timescale. But it is a challenge we are relishing and are ready to take to move this scheme forward.

We especially welcome the close working relationships we are creating and cementing with the Government and the Department for Transport. It is clear there is a willingness on all sides to move this forward.

The question of financing is something we are all grappling with across the country. Certainly we have to look seriously at tolls and the various ways they could be applied. Some form of

local funding is also likely to be a component of any financial package.

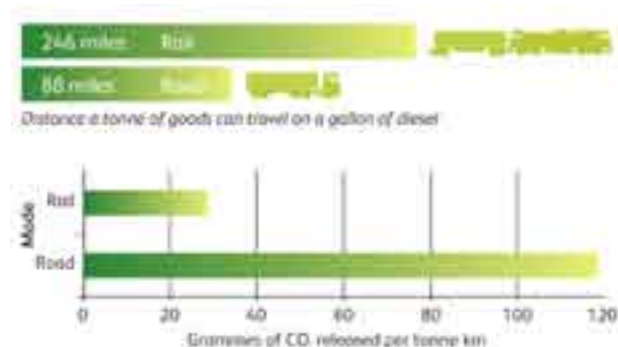
Whatever comes forward must increase capacity along this section of the route. Just tweaking junctions will help traffic flow around those pinch points, but not on the main A14 which is already carrying far too many vehicles.

Equally, alternatives for those users who don't need to drive need to be considered. The Cambridgeshire guided busway has now been opened and is very successful and there is no doubt encouraging even more use of this will help. Equally, encouraging more freight on to rail along the Nuneaton to Felixstowe route is also key.

The process of trying to move the A14 improvements forward is a massive challenge but one, given the chancellor's recent announcement, that we are all ready to tackle for the good of Cambridgeshire, the country and international trade.

**Graham Hughes is Cambridgeshire County Council service director for strategy and development.**

## able to play



Top: Distance a tonne of goods can travel on a gallon of diesel

Bottom: Grammes of CO<sub>2</sub> released per tonne km for rail and road travel (Source: 2009 guideline to Defra's GHG conversion factors; Methodology Paper for Transport Emission Factors, October 2009, Defra)

traditional markets. Last year, for the first time, consumer rail freight traffic (deep sea containers and domestic intermodal freight) was greater than coal traffic; it has grown 29% in the past five years, despite the recession, with eight consecutive years of growth. The industry predicts that rail freight overall will have doubled by 2030 with consumer rail freight growing 7.6% annually during this period.

The A14 study needs to take into account the long-term need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions as there is potential for rail to bring about meaningful carbon dioxide reductions along the A14 corridor.

Freight is a big CO<sub>2</sub> emitter: domestic transport accounts for 20% of UK total emissions and HGVs contribute around 20% of that total. There is limited scope to reduce HGV emissions. Electric HGVs are not a option with current technology because the batteries would weigh more than the vehicle's payload.

Rail freight produces 70% less carbon dioxide emissions than the

equivalent road journey; a gallon of diesel will carry a tonne of freight 246 miles by rail as opposed to 88 miles by road. Rail is the only practicable way of achieving the massive reductions required in carbon dioxide emissions from long distance freight on this corridor.

DfT corridor analysis has highlighted high rates of fatal accidents on the route, so rail freight, which is safer than long-distance road freight using major roads due to a combination of size, lack of proper enforcement of drivers' hours, vehicle overloading and differing foreign operating standards, has a key safety role.

Targeted interventions on rail freight work, as demonstrated by the Southampton example. Rail freight links are an important driver of economic regeneration which can help the Government meet its transport objective to promote the green sustainable economy with green jobs.

**Philippa Edmunds is manager of Freight on Rail**



**L**ast month, transport minister Norman Baker was in his Lewes constituency to launch the latest phase of Go-Ahead's roll-out of the Key, the company's innovative smartcard ticket.

Mr Baker has long been an advocate of smart ticketing, calling for operators to help fulfil the Government's vision of a transport system where passengers can enjoy seamless travel on one smartcard. ITSO technology has been the Government's chosen specification for public transport smartcards. Go-Ahead has responded to these challenges by embracing smartcards across its bus and rail operations, and achieving several industry firsts along the way – including the introduction of the first interoperable commercial ITSO smartcard scheme in Oxford.

At the heart of Go-Ahead's approach is the firm belief that despite difficult economic conditions, we can still increase patronage on our trains and buses by using smartcards to build a compelling proposition for our services. Smartcards mean we can:

- Generate additional journeys by offering more attractive products and ticket types to better match today's changing journey patterns
- Promote multi-modal travel by providing joined-up ticketing between bus and rail
- Offer passengers the best fare if they buy online and use their smartcard
- Reduce waste by cutting back on paper tickets, and
- Improve boarding times on buses and queuing times at stations.

Go-Ahead's smartcard is known as

**“The consistent smartcard name is designed to give passengers the message that, with the card in their hand, they possess a nationally accepted smartcard”**

# The key to joined-up travel



Go-Ahead's smartcard scheme, winner in the technology sector, is being extended over its rail and bus operations to offer seamless



the Key. We've given it a distinctive brand which can be adapted by each of our bus and rail companies to enable them to maintain their own individual identities – an approach which is in line with our devolved approach to operating our businesses. But the consistent smartcard name is designed to give passengers the message that, with the card in their hand, they possess a nationally-accepted smartcard.

Our commitment to introducing smartcards on our operations dates back to 2007, when Go-Ahead and Keolis, bidding as Govia, were awarded the London Midland rail franchise. The franchise agreement included a commitment to introduce an ITSO smartcard scheme.

In 2009, we began to prepare for the London Midland smartcard pilot by establishing our in-house smartcard introduction team. The team's first task was to set up a proof of concept test room so that all elements of the system could be tested before the pilot was launched. That year, we also took the decision to invest in smartcard ticket



...tion of this year's National Transport awards, seamless travel, says **Gillian Singh**

machines for each of our 2000 buses outside London (all buses in London already have Oyster readers), and we placed a £2.8m order for smartcard bus ticket machines – one of the largest orders for this equipment ever seen in the UK.

Early the following year we were ready to go with our initial pilot of the Key, launching the first ITSO smartcard on rail outside London and the South East. At the heart of this small West Midlands trial was a fully-integrated, self-service web ticket sales engine providing customers with the ability to make easy online ticket purchases and to collect the tickets at the station by simply touching their smartcard on the Key reader.

In June 2010 we launched the first bus division ITSO smartcard scheme in Go North East. We undertook the pilot on a standard ITSO platform, and decided to use the same tried and tested solution across the rest of our operating companies.

In autumn last year, we put into operation one of Britain's largest com-

**Left: Smartcard's launch on London Midland was a first for rail outside the South East**  
**Above: Norman Baker flanked by Southern's Riz Wahid and Chris Burchell at last week's launch**  
**Right: Oxford card is interoperable with Stagecoach services**



mercial ITSO smartcard schemes in Oxford. This scheme, for the Oxford Bus Company, initially included 22,000 Key cards, as well as the ability to validate concessionary travelcards. Some 64,000 cards are now in circulation in Oxford, and passengers can buy a range of products using the Key, either online or at the city centre's Debenhams store.

Introduction of the Key has continued apace this year. Smartcard ticket machines have been installed on nearly 2000 buses in Go-Ahead's fleet, and the Go North East pilot has been extended to full operations across the company. In the first week alone, some 60,000 journeys were made each day, a figure that has now risen to nearly 100,000. In November, the Key's launch won best North East PR event in the Chartered Institute of Public Relations annual Pride awards.

In Oxford, Go-Ahead has worked in partnership with Stagecoach to launch the Oxford SmartZone, a multi-operator scheme enabling passengers to use the Key to travel on both Go-Ahead and Stagecoach buses in the city. This is another UK bus industry first.

Plymouth Citybus and Brighton & Hove Buses have both launched the Key this year. In Plymouth, 13,000 cards have been issued and 8,000 journeys are made using the smartcard each day; in Brighton and Hove, 3,000 passengers are now using it to make their journeys around the city. In both cities, the Key is available from travel shops as well as online.

This year will conclude with the commercial launch of the Key on Metrobus and Thames Travel. In the New Year, the team will focus on the full introduction of the scheme by London Midland on the Snow Hill lines in Birmingham and also on introducing the Key in the operating companies within Go South Coast, including Wilts & Dorset and Blue Star. In future, pas-

sengers using Brighton & Hove Buses, Metrobus and Southern rail services will be able to use the Key when travelling on all three companies.

The Southern pilot includes innovative commitments for widespread adoption of the Key across the franchise area, including multi-modal pay as you go smartcard ticketing, new ticket types including three-day season tickets, off-peak season tickets, early bird and cashback ticket options and carnet multi-trip products for services into London.

Speaking at the Southern pilot launch in November, Norman Baker said that smart ticketing was already beginning to make a positive impact across the country, giving passengers the confidence to get out of their cars and on to public transport.

Passenger Focus manager Sharon Hedges added that smartcard ticketing "is an exciting development for passengers, with great potential. Passengers will look forward to seeing the benefits that innovation can bring, such as reducing costs and increasing ease of access to the rail network."

For Go-Ahead, our commitment to smartcard ticketing has taken us a long way in the past few years and we were delighted that our efforts were recognised this year at the National Transport Awards. As group chief executive David Brown said at the time: "The award recognises our desire to continue to innovate and meet the needs of our passengers, and acknowledges the fantastic teamwork which has delivered this significant new initiative."

In future, we will continue to focus on making travel easier and cheaper for our passengers: by 2013 we expect to see 500,000 of our passengers using the Key on our bus and rail networks.

**Gillian Singh is marketing director of Go-Ahead**



# Savings in travel time: how

If we assume that travel time is productive, how should it be valued in appraising projects such as High Speed Rail? **Paul Oxley** and **Chris Riley** look at the evidence



A third of business travellers indicated working or studying is the activity they spend most time on while on a train

“If crowding on trains is reduced so that more business passengers can spend time working then that additional productivity should be taken into account”

**H**ow do you spend your time on the train? Working hard or gazing out of the window?

One of the key issues in the debate about the benefits of the planned high-speed rail network HS2 is how travel time is used and hence how journey time savings should be valued. Travel time savings are a common part of transport appraisal so this debate is not new, but, given their importance to the economic case for HS2, their treatment could be a key influence on the Secretary of State's decision about the future of the scheme.

When assessing the case for a transport scheme such as HS2, it is important to consider all its costs and benefits. Travel time savings are one such benefit. The premise of valuing time savings is that reducing the duration of a given journey frees more time for an individual to spend elsewhere – in other words, the premise is that passengers do not choose to travel for the sake of it, and that their journey time is essentially a cost to them.

Time savings for business travellers are usually assumed to be particularly valuable, because time not spent

travelling can be spent working. For example, saving an hour on a journey may permit them to fit in an extra business meeting. The valuation of travel time for business travellers recommended by the DfT for use in transport appraisal is based on earnings data, and is £49 per hour in 2011 prices. For a commuter, reduced travel times mean that more time is available for leisure – for example, an extra hour to spend with the family instead of an hour travelling.

Although this approach to valuing travel time savings is a simplification that does not capture all aspects of altering journey times, it does allow a broad assessment of benefits. For example, when appraising high-speed rail schemes, the largest component of the monetised estimated benefits are the time savings of business travellers. For the London-West Midlands HS2 proposed scheme, the value of time savings to business passengers was estimated at £5.7bn out of the £20.6bn of total benefits (28%), excluding reliability and waiting time components.

The value of these time savings depends on assumptions about the use of travel time. The conventional DfT

appraisal assumes that time spent travelling is not productive and thus all time saved is valuable.

On the face of it this seems like an unrealistic assumption, given that casual observation on any train journey would find some evidence of passengers working. Indeed the DfT acknowledged, in written evidence to the Transport Select Committee inquiry into HS2, that some travel time may be used productively.

Given the importance of time savings in the economic case for HS2, it would initially seem that changing this assumption would have a dramatic effect. However, the DfT has argued that, in assessing the overall impact, there are a number of effects that at least partly offset each other. Assuming that travel time is productive affects not only the value of travel time savings, but also the value of changes in crowding and modal shift brought about by HS2.

The level of crowding on services may affect the ability of passengers to work during their journey. Standing passengers are unable to use laptops or read papers easily, although some other tasks such as making and receiving phone calls may still be possible. In addition, it may be that travelling in crowded conditions prevents travellers from being able to think clearly, and hence may inhibit thought processes which might be an important component of their productive work. Crowding can also potentially affect the ability of employees to be productive after their journey if it affects their stress levels.

If crowding on trains on both the high-speed and conventional networks is reduced so that more business passengers can have a seat and are able to spend time working then that additional productivity should be taken into account. Instead the approach used in the base case by HS2 Ltd assumes that the only cost for business travellers in relation to crowding is discomfort, as opposed to lost productive time, so these costs may be understated.

A further potential effect of treating travel time as productive is that modal shift from road travel for business passengers can be considered to have an additional value. If we assume that travel time is productive, a benefit arises for passengers who shift to



# How much are they worth?

And how much does overcrowding reduce productivity?

high-speed rail from road, since they are now able to work on their journey.

Figure 1 depicts the difference between the two approaches to the value of travel time.

In the Economic Case for HS2, HS2 Ltd tested the sensitivity of halving the business value of time and simultaneously adjusting the crowding impacts to reflect the loss of value experienced by business passengers travelling in crowded conditions (instead of using commuter values for business passengers). It found that in this scenario the benefit-cost ratio (BCR) of HS2 actually increased slightly. On the basis of this, the government has stated that, while it recognises that this is a complex issue, it does not believe that a change in the approach to valuing time would significantly alter the case for a new high-speed rail network.

Oxera has taken a simpler approach and used the published HS2 Ltd models to test the sensitivity whereby the value of time for business users is reduced without making the associated crowding adjustment. Reducing the value of time by one-third had the impact of lowering the BCR for HS2 from 2.0 to 1.6, and reducing the value of time to zero (assuming all business travel time is productive) lowered the BCR to 1.1. This sensitivity testing illustrates that the value is clearly important and that if HS2 Ltd's analysis is correct there must be substantial crowding and modal shift gains to offset this reduction.

Whether travellers do actually make productive use of their travel time is primarily an empirical question. Recent survey evidence suggests that business travellers do make use of their rail journey time – in research by the Centre for Transport & Society at the University of the West of England, a third of business travellers (34%) indicated that the activity they spend most time on while on the train is working or studying.

This would suggest that the standard method of appraisal should be revised to allow for some productive use of travel time, even if this means also revising the approach to crowding. The net effect of this may be zero in the case of HS2, as implied by HS2 Ltd's analysis, but this is not necessarily true if the amended framework is used elsewhere.

For example, a transport project which created time savings, but where switching passengers came from uncrowded existing modes, would have a net reduction in its estimated benefits if travel time were assumed to be productive.

A further element to the debate about the value of travel time is the question of whether it is appropriate to assume that it is constant across time, regions and journeys. Empirical evidence suggests that the productivity of travel time is increasing over time – the proportion of rail travellers who consider their travel time very worthwhile has gone up by a quarter in six years.

This finding is in line with the view that the progress of technology and communications is helping to increase travel productivity. The DfT used a uniform value of time across the country in the original economic case, but has kept open the option of reflecting regional variations in earnings. Should it decide to include regional variations, this would alter the business case, depending on the balance of travel between regions with higher and lower incomes.

Valuing travel time savings also affects the types of projects that score

well in appraisal. For many appraisals of transport infrastructure projects, savings in travel time account for a high proportion of total benefits, and projects which achieve no time savings, such as many of those often referred to as smarter choices, are put at a disadvantage.

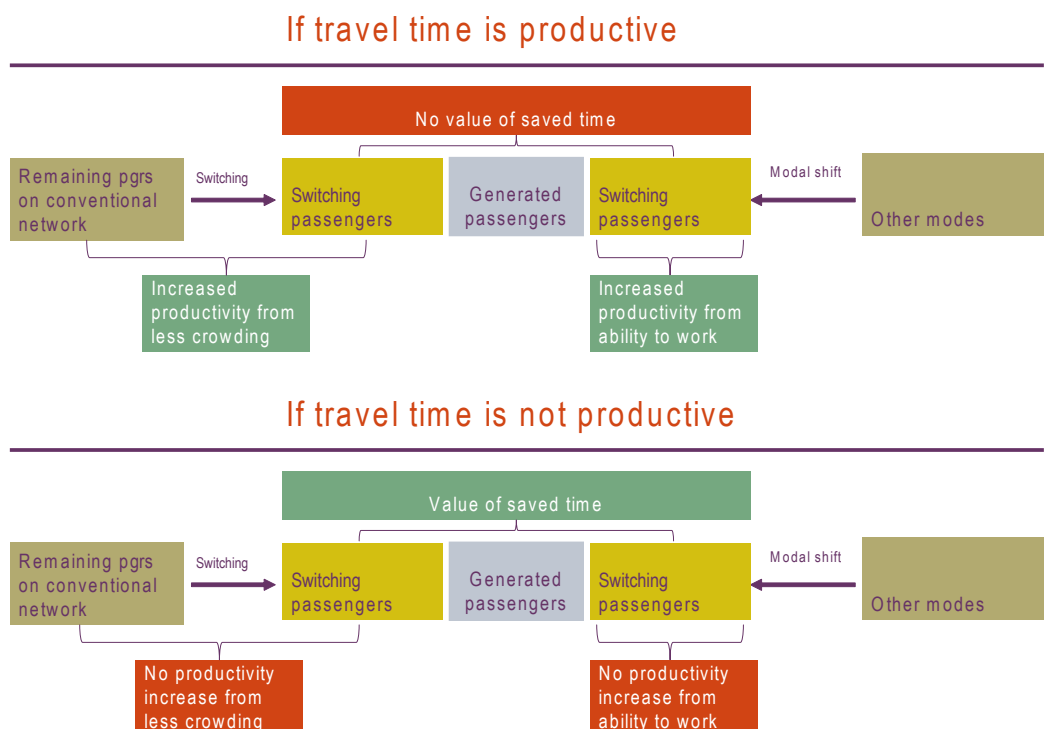
The treatment of travel time in appraisal can be critical for determining the monetised benefits of a scheme, and although these are only one aspect of a scheme's assessment, they are often substantial. The debate about the productivity of travel time seems to suggest that there is a case for reviewing the approach to their valuation to allow for some productivity, or simply altering the values themselves, particularly given changes in how people use their time while travelling.

However, in the context of HS2 any changes to the treatment of travel time may well be offset by complementary changes to crowding assumptions, ultimately not substantially changing the overall valuation of benefits.

**Paul Oxley is a consultant and Chris Riley is an associate at Oxera Consulting.**

**Figure 1. The impact of assuming that travel time is productive**

**Source: Oxera, based on Department for Transport (2011), 'High Speed Rail: Investing in Britain's Future: A Consultation', February, p50**





By David Begg

# Transport people of the month

At all three of our transport award ceremonies, National, London and Scottish, the judging panel singles out individuals who deserve recognition for their contribution to transport. To make this process more thorough, every month I will identify individuals who have impressed me – and hope my fellow judges agree! Here is my list for this month...

## Sir Brian Souter, founder and chief executive of Stagecoach

**W**hen I heard Sir Brian Souter, founder and chief executive of Stagecoach, being openly criticised at this year's Labour Party conference for the amount he and his sister, Anne Gloag, were paid in dividends, I felt a deep sense of despair. At a time when we should be encouraging and incentivising the entrepreneurial flair that Souter has brought to transport, especially the UK bus industry, some want to demonise him because he has been so successful.

Not only has Souter been successful as judged by the city – he has outperformed his peers' share price increases and his bus profit margins are almost twice the industry average – he has also reaped a very positive social harvest which too many don't recognise.

Look at the increase in real revenue (after allowing for inflation) for the UK bus sector and you will see that Stagecoach has increased by over 50% since 2001, twice the industry average.

This has not been achieved by pushing up fares – Stagecoach has some of the lowest fares in the industry – but by increasing patronage. In a way that the local authority companies before deregulation could not – not to mention some of his private sector rivals – Stagecoach has identified new markets, used creative marketing including social media, and not been afraid to cut fares when required.

The social dividend has been more buses, more jobs and fares lower than they would have been. At a time when modal shift from the car seems to be a mantra from the past, Stagecoach has not lost sight of the fact that attracting people out of their cars is the main source of growth for bus companies.

On top of this Sir Brian has personally driven the green agenda with biofuels and the innovative use of chip fat to fuel buses.

When it comes to rail Stagecoach's South West Trains franchise is one of the best in the country.

My message to Brian Souter is: ignore the critics and keep on being innovative.

## Colin Barrow, leader of Westminster Council

Westminster Council has been under fire for extending parking charges till midnight six days a week and from 1 to 6pm on Sundays. Everyone has been lambasting them, from church leaders concerned about their congregation being charged to businesses and theatres which believe it will result in a loss of customers. Even the London mayor, Boris Johnson, has waded in to express his concern.

I'm on the side of Westminster leader, Colin Barrow, who says: "Roads are busier at 10pm than 10am and this move will result in less traffic on the streets, which will be better for businesses and healthier for workers, visitors and local people."

Cllr Barrow is a supporter of the free market and parking charges have to be driven by the laws of demand and supply. A high percentage of traffic in the West End in the evening peak is caused by drivers cruising around looking for a parking space.

I would have thought Boris would have supported his Conservative colleague as this will boost patronage on buses and the Tube, not to mention cycling, resulting in a reduction in congestion and pollution. With the excellent public transport system that serves central London I don't see what the fuss is all about.

As for people with disabilities who are dependent on the car, this move will free road space and make access to the city centre easier for them.

Sir Brian Souter





From left:  
Jo Valentine,  
Daniel Moylan and  
Lin Homer

Bottom:  
Stephen Glaister

### Stephen Joseph and his colleagues at Campaign for Better Transport

CBT's campaign against the proposed increase in rail fares of RPI plus 3% has achieved its goal. I have to confess to being tentative in supporting it because I feared that it would reduce the amount available for rail investment. But the increase in fares has been capped at 1% above inflation and rail investment has been increased. Excellent outcome and good result for CBT.

### Stephen Glaister and David Quarmby, chief executive and chairman of the RAC Foundation

The RAC Foundation's report *Keeping the Nation Moving*, published last month is sensible and persuasive. As you would expect from this pair it is robust and well researched (see page 16). They have remained consistent in their advocacy of pay as you go road pricing, not easy from a body which is associated with the motoring lobby, albeit independent. They know we can't build our way out of congestion and are calling for targeted road improvements with pricing to lock in the benefits.

We are fortunate to have such a level-headed and sensible team speaking for roads, rather than the extreme wing of the motoring lobby that shouts loudly and opposes many policies which are in fact in motorists' interests: road pricing and robust road safety measures such as speed cameras spring to mind.

### Jo Valentine, chief executive, London First, and Daniel Moylan, deputy chair, Transport for London

Both deserve credit for improving the level of debate on airport capacity in South East England and influencing government policy. At long last the Government recognises the need for hub capacity. The mistake too many

have made is not to distinguish between hub airports and point to point airports. This has dogged decision-making and led to the moratorium on runway capacity in the South East. Ms Valentine and Mr Moylan have successfully articulated why this is damaging to London and the UK economy. Where they differ is that Valentine supports the "shovel ready" Heathrow third runway while Moylan thinks this is off-limits and supports a new hub airport.

The fact that Valentine's solution is ready to go and will cost the taxpayer nothing while Moylan's is 20 years away and could cost the taxpayer £50bn you would have thought would carry weight, especially in this financial climate. However, this does not seem to be the case as the chancellor has ruled out a third runway at Heathrow as one of the options to be explored.

Nevertheless Mr Moylan deserves much credit for masterminding the mayor's aviation strategy and putting the case for hub capacity.

### Lin Homer, permanent secretary, Department for Transport

Ms Homer has impressed with her down-to-earth manner and her common sense customer oriented approach. She has led the department through a tough period with a sharp fall in the number of jobs at DfT and the accompanying impact on morale. Ms Homer has shown great leadership during this period and seamlessly managed the transition from Philip Hammond to Justine Greening. She could not be more different from the old-fashioned civil service type, seen as aloof and unapproachable.

Philip Hammond appointed her to the job and was impressed with her work. She typifies the new breed of permanent secretary which is stronger on delivery. Politicians should sit up and take notice: almost half the

permanent secretaries at Whitehall are female. Who would have predicted that 10 years ago?

### Peter Tricker, station supervisor, London Underground

It's important that this column does not just recognise achievements from people at the top in transport but highlights the outstanding work done at the front line. Here's a case in point.

On 8 August this year, Peter Tricker was the night duty supervisor at Ealing Broadway station when it was subjected to violent attacks from groups of rioters and looters.

Working alone, Mr Tricker assisted members of the public, keeping them safe from harm. He liaised constantly with Service Control and all the emergency services, getting people away from the scene on empty trains. Once trains had stopped running he took people in, including stranded LU staff, and made them comfortable.

He attended to local shopkeepers who had been attacked and administered first aid. When things calmed down he assisted police in dousing small fires that had been started in the road in front of the station.





# Verwer to head London Midland




Alex Hynes

 **Patrick Verwer**, currently Go-Ahead's managing director for rail development, has been appointed managing director of London Midland, to replace **Mike Hodson** who retires at the end of December. Mr Verwer joined Go-Ahead in December 2007, having spent more than 10 years with Netherlands Railways in various

executive roles. He came to the UK in 2002 to head the Serco/NedRailways Merseyrail concession.

**Alex Hynes**, commercial director of London Midland, succeeds Mr Verwer as managing director for rail development. He has been commercial director since November 2007 when Govia started operating the franchise. Prior to that, he was a key member of Go-Ahead's bid team and has also worked in rail consultancy and regulation.

 **Edward Hodgson** has been appointed managing director of Stagecoach West Scotland, replacing the incumbent **Bryony Chamberlain**. Ms Chamberlain takes up the post of director of Megabus.com based in North America, the post Mr Hodgson has filled for the last three years, where he oversaw the rapid expansion of the Megabus intercity and interstate network in the US. Prior to that, Mr Hodgson was

commercial director of Stagecoach South.

Ms Chamberlain joined Stagecoach in 1996 as a graduate trainee. After progressing within the UK Bus Division, she joined Coach USA in 2006 to help develop the first Megabus services. In 2009, she returned to the UK as managing director of Stagecoach Bluebird and Highlands and later of Stagecoach West Scotland.

 London City Airport has appointed a new chief executive, **Declan Collier**, currently chief executive of the Dublin Airport Authority. He will take up the post early next year.

Mr Collier became chief executive of the airport authority in 2005, following a career with ExxonMobil, and oversaw a €1.2bn capital investment programme including the construction of the new Terminal 2, which opened in late 2010.

London City's current chief executive, **Richard Good-**

**ing OBE**, is to step down after 15 years in the post, and will join the board as a non-executive director.

 RATP Dev, the arm of Paris transport authority RATP set up to win business in France and overseas, has added four members to its executive board. **Emmanuel Ansart**, **Laurence Batlle** and **Laurence Le Blanc** have joined the executive board where they will work alongside RATP Dev's chairman and chief executive **Jean-Marc Janailiac**. M Ansart, director for France, will head business development and activities relating to the France Business Unit.

Laurence Batlle, chief financial officer, will be responsible for financial, legal, IT and administrative matters. Laurence Le Blanc, international director, will concentrate on business development and activities relating to the International Business Unit.



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**Duration:** 12 month contract

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For further information on this or any other related positions do not hesitate to contact Peter on 020 7960 2551 or [pjm@mattinsonpartnership.com](mailto:pjm@mattinsonpartnership.com)

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