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May 2010



**Welcome
aboard, minister**
Our experts analyse
Philip Hammond's
post-election
challenges

Delivering infrastructure whatever the challenge

Image courtesy of John Sturrock

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Transport is in the firing line and nothing is safe

The fact that the new Secretary of State for Transport, Philip Hammond, is a former shadow chief financial secretary to the Treasury will stand him in good stead. The new five-year parliament will be dominated by the necessity to slash public sector debt and transport is in the firing line.

When advising new incumbents at Great Minster House I always pose three questions: what works from a policy perspective, can it be financed and how will it go down with the public? Now the essay question is: how can we make big reductions in transport spending in a way which does minimal damage to our policy goals and electoral support? With this in mind I have had a go at ranking budget cuts and new policy initiatives (page xx)

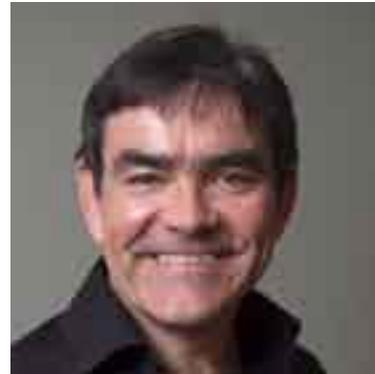
We have asked a number of industry experts to offer their advice to Phillip Hammond on rail, road, bus, environment and technology. It's informed and worthwhile reading.

I'm sorry to have to be the carrier of bad news for our sector but I would rather be honest and pragmatic. This is Mystic Begg's attempt to read the tea-leaves for the next five years.

Let's start by looking at where the Department for Transport spends its £14bn budget. Around £5.5bn goes on motorway and trunk roads, £4.5bn on rail (£3.5bn to Network Rail and £1bn to the train operating companies on net franchise subsidies); £2bn to London and the rest to local authorities and bus subsidies.

We know that the new Government has stated that it will try to protect frontline services. This will put more pressure on capital budgets – and don't be surprised if we have a moratorium on capital expenditure in the transport sector for the next few years. We can anticipate the completion dates for Tube upgrades, Crossrail, Thameslink, Reading and Birmingham Station revamps, new rolling stock, A14 improvements and the managed motorway programme all to be significantly delayed.

It will take some time for the



Don't be surprised if we have a moratorium on capital expenditure for the next few years

public to notice the difference from late delivery of new transport infrastructure so it's always a top target for cuts, even if it is short-sighted. Don't expect any work to start on electrification of the railways over the lifetime of the new parliament.

It will not be enough to take a cold shower just on capital projects; revenue expenditure will also be targeted. Ten of the 16 rail franchises are coming up for renewal in the next five years and we can anticipate significant de-scoping, with fewer off-peak services and less micromanagement. We also need to brace ourselves for fare increases well above inflation.

The same prognosis applies to bus: almost half bus company revenue comes from the taxpayer in one form or other and this will be squeezed. Look for bus service operator grant to be abolished, concessionary fare revenue to be cut and local authorities to slim down the bus network they support. All this will mean fare hikes and service cuts.

I have a plea to the new Government. Make sure that the relative cost of public transport does not rise in comparison to motoring costs.

This will be bad for the policy objective of reducing congestion and pollution and will result in deeper cuts in public transport and even higher fares. It will mean tough choices delivering on the rhetoric we have heard in the past from both the Conservatives and LibDems of "taxing as we burn rather than taxing as we earn". This strategy is right for both the economy and the environment.

I would also give the go ahead for lorry road user charging (LRUC). Both the Conservatives and the LibDems have backed this. If we adopt the German model and charge 19p/km it could raise £2bn, with less than 10% evaporating on set-up and administration costs. If we have to compensate our hauliers with vehicle excise duty reductions then obviously the amount will be less. LRUC makes sense financially, is right from a policy perspective and it can be delivered politically – especially if it creates a level playing field with foreign hauliers.

Free concessionary travel – both locally and nationally – is financially unsustainable. While the annual £2bn that is spent on this does not all come out of DfT's budget, it is nevertheless worth targeting. It makes little sense from a policy objective to provide free travel regardless of income, but all the political parties promised to continue it for fear of losing the "grey vote".

There is no clearer example of a conflict between what is right from a policy and financial perspective and what works politically. So scrapping it is not an option. Means testing could save £500m annually and pushing up the eligibility age for new entrants or requiring them to pay half-fare would make it more affordable.

We wish Philip Hammond the best of luck. He will need it!

David Begg

David Begg is publisher of Transport Times.

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Now the work begins



The votes are counted and the coalition deal hammered out: now a new ministerial team must address the challenges ahead.

Across the industry there is widespread concern about the severity of the coming cuts in spending.

We will get a first flavour of these on Monday, when Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne announces £6bn of immediate cuts. An emergency budget will follow in June.

In this special issue of *Transport Times* we focus on the fallout from the election. On the following pages experts including former transport minister Steve Norris, the RAC Foundation's Stephen Glaister and the Commission for Integrated Transport's David Leeder join our regular columnists to outline the challenges ahead and the possible responses. And opposite, we apply the three Begg tests of policy, affordability and public acceptability to assess which proposals are likely to become reality.

In the turbulent times ahead, *Transport Times* will, as ever, strive to keep its readers informed and to articulate the arguments for protecting transport investment.

New Transport Secretary Philip Hammond stressed to journalists the day after his appointment that reducing the public spending deficit was the biggest challenge facing the Government.

Chancellor George Osborne's £6bn of immediate cuts will focus on waste, consultancy, IT costs and travel spending. The cuts will be partly based on savings identified by the outgoing Labour government in the budget in March and last autumn's pre-Budget report which it planned to introduce from next year, as well as savings identified by Sir Peter Gershon, the Conservatives' adviser on spending efficiency.

An emergency Budget has been set for 22 June, to be followed by a spending review to report in the autumn. All spending decisions made by the Labour government in its last four months in office will be reviewed.

Mr Osborne added that, as well as setting out spending totals, the emergency Budget would contain measures to boost enterprise and "provide a solid foundation for a private sector recovery".

Transport pledges are thin on the ground in the formal coalition

document between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, but the parties committed themselves to establish a high speed rail network, to cancel the third runway at Heathrow and block additional runways at Gatwick and Stansted, and to replace air passenger duty with a levy on each flight (both passenger and freight). A national recharging network for electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles will be "mandated".

There is also a commitment to create a green investment bank. Though there are no details of its remit, the Lib-Dem manifesto proposed an infrastructure bank to direct private sector finance to "essential projects such as new rail services and green energy".

The parties will promote "the radical devolution of power and greater financial autonomy to local government and community groups", a move which will be linked to "a full review" of local government finance.

Despite the commitment to high

speed rail, given that the LibDems supported the High Speed 2 proposals of Labour transport secretary Lord Adonis while the Conservatives reserved their position on the route, the project may fall foul of the Crossrail syndrome in which new studies provide a cover for inaction.

The appointment of Mr Hammond, who had been shadow chief secretary to the Treasury, was a surprise; shadow transport secretary Theresa Villiers has been made his number two, while the other Hammond, Stephen, who had impressed as a shadow minister, was moved out of the department altogether.

In a press conference the day after his appointment Mr Hammond, who has been the MP for Runnymede and Weybridge since 1997, impressed with how quickly he had mastered his brief. He came over as competent, confident and unassuming. He conceded that he came to the job with the "jaundiced eyes" of a former shadow Treasury

man and that the focus in this parliament would be on "sweating the assets", seeking efficiency savings and getting more value now that "the era of cheap public money is over".

He did not part from the Conservative party transport manifesto position and gave no indication at this stage that LibDem policy had had an impact on policy direction. Indeed, he explicitly ruled out road user charging for existing roads for the lifetime of this parliament, despite it being a LibDem policy.

He said he supported lorry road user charging and paying for new roads – but not new lanes on existing roads. While he supported public-private partnerships generally, he thought the one for the Tube was too complex.

Despite the need for cuts, however, Mr Hammond made supporting economic growth and tackling climate change key priorities for the department.

He also gave an assurance that Crossrail would go ahead, though all opportunities to drive down its cost would be examined. All capital projects would have to face a value for money test. New and innovative ways to fund capital expenditure would be sought.

Transport pledges are thin on the ground in the formal coalition document between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats

Policies for the new Government – how they measure up

Which of the likely options will stand the test of political reality? We rate them against the three key criteria: how well they work purely from a policy perspective; can they be financed; and – the acid test – how will they go down with the public?

Proposal	Policy	Finance	Public acceptance	Transport Times says
Lorry Road User Charging (see Steve Norris page 14)	****	****	****	Both Conservatives and Lib Dems are backing this. The high mark for public acceptance is based on reducing VED for UK hauliers.
Aviation: per flight duty to replace air passenger duty	****	***	***	Good move. Both Conservatives and Lib Dems agree on this. Good for carbon reduction as freight aircraft are now taxed, and an empty plane is almost as bad as a full one.
National road user charging	*****	*****	*	Ruled out by Conservatives for this parliament. Viewed as politically toxic.
Scrapping free travel for pensioners	*****	*****	*	Expensive policy which has become unaffordable. Grey vote too powerful: difficult to take it away.
Increasing entitlement age for new entrants for free travel	***	***	**	Less opposition from people who don't have a free pass, but savings less. A likely option.
Delaying completion date for capital projects	*	*****	***	Short-term pragmatism will outweigh long-term planning. Assets will be sweated and it will be some time before the public notices.
Rail fare increases above inflation	*	*****	**	LibDems may resist. But if capacity is constrained on rail this will help to ration demand. Back to the future!
Scrapping Bus Service Operator Grant	*	*****	**	The Treasury has always wanted to do this. It will push up bus fares and cut services, but bus passengers are not as vocal as their rail counterparts. Pity!
Replacing BSOG with incentive per passenger (see David Leeder page 8)	*****	**	***	CfIT recommended this in 2002 and the last government wanted to move this way. Winners in urban areas, losers in rural. Makes it difficult for new Government with its strong rural base.
De-scoping rail franchises	*	****	**	With 10 of the 16 rail franchises up for renewal in the next five years there are opportunities for cost savings. Fewer off-peak services? Scope for big savings, however, lies with Network Rail.
Cutting Network Rail's spending	**	*****	***	May need primary legislation. Expect a tough conversation between new Transport Secretary and Iain Coucher: this is what we want or we will legislate!
Carbon tax and increase in fuel duty (see Steve Norris page 14)	*****	*****	*	Better to tax as we burn rather than tax as we earn. It's brilliant from a policy and financial perspective but challenging politically.

The ministerial team

Transport secretary **Philip Hammond** attended a local state school in Shenfield, Essex before going to Oxford University to study philosophy, politics and economics. Prior to becoming an MP he gained wide-ranging business experience in small and medium-sized companies in manufacturing, property and construction, and oil and gas, both in the UK and elsewhere in Europe.

Three years before being elected as MP for Runnymede and Weybridge in 1997, he stood for election in Newham North East in 1994 against Stephen Timms, whose post as chief secretary to the Treasury he shadowed from 2007.

Since 1998 he has been an opposition spokesman on health, trade and industry, and local and devolved government affairs, and in between two stints as shadow chief secretary to the Treasury was shadow secretary for work and pensions.

As a backbencher in 1998 he was

a member of the transport select committee.

As well as having overall responsibility for transport strategy he will be directly responsible for the spending review, transport security and high speed rail.

Theresa Villiers, who becomes number two in the department as minister of state, will cover rail, the Olympics, London including Cross-rail, aviation and Europe.

The Liberal Democrat shadow transport secretary **Norman Baker** becomes under-secretary of state with responsibility for regional and local transport, buses and taxis, concessionary fares, walking and cycling, and accessibility.

Mike Penning, the second under-secretary of state, takes responsibility for strategic roads and the Highways Agency, motoring agencies, road safety and standards, freight and logistics, including lorry road user charging, and maritime issues.



From top left clockwise: Philip Hammond, Theresa Villiers, Norman Baker and Mike Penning (source: www.acumenimages.com)

The bus industry faces big upheavals

Reform of subsidies and the Competition Commission investigation will lead to big changes for operators in an already difficult market. **David Leeder** suggests a rail-style funding settlement



David Leeder: "Bus industry costs will resume their upward drift"

The entire transport industry faces a turbulent few years, and nowhere more so than the bus industry.

With the economy tentatively emerging from recession, history suggests that the key costs for the bus industry – labour costs, traffic congestion and fuel – will soon resume their normal upward drift.

So more revenue will be needed to sustain even the current level of service. Yet revenue growth is patchy and there are huge variations in op-

erator performance across apparently similar operating geographies.

Some parts of the industry are doing very well indeed, while others struggle to convince shareholders that they can really generate cash. And many local authorities – like bus company shareholders – are struggling to see through the financial headlines.

Some of these variations reflect the historic exposure of some companies to public sector pensions, but a great deal of the performance gap can be explained by the extent to which individual operators have – or have not – managed to attract more passengers.

Against this trend of rising costs, the phased shift from the Bus Service Operators' Grant (BSOG) to an Incentive Per Passenger (IPP) payment regime – long advocated by CfIT – will further accentuate the importance of passenger growth in sustaining and growing profits.

The industry's economic challenges are aggravated by political uncertainty. What will the new government now do about the various interventions proposed in the last Parliament? What will its interventions in the market be designed to achieve? And is subsidising public transport actually the best way of meeting

these objectives – such as reducing congestion, achieving modal shift, and reducing social exclusion?

In the early days of New Labour there was a great deal of talk about social inclusion. At the core of the idea was the concern that people on low incomes, or with reduced mobility, should have access to a basic level of transport at affordable prices.

Most people would accept this proposition, but the real question is whether the state should then subsidise transport operators, or channel subsidies directly to the transport users in the greatest need.

The planned extension of smartcards could allow subsidies to be paid directly to bus users to replace tradi-

Buses are at a real disadvantage when the question may be 'what can be cut easily'

tional subsidies, such as concessionary fares, that currently pass through local authorities and operators.

The CfIT proposal for an IPP is consistent with a vision of a competitive and dynamic bus network, and the DfT's decision to work towards this model creates new opportunities for market-focused operators to show what they can deliver. IPP is not just about rewarding passenger density. It will also highlight the different track record of operators in driving passenger growth through marketing and customer service.

The current Competition Commission investigation means that the industry may soon need to decide whether it favours a consumerist model or a London-style contracted one – essentially the difference between competition *in* the market and competition *for* the market.

A consumerist model might require new structures to allow competition to do its work – which will mean

actions to promote 'mature' competition of the sort that can be sustained, and which will help markets to grow without periodic bus wars.

The traffic commissioners may need an enhanced role as arbiters of quality – able to step in and halt predatory action.

This would require pre-determined protocols around over-bussing, access to bus stations and stops and participation in multi-operator ticketing. With a little modification, the Transport Act 2008 might provide some of the delivery mechanisms necessary.

CfIT's analysis shows that the benefit cost ratio (BCR) of bus subsidies compares very well with most of the transport alternatives – but the operating industry has few friends among the municipal left, and bus funding – unlike rail – continues to be determined on a year-by-year basis.

Buses are therefore at a real disadvantage at a time of spending cuts when the question may be 'what can be cut easily' rather than 'what could be cut efficiently'.

The railway SOFA (statement of funds available) is a rather sensible idea. It sets out the funding the taxpayer has made available for rail spending, for a multi-year period. The HLOS (high level output statement) describes the rail improvements that the taxpayer wishes to purchase.

The idea is to ensure that the 'menu' and the funding are in sync, to allow industry players the time and incentive to achieve the government's vision. A conceptually similar process controls TfL's Underground enhancements budget.

Without such a settlement – a bus SOFA – the industry will continue to be the Treasury's favourite area for dawn raids on the transport budget.

The bus industry may need to build its own coalition among passengers and historically antagonistic local politicians if a stable funding regime is to be maintained during the savage spending rounds to come.

David Leeder is vice chair of the Commission for Integrated Transport



Bus subsidies could be a target for cuts

Everything is on track – or so we thought

On the rail front the new secretary of state faces great travails. **Christian Wolmar** offers a warning

Dear Philip Hammond, You poor sap. I wonder why on earth you have taken this job and I am sure you too will soon, once you are faced by hordes of angry rail passengers. You are in for nothing but trouble and then worse. It's bad enough on the roads and in the air but I will confine myself to the issues you face on the railways.

Superficially, all is hunky dory on the tracks. Usage is at an all time high, there has been continued, albeit slow, growth despite the recession and there is an investment programme that has trainspotters drooling. The safety record is one to be proud of and there is even talk of a high speed line, as well as electrification and shiny new mega-stations in Birmingham, Reading and London.

But there are potential elephant traps in every corner of the industry and it will not be long before you fall into one of them. Tough decisions are on the immediate agenda.

The obvious place to start is the investment programme. The biggy is Crossrail, which has already absorbed a couple of billion or so and would be terribly difficult to cancel in its entirety, but there is going to be enormous pressure on you to cut off the ends. Your job is to protect the tunnel as, once it is built, it will look silly not to use it (though Eurotunnel and High Speed 1 have both discovered that building huge shiny new infrastructure and then pricing it out of the market is a favourite of the Treasury) and hope that the other sections can be added later.

Then you have to ensure that Thameslink, which has already slipped a year, does not get delayed any further. The last thing you want is to infuriate this particular bunch of commuters, who have suffered woefully under First Capital Connect already this year

However, the biggest headache on the investment side is Network Rail. Its budget of £5.3bn is going to be under fire. Ostensibly it is protected by the High Level Output Specification process and I had thought, until

recently, that it is sacrosanct. However, talking to various senior people in the industry and politicians, it is clear that they feel that NR's money is a target for cuts, putting an immediate halt to any expansion plans. Moreover, it is going to get worse – Network Rail will face enormous cuts in the next control period starting in 2014.

Moreover, Network Rail is a slow-burning disaster area because it is a company that is out of control. It behaves like a private sector behemoth, but in fact it is a public sector tiddler which overpays its executives and refuses to be accountable. And it has survived by accumulating debt, £31bn by 2015 and growing. That is unsustainable. My advice is nationalise the damn company as soon as possible, and put the executives on the far more modest salaries which

It is on franchising, where the situation is going to be most pressing

the absence of risk in their business merits.

As for rolling stock, the 1,300 new carriages promised a couple of years ago are simply not going to happen. The best analysis suggests that around half will be obtained, which means a lot of passengers struggling in lousy old trains. Oh, and then there is the Tube upgrade, which despite the demise of the PPP is still bound to be cut back, just as the Tubes are swamped with people as London is expanding.

So get real. The last thing you want is precious money that could be used to maintain the investment programme to be absorbed in the fanciful high speed plans. It is not going to happen in your political lifetime or even probably in your earthly one. Quietly kick it into touch and starve the project team of any serious funds, confining them to draw a few blue

lines on Ordnance Survey maps.

It is on franchising, though, where the situation is going to be most pressing. Several franchisees are already in 'special measures' which means that the revenue risk has effectively been taken on by the state through the cap and collar arrangements. This is intolerable and disincentivises the train operators.

It means there is no point in investing in boosting traffic as 80% of the income simply goes to the Department. Even worse, any savings boost the bottom line of the operators, and therefore the service is bound to decline. Watch for more operators plunging into the cap and collar arrangements.

Lord Adonis promised there would be no deals but that, too, is unsustainable. Get the industry out of cap and collar, even at the cost of extending franchises. I could say be brave and just nationalise the lot as they run out, but that sensible move was in no one's manifesto.

Up to now I had thought that the railways, popular among the public and seen as important part of the infrastructure, might have been immune from cuts because of the Byzantine structure created by privatisation. Certainly that is what the politicians have intimated, but in fact I feel they have been living in cloud-cuckoo land.



Christian Wolmar: "High speed rail plans are fanciful"

Desperate politicians will find ways round the rules and the railways are not protected by a strong lobby. And you, dear new Secretary of State, will be the fall guy.

Best of British (Rail)
Christian Wolmar

Christian Wolmar is a writer and broadcaster who writes a regular column for Rail magazine. His new book, *Blood, Iron and Gold: How The Railways Transformed The World*, has just been published by Atlantic Books.



Managing the UK Road Network with Less Public Funds

30 June 2010, ICO Conference Centre, London W1T 3DD



Our road assets are in need of maintenance. Road traffic growth needs managing and stabilising. And carbon must be reduced. However, making progress in these areas is challenging given the next decade is likely to be one of austerity – spending cuts will really start to bite and industry is going to have to ‘sweat its assets.’

To deliver future strategies a more intense focus than ever before will be made by highways professionals on generating greater efficiencies through innovation, partnership and technology especially. Realpolitik may also force the return of contentious tools like road pricing that could generate too attractive a level of funding to be ignored in these leaner times – Lorry Road User Charging is already working its way back to the current political agenda. With so much emphasis on the local, the debate may soon turn again to the national arena, with a national strategy for roads similar to the HLOS/SOFA for rail being called for.

At this one-day event, we will be discussing a way forward for those professionals with the difficult task of having to improve the UK road network with less public funds.

Confirmed speakers include:

Stephen Glaister, Director, RAC Foundation

Garrett Emerson, Chief Operating Officer, London Streets, TfL

David Leather, Chief Executive, GMPTE

Mel Ewell, Chief Executive, Amey

Jim Stevens, Head of Transport, Transport for Buckinghamshire

Sharon Kindleysides, Managing Director, Kapsch TrafficCom Ltd

George Batten, President, Adept

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Let's have a fair deal for road users

Addressing the appalling state of the road infrastructure and a medium-term funding plan for the Highways Agency should be a higher priority than new *grands projets*, argues **Stephen Glaister**

Let's raise a glass of something sparkling to the new political incumbents of Great Minster House. Of course we should be toasting the arrival of the ministerial team with champagne, but fizzy water will have to do. It's the cuts, you know. We all have to face up to them.

When it comes to public spending transport was never going to be a "protected" department, despite what some politicians and professionals might have hoped for. Indeed there might now be budget reductions of 30 to 50%.

This general shortage of pennies will soon become familiar to those who now have the responsibility for keeping the country moving. The big questions are: what do you spend such limited resources on? Where is the need and where is the public benefit? What can we really not do without?

Perhaps it would be worth outlining a few home truths. More than nine out of ten passenger journeys take place on the roads – predominantly by private car, but also taxi, bus and coach – while just 7% take place on the railways and a mere 1% in the air. Only 5% of the population uses a train more than once a week.

And let's not forget the vast bulk of freight also moves on our network of highways and byways. The fact that the average road scheme delivers a higher return on investment than the average rail scheme is a reflection of the relative shortage of road capacity and not a consequence of appraisal methods that have somehow been skewed to give the "wrong" answer.

Yet in the run-up to the election it seemed as if politicians had set aside reality, such as the emphasis on rail and high speed rail in particular. All the parties were at it.

Whatever the isolated merits, in the context of a general transport policy high speed rail is an irrelevance to majority of the travelling public. High Speed 2 did the sums and demonstrated that it would do little for carbon emissions and barely

touch road congestion – the majority of road trips are far too short to be candidates for transfer.

An Ipsos MORI poll for the RAC Foundation in April suggested it was the state of the road infrastructure – potholes et al – and the general cost of motoring which exercised voters most. A possible super-fast train service linking London and Birmingham used (like all train services) by the relatively wealthy came at the bottom of a list of priorities.

The message was clear: before we rush headlong into new *grands projets* how about spending a little bit of time and money adequately maintaining what we already have? Those with a concern for the railways will have a bitter fight just to protect the existing railway from cuts, in view of

High speed rail would do little for carbon emissions and barely touch road congestion

the parlous state of the DfT's current railways budgets, the new investment in the current high level output specification and the Hellenic state of Network Rail's debt.

And, at £47bn a year, it's not as if road users aren't contributing enough to the national coffers to warrant a fair slice of the pie being spent on the road network, a utility every bit as important as the water, electricity, gas and phone services. This point was not lost on the all-party Transport Select Committee, which in March said: "Notwithstanding the multi-modal nature of an integrated, or sustainable, transport strategy, the major road network is the most important part of the UK's transport infrastructure." Exactly.

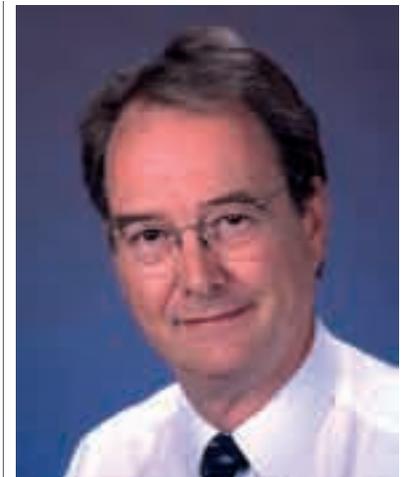
But it is a system under severe pressure. Yes, as individuals we are driving less, but overall traffic is set to rise as the economy recovers (as

it must if we are to deal with the deficit) and the population increases. In Yorkshire, the East Midlands, the East and South-East the population is officially forecast to grow by one-fifth over the next two decades.

More people need more infrastructure, especially to serve the need for local movement. Congestion will increase with all the problems that creates for mobility and the environment. The select committee also recognised some more motorways might need building and 900 miles of A-roads turned into dual-carriageways to help ease the logjams.

In the future some form of road user charging might be needed to manage demand (but only with the associated reduction of road taxation and a commitment to spending a fair proportion of revenue on enhancing the roads). But we risk getting ahead of ourselves. There's enough to be done in the short term. Today. Tomorrow.

I have already mentioned the appalling state of so many roads as something for immediate action, but there are several other areas where the public would like to see action taken quickly, and which do not require huge spending commitments: once and for all, a limit on the behaviour of rogue clumpers and ticketers on private land; more intelligent road safety measures; and perhaps a



Stephen Glaister: "Traffic is set to rise as the economy recovers"

change to the administrative structure of the Highways Agency to give it a medium-term funding plan as currently happens for the railways.

Most of all, drivers want a bit of love, some public display of affection from ministers which recognises them as valued members of society who contribute to its well-being, rather than try to undermine it. That would make the 34.5 million people in the UK who hold driving licences very happy.

Professor Stephen Glaister is Director of the RAC Foundation for Motoring



Make every citizen a shareholder in the road network



Mutualisation of the highway network could make road pricing acceptable, argue **Ian Mulheirn** and **David Furness**

Roads – the UK’s arteries – are clogged

It is a commonplace to suggest that our lives are speeding up. The 24-hour media, longer working hours and instant communication all mean that things move at an ever-faster pace. Except, that is, on Britain’s roads.

Congestion is bringing traffic to a standstill, with severe economic consequences. The solution already exists – road pricing – but politicians have always been wary of the public backlash against the idea. The Social Market Foundation’s new report *Roads to Recovery* shows how this hitherto insurmountable political barrier can be overcome.

In 2007, 84.5% of all passenger transport in the UK was by car, van or taxi, with a further 6.2% of transport by bus and coach. Our roads are nothing less than the arteries of the UK, delivering the oxygen of commerce around our economy. But the arteries are clogged. The already substantial annual costs of congestion to businesses and households

Modal shift cannot solve the congestion crisis

are set to grow by an extra £22bn by 2025.

On top of the financial burden, the environmental and personal costs of overcrowded roads are also considerable. Cars and lorries stuck in stop-start traffic belch out around twice as much CO₂ as those on free-flowing roads. One study concluded that expanding an overcrowded motorway by one lane leads to a carbon emission reduction of 38%. At moderate to severe congestion levels, externally imposed delays cause one-to two-thirds of vehicle emissions.

And the personal costs should not be overlooked. How familiar is the misery of spending a bank holiday weekend staring at the number plate of the stationary car in front?

That the congestion crisis must be tackled for reasons of Britain’s future prosperity, environment and well-being is clear. But the policy debate about what to do remains stuck in the dark ages.

Policies based on reducing conges-

tion by encouraging people to use public transport – referred to as ‘modal shift’ – can be helpful at the margin. But with more than nine out of ten domestic passenger kilometres being travelled on our roads, modal shift cannot solve the congestion crisis. For the time being, at least, there is no alternative to the car.

While more road capacity is badly needed, road building is unpopular, slow and extremely expensive. All these things make any achievable road-building strategy for congestion insufficient in the coming decade of fiscal austerity.

Although the number of vehicles has increased substantially over the years, congestion is not simply a result of more cars on a road network that has hardly changed. Congestion reflects poor use of the road infrastructure we have.

Since the costs of driving are unrelated to the time of travel or route, there are minimal incentives for drivers to consider when journeys

should be undertaken. The lack of any pricing structure for road users means that, unlike on other forms of transport where peak and off-peak fares help to use capacity most efficiently, road use is incredibly inefficient.

The key to more efficient use of the network is road pricing to tackle congestion. At the moment, drivers have no incentive to travel at less congested times. Just imagine how crowded the trains would be without off-peak ticketing. Yet this common-sense principle doesn't apply on most of our roads, despite evidence that it works.

The London congestion charge, for example, shows what can be achieved. In the first four years of the scheme's operation, traffic in the capital fell by 21%. Subsequent rises in congestion can be traced to increased deployment of bus lanes and more road works, and without the charge, London would, by now, be gridlocked.

However public opposition to congestion charging is overwhelming and politicians have seen the idea as politically toxic. Following a 2007 SMF publication on road charging, a petition on the Downing Street website attracted over 1.7 million signatures from people against the idea. Plans in Manchester for a congestion charge were decisively defeated in a referendum – 79% voted 'no'.

The opposition to road pricing stems from the sentiment that any new charge is simply a way of the Government taxing more. Manchester MP Graham Stringer opposed the congestion charge proposal, saying "You have to come up with an extremely good scheme whereby you reduce other road taxes if you ever want road pricing by consent in this country."

The way to convince people that road pricing is in their interest is to ensure that they benefit directly from the proceeds. Crucially, the public must also retain ownership of what are, after all, their roads. In short, the Treasury must commit itself to keeping its hands off the money.

The answer is to make every citizen a shareholder in the strategic road network – under a process of 'voucher mutualisation'. Everyone should be given a free share in the roads that can be traded on the stock market.

Under this scheme, road tax would be scrapped and drivers charged according to how much, where and when they use the major roads. The abolition of vehicle excise duty would allay public fears that road pricing is simply another way of in-

The lack of any pricing structure for road users makes road use incredibly inefficient

roducing a tax. Indeed the abolition of VED combined with user charging would ensure that foreign drivers on UK roads make a fair contribution to their maintenance, rather than being subsidised, as currently, by UK taxpayers.

If road charges were set at an average of 10p per mile (similar to levels in continental Europe) each citizen's share would be worth about £1,500 on the open market, after taking account of the investment that road tax currently funds. The average driver would be significantly better off, paying less in tolls than they currently do in tax. Heavy road users would pay more, but they'd save on the huge time and fuel costs of congestion that currently hamper industry.

Voucher mutualisation combined with congestion charging is a scheme that is both politically and technologically feasible. The charging principle is also easily understood – motorists pay for what they use

– and mutualisation avoids the pitfalls of privatisation.

Charging must not be seen as a way to patch up the state's finances, but rather a way to tackle congestion. If the exchequer were to benefit from a sell-off of the road network, citizens might understandably feel aggrieved that their property had been used to fill the Government's coffers. Rather, this policy offers a way of overcoming public resistance to a policy that is badly needed if we are to liberate British industry from the handicap of creaking road infrastructure that threatens our economic recovery.

Following the election campaign and the parties' shady numbers on their tax and spending plans, we need bold policies that will foster economic growth for everyone's benefit. There are few challenges more pressing than our congestion crisis. It's time for our politicians to take the lead.

Ian Mulheirn is director and David Furness is head of strategic development of the Social Market Foundation. The SMF's new report, *Roads to Recovery*, is available at www.smf.co.uk/Roads-to-Recovery-Reducing-congestion-through-shared-ownership.html

Road pricing to tackle congestion: "a common-sense principle"



New technology can keep us mobile in austere times

From satnav to smartcards, and variable message signs to telepresence, high-tech solutions will help make the most of drastically reduced funding, says **Steve Norris**

One of the least comfortable parts of Philip Hammond's induction will be when the Permanent Secretary talks about capital projects. Transport is massively weighted toward capital rather than revenue spending; all the economists worth reading agree that we are likely to see the budget for transport schemes cut by up to 50% over the next four years now the election is over and the new ministerial team has to get to grips with the massive budget deficit.

Indeed we gathered as much from the three main parties during the election, although they were remarkably short on detail. So how does the new secretary of state approach the daunting task of keeping the economy moving in such straightened times?

Technology is certainly a significant part of the answer in almost every mode. We already know the Highways Agency will roll out ATM as a much more cost-effective way of dealing with constrained capacity than conventional widening. Variable speed limits will be controlled either by gantry mounted VMS or average speed controlled sections.

Many more vehicles now offer real-time traffic information delivered through factory-fitted navigation devices, and screen-mounted and phone-based applications now accommodate the same capability. Variable message signs will continue to be available for all traffic and of course increasingly accurate traffic radio bulletins will also help drivers anticipate risks and take alternative routes where appropriate.

More controversially, we now know that the technology behind road user charging is effectively available already through a variety of tried and tested techniques.

Lorry road user charging, which will finally enable the government to capture meaningful contributions from foreign registered vehicles using UK roads, is surely now a certainty.

Whether this government will be braver than its predecessor and actively promote road pricing I personally doubt. Increasing fuel duty remains a much more cost-effective way of discouraging drivers from using big cars for long journeys and discouraging excessive consumption generally, and it can be instigated with a stroke of a pen rather than at

the cost of the billions outlined in the Eddington report.

Having seen how naked blackmail failed to impress the citizens of Manchester, the Government may well allow local authorities to introduce local charging if they choose, but will not be anticipating a rush of applications.

One of the characteristics of modern rail maintenance and renewal is that it is carried out using techniques that have in many cases remained unchanged since the 19th century. Building a high speed network may be more of an issue for the next parliament rather than this, but in terms of capacity enhancement the Holy

Lorry road user charging is surely now a certainty

Grail for train operators is the advent of a true seven-day railway.

Currently, the impact of planned maintenance and renewal at weekends means operators pay the costs of a seven-day service but far too often can only use it for five. The government will surely insist on the use of new technology in rail replacement, such as mechanised ballast renewal combined with specially-built train sets that are pre-loaded with sleepers or rail that can achieve as much in overnight possessions as is currently delivered at weekends.

The payback is staggering and the technology is available now. Electrification, which all political parties now support, will mean regenerative braking and other methods of improved energy management can be routinely employed.

On public transport as a whole, new ticketing technology will help deliver more responsive charging systems, eliminate expensive cash handling and allow accurate revenue

allocation. Real-time changes can be delivered to your phone or PC. Timetables can be integrated more readily so as to deliver the seamless hassle-free journey that every public transport user seeks.

One of the residual weaknesses of our bus system, particularly in London, is that the very complexity of the network makes it impossible to represent it on a simple diagram akin to the world famous Tube map. I know the buses in my area, but if I am in an unfamiliar part of the city I have very little information as to how to travel to anywhere that is not signalled on the front of the bus – as it was when the vehicle was horse-drawn. Transport for London has produced a first-class journey planner for use via a PC, but that will very soon be rolled out on to mobile phone applications and could be available on touch screens at bus stops.

And never forget that since the Romans first pushed a cart up Watling Street there has been an umbilical link between economic growth and traffic growth. We are the first generation since then which can – and must in the interests of preserving the planet – cut that link. Modern telepresence technology, the successor to the clunky and largely unused videoconferencing facilities that have never really taken off, will transform how we do long range business. As Icelandic ash frustrated air travel more effectively than the Unite union ever could I sat in a room in London and talked at length to colleagues in New York who were so close, so clear and so engaged that you would have to see it to believe it.

Who needs a third runway at Heathrow when your Shanghai negotiation can take half a day rather than a week and cost a fraction of the airfare? Now there's a thought for the new Secretary of State to ponder.

Steve Norris is a former Conservative transport minister and president of ITS UK



Creative thinking whose time has arrived

Straitened economic circumstances may provide the opportunity for intelligent systems finally to realise their promise, says **Howard Blessington**

The General Election was dominated by the state of the economy and an outlook which suggests that the level of funding and investment for many policy areas, including transport, will be much less in real terms than it has been at just about any other time in recent history.

Despite this prognosis, overall levels of movement will continue to increase and the impacts of such movement will similarly increase. For those involved in addressing these impacts – whether operational, environmental, economic or social – the problems will therefore remain, but the toolkit for providing solutions will be smaller.

The response to the economic and financial imperatives have yet to be fully spelled out but it is likely to be one of cutting (or at least deferring) a large slice of capital spending, seeking alternative forms of finance (PFI/PPP) to undertake a more modest capital programme, promoting travel planning more energetically, and turning, once again, to the Cinderella of the transport world, intelligent transport systems (ITS), as a key to providing transport solutions at a fraction of the usual cost.

For at least 25 years, ITS has promised technology and information-led alternatives to provide transport solutions and, undoubtedly, it has delivered on occasions. But it remains an area of huge, but unfulfilled, potential – think England and the World Cup, or Chelsea and the Champions League.

Nevertheless, reduced expenditure may, perversely, offer real opportunity to test the mettle of ITS in a number of important ways:

- By encouraging the development of “smarter” solutions which link more directly and explicitly to overarching policy objectives and not necessarily to schemes (for example as in the Delivering a Sustainable Transport System approach)

- By creating some breathing space

to resolve a host of associated issues if ITS is to play a more comprehensive role. These include strategic systems governance relating to modal, geographical and political boundaries where different areas of the network are operated by different bodies with different priorities

- By creating the necessary thinking time to develop a plan to allow ITS to migrate from where it is today to what we know it can achieve in the future – integrating all modes and all relevant types of intervention, including pricing and regulation.

Urban traffic management and control remains a job half-done and an investment half-made

Given the underlying assumption that ITS will increasingly be called upon to provide transport solutions, what should its priorities be in the near future? I suggest four distinct areas:

- Complete the job started with urban traffic management and control. We have linked traffic signals and, occasionally, good information but rarely, if ever, do we have strategic control and information linked across all modes. UTMC remains a job half-done and an investment half-made – completing the process will capitalise on the investment already made and potentially generate disproportionate benefits as a result

- Substitute, as far as possible, ITS-style solutions for major construction (for example, signalised roundabouts and urban bus priority show what can be done). Some new construction will always have a role to play in transport but in too many situations



it can perpetuate existing problems through a never-ending catch-up between demand and supply. In such cases, ‘influence’ and ‘control’ will, in any case, often be the better long-term solution

- Resolve the governance and boundary interfaces which inhibit the potential of ITS and will continue to do so

- Accept the inevitable – that eventually, we must tackle the demand side of travel more effectively than through vague talk of behavioural change, travel planning and voluntary agreements. Pricing, its overall level and its variation by time period, has the potential to bring about many of the outcomes which we are seeking today by alternative, less effective, means. It will one day influence our private road-based travel as it currently does with public transport, electricity, telephones, and even leisure activities. We therefore need a concerted effort to produce a plan which will allow existing systems, technologies and governance to move from where we are today to where we know we must be in the future – and ensure that intermediate stages of development concur with that long term strategy.

ITS practitioners have often been criticised for being too concerned

with exploiting new and emerging technologies – solutions looking for problems rather than the other way round. This may on occasion be true but, conversely, the inquiring and inquisitive nature of the practitioner has also spawned much creative thinking and innovation which has extended the armoury of techniques which are used today.

Would managed motorways have evolved as they have without the Highways Agency’s “outward facing research” in the late 1990s? Would we have the range of operational, safety and information regimes today without some wacky thinking and discarded ideas which preceded “innovation”?

Though the next few years will be tough in financial and economic terms, and while ITS must be focused more effectively, we must equally not lose sight of its potential to push back the boundaries of influence and control, and the research required to do that.

Leaner times mean that we will inevitably have less to invest but, paradoxically, this may actually produce better long-term outcomes.

Howard Blessington is a director of AECOM.

Forget high speed rail and focus on car emissions

A green scrappage scheme, more expensive fuel, intelligent speed adaptation and targeted grants for electric cars are what's needed, argues **Ben Webster**



Ben Webster: "Make eco-driving a pass or fail part of the driving test"

Yes, minister, you can deliver a greener transport system, but first you will have to shelve the £30bn high speed line you promised in your manifesto.

I know it played well with the media and on doorsteps during the campaign, but now you are elected there is no point in carrying on the pretence that there is any spare money for such grand projects.

The honest approach would be to announce you are suspending the scheme for five years. But given the promises you made, it might be best to kick it into the long grass by announcing another study that can be spun out for several years.

The real issue you should address is how to deliver the biggest reduction in emissions from transport per pound of public money spent. On that basis, the high speed line would be a very bad investment. Only a minority of its passengers would be switching from higher polluting modes. Even if the 250mph trains supplanted all flights between London, Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh, they would still only reduce total UK transport emissions by a fraction of one per cent.

Let's focus instead on cars, the source of most transport emissions. Your key objective should be to ensure that average CO₂ emissions from new cars continue to decline as rapidly as they have done in the past two years. That means providing stronger incentives for low-carbon (100g/km or less) cars.

The popularity of the £1,000 scrappage grants showed how drivers love the idea of getting something back from the taxman. You should introduce a new scrappage scheme, this time linked to emissions and funded by ratcheting up the road tax rates for all new cars emitting more than the 2009 average of 149g/km.

The grants could start at £1,000 for a car emitting 90-100g/km (there are a growing number of small diesels

and hybrids in this range), and rising to £10,000 for fully electric family cars.

The existing commitment to £5,000 grants for electric cars from next year is inadequate because even the cheaper models, such as the Nissan Leaf, will cost more than £25,000 before the subsidy.

You should also disqualify all electric two-seaters and sports cars, such as the Smart car and Tesla, from receiving any grants. These are toys for rich show-offs which are mainly used in cities where there is already good public transport. They are not contributing to the goal of convert-

It is time to reintroduce the 1990s Conservative policy of a fuel duty escalator

ing ordinary families in the suburbs to electric motoring. You also want to avoid the public outrage that would result from reports of bonus-happy bankers zooming off forecourts in £100,000 Teslas, with £5000 cheques from the taxpayer in their back pockets.

You should also give all drivers an incentive to use fuel more sparingly – either by driving less aggressively or by using their cars less. It is time to reintroduce the Conservative policy from the 1990s of a fuel duty escalator, with real-terms increases each year. This could be made more palatable, however, by linking the annual increase to the oil price. This policy should not be confused with the Tory idea of cutting fuel duty if the oil price rises, which could end up deepening the hole in the public finances. Instead, the existing level of fuel duty should be maintained regardless of the oil price, but the real

terms increase would be suspended for the duration of price spikes.

Eco-driving should be made a pass or fail part of the driving test and companies should be obliged to use existing telematics technology to monitor the fuel consumption of their fleets. Company car drivers who waste fuel by accelerating and braking too hard should have their mileage allowances cut.

Rolling out more speed cameras on motorways on dual carriageways would reduce emissions and noise pollution as well as save lives. Drivers who agree to have intelligent speed adaptation fitted to their cars could be rewarded with free parking and road tax exemption.

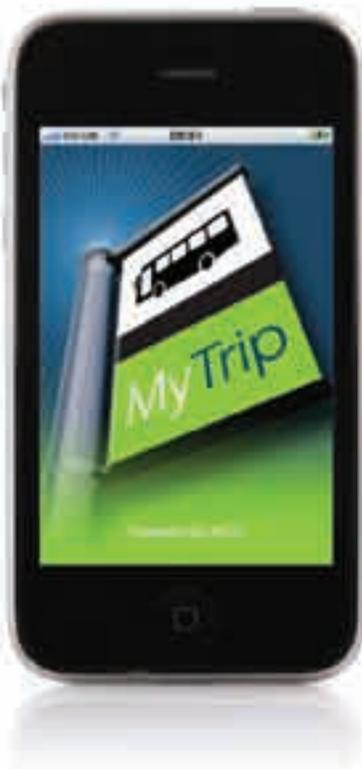
On air travel, you should revive the idea of taxing planes rather than people. Air Passenger Duty should be converted into a single tax on the whole flight, adjusted for distance. This would provide airlines with an incentive to fill seats, reducing the average emissions per passenger.

You also need to find a way of making frequent flyers pay extra for their golf trips to the Algarve without penalising the average family that flies once a year on a summer holiday. This could be done by giving each person a £20 flight voucher, funded by an increase in the total amount paid in aviation tax. People would be able to use these vouchers to part-pay for a flight, or sell them on eBay.

If all that seems a bit daunting, minister, you should recall Jim Hacker's observation to Sir Humphrey: "After all, we do need a Transport Policy."

You might also like to ponder on Sir Humphrey's reply: "If by 'we' you mean Britain that is perfectly true, but if by 'we' you mean me and you and this department, we need a Transport Policy like an aperture in the cranial cavity."

Ben Webster is environment editor of The Times.



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Hybrid bill may be the slow track to new rail

A degree of political consensus has emerged on the principle of high speed rail, if not the route. The outgoing government proposed to secure the powers required for the lines linking London, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds by means of a single hybrid bill. Could this approach to authorisation hold back delivery of HS2, asks **Robbie Owens**



Robbie Owens: "An early bill for the first phase would demonstrate commitment"

Before the election the Labour government promised to consult later this year on proposals for a high speed railway between London and the West Midlands. But construction was not proposed to commence until 2019, despite detailed plans for the initial route having already been published. The Conservatives, who have not yet endorsed the work already undertaken but have indicated that they would also favour a parliamentary procedure, say they would see construction commence by 2015.

Under the current timescales, detailed proposals for lines to Manchester and Leeds are due in June 2011 and further public consultation will be required. If, following these public consultations, the 'Y' shaped network is to proceed, it is currently proposed to secure powers through a single hybrid bill. This article asks whether a phased approach to consents might provide better results.

The temptations of a hybrid bill authorisation route for HS2 are clear – it is a tried and tested means of securing powers. It would enable

the Government to promote a bill affecting private interests, and allow those affected the opportunity to make their cases in Parliament, and it worked for Crossrail and High Speed

1. The new Planning Act 2008 regime for major infrastructure cannot currently provide all the statutory powers that a complex scheme like this might require (for example, public finance or rail regulatory provisions). Given the scale of these proposals, in terms of both cost and geography, it seems right to subject them to parliamentary scrutiny.

What is not so clear is why a *single* bill is favoured, particularly when other work on HS2 is being phased anyway. In effect, the single hybrid bill approach is likely to delay the West Midlands line while work on the Manchester and Leeds lines catches up. The single bill will not authorise any network beyond Manchester and Leeds and it is therefore unclear how and when that part of the network would be approved. A Scottish hybrid bill could authorise the new line in Scotland but the English section of the railway would presumably stop far short of the border in advance of that. As such, a sequential approach to authorisation in Westminster will ultimately be required, so the commitment to a single hybrid bill for London-Leeds/Manchester seems strange in light of this.

The Government's Command Paper, *High Speed Rail*, recognises the possibility of promoting a series of hybrid bills but dismisses this option as being unviable in practice for reasons that include the strain on parliamentary time. The paper also suggests that a series of bills could create significant uncertainty about whether and when powers for subsequent legs could be secured and states that this in turn would impact upon consideration of the initial legislation.

It is certainly true that hybrid bills take up parliamentary time, but the bulk of this is spent considering evi-

dence put forward by petitioners. The principle of a scheme is considered at the bill's second reading, usually lasting no longer than a single day.

Regarding petitioners, it is not clear that consideration of a single bill would bring with it any 'economies of scale' over two separate bills. The total number of the individuals and organisations affected, and the strength of their arguments, would remain the same.

Rather, a larger bill may place an unnecessarily heavy burden on parliamentarians who are assigned to hear objections. The difficulty they face in attending all proceedings and

It is not clear that consideration of a single bill would bring with it any 'economies of scale' over two separate bills

digesting all the evidence is already perceived as a weakness of the process. A bill of the scale being contemplated might exacerbate this problem.

Smaller bills presenting proposals to Parliament in more manageable chunks might serve to focus debate and consideration more effectively. Amending the bill process to enable a single joint committee to consider petitioners' evidence on behalf of both Houses would create a speedier process, which in turn might enable a series of bills to progress relatively rapidly.

A phased approach will not necessarily impact on consideration of the West Midlands line, as it has already been identified as having a sound business case in its own right. Nor would it detract from the vision of the wider network. Politically, an early bill for the first stretch of the line would demonstrate stronger commitment to HSR. Far from casting doubt

on subsequent phases, it would make the case for the construction of a wider network more compelling.

Furthermore, the National Networks National Policy Statement (NPS), expected later this year, is likely to set out clearly the vision of the wider HSR network, and may, depending on a change in government, reflect work already undertaken in terms of what the network will look like.

The West Midlands line will take over six years to build, during which time a second bill could be promoted. Construction periods may well overlap. But this would have the added benefit of enabling land acquisition and construction to commence, while Parliament considered phase two. Early bill promotion and land acquisition would also reduce the blight suffered by those with interests in land already identified as likely to form part of the route.

Indications since the General Election suggest the political will for the principle of HS2 remains in place. The key uncertainties concern timescales and funding – these cannot be underestimated and, to a significant degree, the strategy for resolving them may determine the authorisation methods, rather than the other way around. Despite the apparent political consensus, the main questions will concern how a coalition will manage these considerations in the current economic context.

As far as authorisation is concerned, I would argue that the delayed promotion of a single hybrid bill of unmanageable size risks holding back the development of HSR generally. Instead an initial hybrid bill for the first phase would demonstrate commitment, bring greater clarity for those affected, as well as allowing clear phasing of significant spending.

Robbie Owen is a partner at Bircham Dyson Bell

Seize the chance to reinvent the way we work

With pressure to make spending more effective, now is the time to ditch narrow Government initiatives and re-direct resources to address the fundamental needs of local communities, says **Tony Ciaburro**

As local authorities prepare for cuts expected to be in the order of 30%, changes in the way in which we deal with transport seems inevitable. The debate thus far has been dominated by the different ways in which council services can be delivered more efficiently, but we will be storing up problems for the future if we do not take this unique opportunity to address the fundamental underlying issue of transport policies, strategies and their subsequent implementation programmes to assure that we are truly supporting sustainable lifestyles and communities.

There is a danger that government departments, including the DfT, and local transport authorities alike will fall into the old trap of pursuing less of the same, followed by more of the same as we eventually emerge from the recession, rather than exploring transformational policies that will make a real difference in practice.

There is a temptation for all tiers of government to try to be resilient and weather the economic storm instead of rejecting the status quo which, arguably, has helped to increase our vulnerability in the first instance. We need to be seeking change, reinvention and innovation.

We seem to have lost sight of the axiom that transport is derived demand and should be engaged in a dynamic scenario whereby social, economic and environmental interventions are driving the agenda rather than the other way round. We are simply not good enough at place-shaping and developing communities in the way that the public and the business sector wish to see.

Even the CBI has called for radical changes to the thinking on work-place activities and the way in which people work and commute (or not) in order to reduce congestion and the adverse impacts of traffic in the future. Moreover, a survey of UK shoppers revealed that in their view councils are not doing enough

to prevent high streets becoming ghost towns. Some 56% of respondents believed that there had been a continuing deterioration over the last five years, and 71% expected councils to reinvigorate commercial activity, deal with antisocial behaviour and improve the general environment.

Instead, our transport activities are perceived by many to be in conflict with these aspirations.

Transport policy has moved around in circles and little has changed since the ambitious transport plans first set out in the early 1960s. Decisions have been hugely influenced by politics and funding, with transport solutions being chosen to match government silos and public opinion, instead of

With funding in short supply we can ill afford to chase pockets of funding that don't match our wider local agendas

addressing the bigger picture.

Ironically, with the country braced for the deepest cuts in public services since the war, now is the best time to introduce dramatic change.

While initiatives like Total Place, and the latest jargon of the "single offer" will take local authorities in the right direction, we must make sure that this does not evolve into a bureaucratic nightmare at the local level. Local government, transport operators and providers have traditionally aligned themselves with government budgets, often with a result that has done little to shape the sort of communities we would all wish to see.

To turn this round we will need to free ourselves from our overdependence on DfT and government funding and narrow guidance and think more holistically about the outcomes we

are seeking. This dependency has, over the years, led to bizarre transport interventions. We have seen bus lanes constructed where no buses go, grossly under-used cycleways and buses running around all day long with hardly any passengers – the list goes on. With funding in short supply we can ill afford to continue chasing pockets of funding that don't match our wider local agendas.

There are many examples around the country where local authorities can make a difference in local communities through sensible transport strategies, but these are not widespread or universal. The reality is that the enormity of the financial crisis will dictate how our pressured budgets will be spent. With this in mind many would agree on a broad strategy of first looking after what we already have, both for highways and railways, making sure they are safe for all classes of road user and traveller, optimising their use and encouraging more opportunities for sustainable choices. However, even this approach will be limited by cuts on the scale anticipated.

It is possible to envisage a completely different approach to transport policy whereby more effort and resources are targeted at addressing the underlying problems resulting from public behaviour and lifestyle choices, with an aim of transforming communities. Councils' engagement with stakeholders has improved in recent years and providing better information to residents is recognised as a key factor in public satisfaction.

This approach has been the Cinderella of transport policy and smacks of social engineering. However, if our ultimate goal can be achieved in this way at a fraction of the price then it likely to be more acceptable now than ever before.

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



Tony Ciaburro: "We are simply not good enough at place-shaping"

Links to wider goals could protect transport

Investment could be better protected if the benefits of transport projects for areas of policy such as health and climate change – rather than traditional measures such as capacity – are spelled out, says **Jim Steer**



Jim Steer: “Align projects to sustainable outcomes”

Don't bother to get irritated by comments from former DfT permanent secretary Sir David Rowlands (page 23) to the effect that high-speed rail needs to be seen as part of a series of coherent policies. You might think that his erstwhile department existed to provide such intellectual joinery, but he is right. So will the fashion turn back, under the new administration, towards an attempt at joined-up policy, perhaps this time with a 23-year plan?

To be really radical, the message on policy coherence for Philip Hammond's team ought to be: talk to your ministerial colleagues in adjacent departments. Because the guiding spirit for transport policy should be properly interwoven with thinking on personal health, on tackling climate change and energy scarcity, on regional development and a national programme of economic recovery – and even on the favourite word of the general election, fairness.

Of course chats across the cabinet table are hardly going to be effective unless the way that the civil service functions is also changed. But embedding transport policy into fulfilling the ambitions of adjacent departments is a good way to protect

critical programmes and prove that they provide more than a passing sop to what's left of the road lobby and to whingeing commuters.

In asking of adjacent departments what can transport do for you, we might also just gain a little reciprocity: what can you guys do that will help ease the burden on our overstretched transport system? Build more regional hospitals? I don't think so. Encourage greater parental choice on schools? Not helpful.

But this is to luxuriate in a spring-time blessed with endless hours of sunshine and a temporary absence of aircraft noise. It can't last, so let's get real, as Gordon was wont to say in the televised debates.

All the major political parties are signed up to high-speed rail and most also understand it to be the most sustainable way to add national transport capacity, as well as achieving a step-change in the quality of service available. So to return to Sir David's question, what is needed to create overall coherence around the opportunity that high-speed rail brings?

If the key policy driver of high-speed rail is capacity, then we would need to look at the question of where this is to be provided, and more pertinently, where it isn't. Would this mean that in those corridors that high-speed rail can't reach, we should look for complementary capacity investments, say on the road network?

The short answer is no. Support for high-speed rail may ultimately be persuasive because it is clearly the best way to add long distance capacity, but that doesn't mean that there has been a reversion to pre-1990s thinking (“predict and provide”). Capacity isn't the sole driver for high-speed rail and it shouldn't return to the centre of the policy stage.

Instead, our roads policy and the appraisal of the limited investment opportunities that will remain affordable need to be aligned to a set of

more highly-valued and sustainable outcomes. How much better it would be if new road investments were to be assessed on the basis of virtues other than the old favourites of extra capacity and small journey time reductions. There are some perfectly worthwhile highway projects that would contribute to measures within the purview of those adjoining government departments: better personal health (including stress reduction), less pollution, fewer accidents and greater predictability of journey times.

So much harder to see planning

Capacity isn't the sole driver for high-speed rail and it shouldn't return to the centre of the policy stage

clashes and effective anti-roads campaigns if these were the only admissible benefits in road appraisals, artificial though the exclusion of traditionally measured transport benefits might be. One thing we cannot afford, surely, is to waste scarce funding on protracted planning battles.

The Liberal Democrat position, as explained by Norman Baker pre-election, was that his party's proposed switch away from road expenditure would lead not only to the cancellation of new road projects but also to scrapping the managed motorways programme. But surely part of the wider joined-up policy programme will have to include better management of what we already have, and the managed motorway programme merits progressive extension to other trunk roads rather than curtailment.

It would be fair to ask where the

funds will come from. As the British Chamber of Commerce's recent surveys show, business is very reluctant to see either a national road pricing scheme or further attempts at Manchester-style local schemes. But about a third of those businesses polled support the introduction of motorway tolling. That's how to make these highways sector schemes affordable, as well as capable of rapid adoption, because this is a wholly new revenue stream, collectable at very low cost.

Of course we would all like to see funds devolved to cities and the English regions so that others could emulate the prioritisation that Scotland and London have given to better transport. We'd then discover that there are other opportunities available in the complementary policy mix, not all of which should be a matter for Westminster to decide.

We'd soon come back to asking why our largest cities lack modern tramway systems despite perfectly sound business cases. We might even realise that the rest of Europe is busy developing cross-city regional rail networks. Now there's a complement for high-speed rail.

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



City tram systems could complement high speed rail

The new Government needs a vision for transport

A coherent transport strategy is the only way to stave off massive cuts – but can our politicians overcome short-termism and fear of unpopularity and rise to the challenge? **Adam Raphael** is dubious

What happened to the great election debate on transport which we were promised by none other than *Transport Times*? To be fair to *TT*'s publisher, David Begg, he did note in a pre-election comment that all those hoping that transport would be a key issue were "extreme optimists".

Well, he can say that again. Transport was not mentioned in any of the three televised debates between the leaders. It rated barely a line in the millions of words devoted by newspapers to campaign issues. And as for the party's manifestos, it rated fewer than 600 words from each of the three major parties, much of which were given over to vague platitudes such as the Tories' promise to "give the concerns of cyclists greater priority". The only significant difference between the parties was Labour's backing of a third runway at Heathrow, a policy opposed by both the Tories and the Liberal Democrats.

There was, at least, one issue on which the parties were in agreement: the development of high-speed rail. Though there are some issues on the route, and how it should link to Heathrow, the Labour and Conservative manifestos parroted one another in their enthusiasm for super-fast rail journeys, while the Liberal Democrats said they planned to set up a UK infrastructure bank to invest in such high-value public transport projects as high-speed rail. The real issue post-election is whether this enthusiasm survives the tough public expenditure and infrastructure cuts that lie ahead.

Some of the election commitments that were made were bizarre. The Liberal Democrats promised in a bout of pre-Beeching nostalgia that they would switch traffic from road to rail by investing in local rail improvements, "such as opening closed rail lines and adding extra tracks, paid for by cutting the major roads

budget". The Conservatives noted without a hint of irony that "because travel abroad is so important for our economy, we need to improve our airports... so we will stop the third runway at Heathrow... block plans for second runways at Stansted and Gatwick".

But the prize for nonsense surely goes to Labour whose manifesto, after noting that tackling road congestion was "a key priority", proclaimed: "We rule out the introduction of national road pricing in the next Parliament." No mention of further research, no mention of local initiatives, no mention of tolls on new motorways. Road pricing

The truth is that transport is far down the political agenda because none of the parties have any coherent thoughts

did not even rate a mention in the Conservative manifesto while the Liberal Democrats promised to "undertake preparations" for revenue-neutral road pricing in a second Parliament.

Not much sign of a great debate in any of this, despite the fact that millions of commuters daily put up with roads which are congested to the point of paralysis, are crammed into overcrowded trains running at pre-Victorian speeds, and stuffed into grossly overcrowded airports. Unlike health, education or crime, transport touches almost everyone's daily life. Noise, pollution, congestion, delays, safety and cost are popular concerns.

But the truth is that transport is far down the political agenda because none of the parties have any coherent thoughts, let alone a solu-

tion. The result is a subject that no aspiring politician wants to tackle. Stephen Byers famously muttered that it was "a poisoned chalice" when offered the post of transport secretary.

Since the end of World War II, transport ministers have come and gone, few lasting more than a year. Most of them have been on their way down, if not out of politics altogether. Apart from Ernie Marples, Barbara Castle, and possibly Alistair Darling, few members of the public could put a name to any of them.

Unfortunately, fear of the road lobby has paralysed debate on how to restrain traffic. The petrol price blockades in 2000 panicked politicians of all parties into believing that the risks of action outweighed any potential rewards at the ballot box.

Second only to fear, short-termism bedevils transport planning. One of the reasons why Britain has a grossly congested transport system is that it is almost always first in line for the chop when cuts are made in public expenditure, as we are now about to see.

In the next review of expenditure, transport spending will almost certainly be once again a prime target. But more than any other policy area, it requires a long-term vision and long-term planning. A new road, railway or airport takes at least 15 years to plan and build.

Voters are rightly cynical of those who promise rapid improvements, but the new government must come up with a coherent transport strategy. To do that, it must be willing to debate openly the options with the public, even if that means courting unpopularity.

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.



Adam Raphael: "Fear of the road lobby has paralysed debate"

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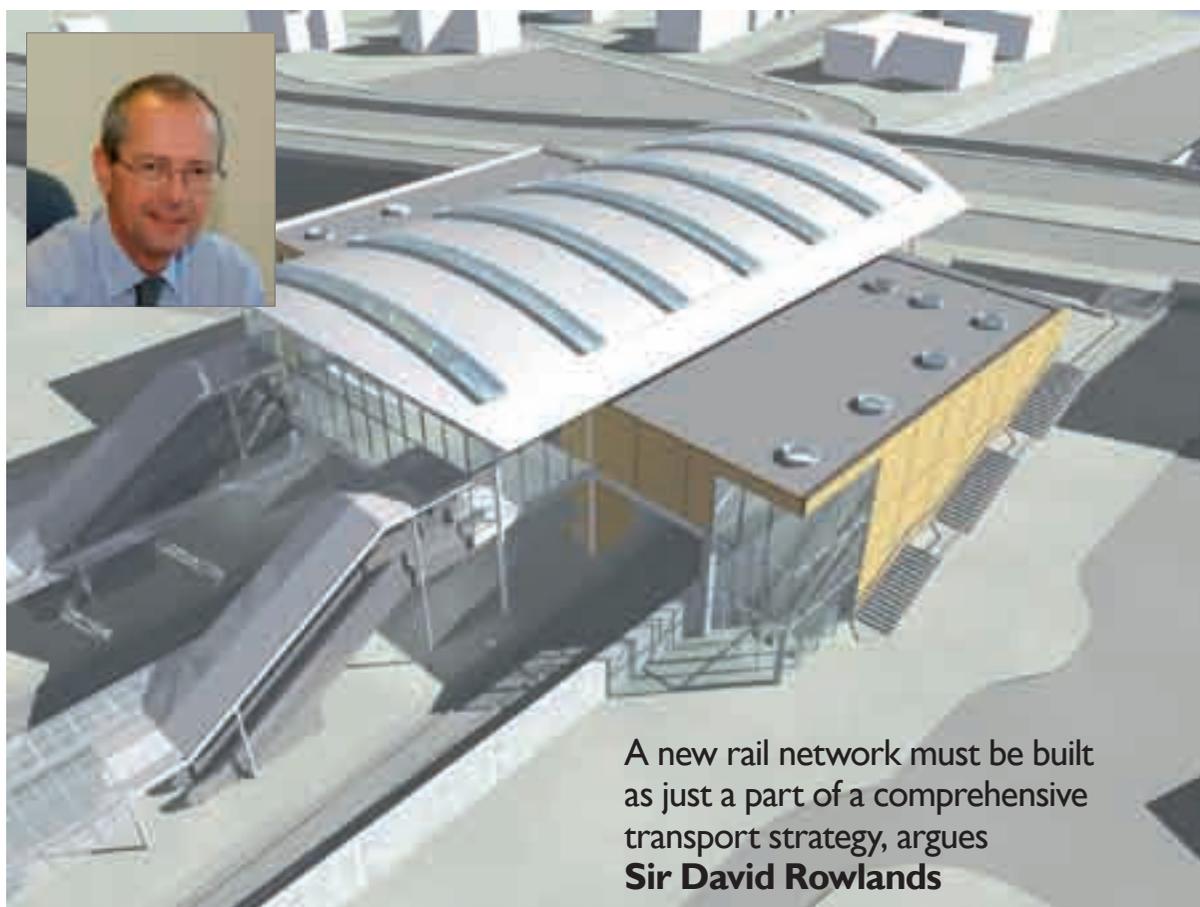


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Four tests for high speed rail



A new rail network must be built as just a part of a comprehensive transport strategy, argues **Sir David Rowlands**

I think the cost is ultimately affordable, and there is a more than decent business case

high speed over conventional tracks is relatively modest.

The second reason for building a new network is that it could be, certainly should be, a key part of a comprehensive transport policy which meets the infrastructure needs of this country as well as rising to the environmental challenges. It should be a part, but only a part, of a set of policies which deal with the wider rail network, road capacity, ports and airports.

On which basis, and as an aside, it seems to me the proposals in the various manifestos failed abysmally. It is not too much of a parody to suggest that both the main parties' idea of a transport policy for the future seemed to consist of a commitment to building a high speed network, being nice to cyclists and stopping the gas board from digging up the streets!

So what are the challenges should the Government decide to press on with high speed?

Engineering? Not really. The engineering is relatively straightforward – or at least that is what engineers have told me.

Environmental? That's hard. The route which HS2 has put forward goes through the Chilterns. It was unavoidable given its remit. The team tried very hard to mitigate the impacts on an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. And none of that has prevented what we can already see will be a major campaign to fight the proposals.

Nor did we realise, because of our concerns about the Chilterns, that the route proposals might face opposition elsewhere. The area around

turn to page 24

Crossrail was talked about for 20 years before anything happened

I wondered when I was asked to talk to you about high speed rail whether there was really anything much to say. After all, HS2's report published last month is nearly 250 pages long, with many hundreds more pages of supporting technical material. The Government's own Command Paper is another 150 pages.

And last month all the main political parties committed themselves in their manifestos to building a new high speed railway network.

So what more is there to say? Well, perhaps a great deal, since I suspect the real debate about high speed has scarcely begun.

I do not speak for High Speed 2, still less my old Department or the Government. So perhaps at this stage of the project's life I can offer a few personal reflections.

I would like to look first at why anyone would want to build a new high speed network at what would undoubtedly be enormous cost, then look at what are the challenges in doing so. I ought to say a few words about Heathrow Airport. And then finally there is the million dollar question: will it ever be built?

Why would this country want to spend £30bn or so to build high speed lines from London to Birmingham and through to Manchester and Leeds? And perhaps spend much the same again if a network eventually extends to Newcastle and Scotland or even to Wales, as one of the political parties seems to be suggesting?

I think the cost is ultimately affordable given the lengthy timescales involved, and there is a more than decent business case. But if a high speed network is to be built then the reason for doing it should, in my opinion, be twofold. First, it is not about high speed *per se*: it is about capacity.

The transport history of this country is a sorry tale of too little too late when it comes to capacity. Heathrow has two runways when its main rivals have four or five. Paris has the RER while we are only just beginning to build the first leg of such a system. Our motorways are on average used twice as intensively as their equivalents on the continent. I could go on.

A high speed rail network offers the opportunity to break through rail capacity constraints on the main lines for at least a generation and maybe longer. The demand forecasts suggest we will need it, starting with the West Coast Main Line south of Birmingham. If we are to build a brand new line of route for capacity reasons then the incremental cost of

from page 23

Coventry and the Kenilworth gap has emerged as another sensitive point where further mitigation work may be needed.

What this tells us is that, in a crowded island with many other equally sensitive areas, avoiding such areas is hugely important where we can and that environmental mitigation is vital where we cannot.

What it also tells us is that no high speed line will be built unless the Government, through the planning system, finds a way of properly balancing national need against local interests. Recent history does not inspire me with confidence that this will be so.

What about costs? I said that I thought high speed was affordable given the timescales. But that does not change the fact that it would still be hugely expensive.

The High Speed 2 report quite clearly suggests that, based on information supplied confidentially from some of our neighbours in Europe, the costs of building a new line in this country may be unreasonably high. Interestingly we were hearing at the same time similar suggestions about the costs of building new nuclear power stations in the UK compared with mainland Europe.

The problem, if there is one and there are certainly some who would deny it, is about the costs of civils work. I do not know how this will play through. But it seems to me that HS2 in its report has let a cat out of the bag and that, one way or another, high speed may not proceed as a project unless and until the Government is satisfied on the point. And for the Government read Her Majesty's Treasury.

On funding and financing, I really do believe high speed is affordable and therefore fundable. Most of that funding will inevitably have to come either from taxpayers or rail users – although I am quite sure there will be siren voices promising that the private sector can help to meet the costs and ministers who will be only too willing to listen.

This is partly because too many ministers fail to understand the distinction between funding and financing and too many who fail to understand just how much will need to be spent – measured in billions of pounds – even before construction begins, let alone once it is under way and private sector funding can become engaged.

This is not to deny a real and major role to the private sector. There are potentially free-standing elements

like stations which might be fundable by private sector interests. There is a real role for the private sector in building a network and managing the risks. And there may be scope to release value to meet some of the costs of extensions to the network if early taxpayer funded stages are built for sale to the private sector.

Which brings me to project sponsorship and project management. There are not many people in the civil service with genuine expertise in big transport projects and even fewer potential ministers in any of the main parties. I want to come back to this. All I will say at this stage is that project sponsorship and management are so vital that the new Government ought to take the time to think it through and get it right – and to realise that many of the people who will be offering advice on how to go about the project are not disinterested observers but are instead talking their own book.

The final challenge I want to touch on is “politics” with a big “P” and a small “p”. All the main parties may have agreed upon the need to build a new high speed network. But there is not necessarily agreement on the shape of the network. And nobody has agreed where the stations should be.

Some of you may have heard warnings at a high speed rail conference last year from SNCF and from Deutsche Bahn about how they were pressurised by regional and local interests into building stations on their high speed lines which they did not want. Could it happen here?

Well, look at High Speed 1. It is just 68 miles from the Channel Tunnel to St Pancras. And we have a terminal station there, a disused terminus at Waterloo, an unused station at Stratford, an underused station at Ebbsfleet and a dying station at Ashford.

It does not bode well for the future, not least because the hybrid bill which all parties seem to see as the vehicle for getting new high speed lines built is not just a planning vehicle. It is a political tool as well.

I promised a word about Heathrow and here I ought to declare an interest. I am the chairman of Gatwick Airport Limited and therefore in competition with Heathrow.

The case for linking Heathrow to the high speed network is weak. It is not just HS2 which has said so in its

report. Network Rail said much the same last year in its own report on high speed.

Nevertheless there is a wider question, which goes beyond high speed, about how Britain's premier airport, and its only hub airport, fits into the rest of the transport network. That is why I think the outgoing Government was right to ask Lord Mawhinney to look at Heathrow more broadly and to assess the options. It is certainly what we at HS2 thought should happen in the aftermath of our report.

As for a third runway there are good arguments both for and against building it. It ought to be the job of the planning system to decide where the balance lies.

All I will say is that the suggestion that linking Heathrow to a new high speed network means there is no need for a third runway is not just nonsense but, to borrow a phrase from Dr Johnson, nonsense on stilts. A cursory look at the numbers

should be enough to convince anyone with an open mind of that.

So finally the million-dollar question. Will it be built? In truth I have no idea.

Again past history is a guide. I think the

Channel Tunnel first started life in Napoleonic times and digging first started in 1974. It opened in 1994. Crossrail surfaced as a proposal in the Central London Rail Study in 1988 but is not planned to open until 2017. The Chelsea-Hackney line, now Crossrail 2, featured in the same study but remains just an aspiration. History suggests that big transport infrastructure projects in the UK take a long time to reach fruition, if at all.

The history of the West Coast Main Line modernisation is instructive. Not Railtrack's eventual project and its rescue by the Strategic Rail Authority, but an earlier period in the 1990s. There was no money, Ministers of the day tried to create a semblance of activity by letting consultancy studies and nothing happened expect the imposition of a growing number of speed restrictions at the southern end of the line to keep it safe.

For me that was an instructive period and it leads me to propose three tests by which to judge whether the Government is serious and whether high speed is likely to progress as a project or whether it is just political hand waving.

First, and I said I would return to this, how is the project being structured in terms of its sponsorship and management? To take two extremes, at one end we could have the Secretary of State directly sponsoring the project with close management by his or her department either through an agency, say, or through a closely controlled, government owned company.

At the other extreme sponsorship could be through, say, a statutory high speed rail authority answerable ultimately to Parliament with management through an arm's length special purpose vehicle supported by bought in functional specialists.

I know which I would vote for. The closer a long-life project like high speed rail stays to ministers and civil servants the greater the scope for interference for short term gain by people with a vanishingly small amount of expertise. None of that would be helpful and too much of it will kill the project.

Second, is there a declared timetable for the project with clear and published milestones both for decisions and in terms of progress? And who is to be held accountable for slippage? No real timetable to my mind means the project is not happening.

Third and finally, where is the money? Unless you can see a clear funding line across a period of some 20 years or so, year by year, then I doubt the project will happen, no matter what manifestos may say. You simply do not build £30bn worth of railway on a wing, a prayer, good intentions and the promise that all will come good – particularly if the white knight is supposed to come from the private sector.

In summary I think a high speed network can be built and perhaps ought to be – but only as part of a coherent and wide-ranging set of transport policies and not as a substitute for them.

I said in my foreword to the HS2 report, it is the only new network we can expect to build in the 21st century. I also said it is the work of a generation. It will need real ambition and consistency of purpose across a succession of governments and support across the political divide. That, if you like, is the fourth and final test to see whether high speed will ever happen.

Sir David Rowlands was formerly chairman of High Speed 2 and is a former DfT permanent secretary. This is an edited version of a recent speech at an event organised by recruitment consultant Odgers Infrastructure Practice.

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Quarmby to head winter review

David Quarmby CBE, consultant and former director of Colin Buchanan, was appointed last month by outgoing Transport Secretary, Lord Adonis, to lead a review of the resilience of England's transport systems to severe winter weather. The aim of this study is to identify practical measures to improve the response of England's transport systems – road, rail and air – to severe winter weather. The study will build on previous recommendations, and will take account of reviews of experience and lessons learned by public authorities, network operators and transport providers. The study will consider the views of transport users and stakeholders, the effectiveness of communications about travel conditions, and the contribution of weather forecasters.

Colin Buchanan has also announced the appointment of **Jon Herbert** to its planning team, from Urban Initiatives where he was a senior associate involved in the production of masterplans, AAPs and provision

of strategic planning advice. Since joining the company, Jon has been appointed to the CABA enabling panel.

TRL has appointed **Mike Grimsey** to the role of programme development director for rail. Mr Grimsey joins TRL from Jacobs UK where he was an operations director. He is a chartered civil engineer with over 20 years' experience of highway, rail and transportation infrastructure, gained in both contracting and consulting, within public and private sector markets. He will bring a long-held interest in railways and integrated transport to his role of building on TRL's successful expansion into the rail sector, by developing stronger client relationships at all levels with key rail clients.

Cubic Transportation Systems has appointed **Colin Fullalove** as its new business development director.

Mr Fullalove joins the ticketing technology specialist from Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems, where he was



responsible for international business development. At Cubic he will have day-to-day responsibility for building long-term relationships at senior levels among both its existing customer base and in new markets, including mobile ticketing.

Independent multidisciplinary consultant Peter Brett Associates LLP (PBA) has appointed **Keith Mitchell** as chairman. He takes over from Steve Capel-Davies, who steps down after completing his four-year term of office. Malcolm Cleaver continues as managing partner.

Mr Mitchell has extensive experience in the planning and implementation of transport and urban regen-

eration projects, gained during his 25 years with PBA. Mr Capel-Davies, who led the firm through the transition from a traditional partnership to limited liability partnership in 2008, will continue to deploy his experience in river engineering, hydrology and sustainable development.

Andrew Chivers, managing director of train operator National Express East Anglia, has been appointed the new chair of GoSkills' board of directors. Mr Chivers will replace the outgoing chair, Nick Mitchell, who is stepping down having led the sector skills council to achieve its new licence to operate from the government. Mr Chivers said: "The passenger transport sector plays a critical role in supporting the UK economy and it is important that services are delivered by a skilled and competent workforce. By working closely with employers and stakeholders we can make a real difference in improving skills in the passenger transport sector."

Win a copy of 'How To Be A Better Cyclist'

Cycling is a practical and speedy way of getting around, and the IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists), a name synonymous with safer driving since its formation in 1956, has extended its umbrella to include cyclists with the launch of a new book, *How to be a better cyclist*. The book, compiled by author John Franklin, is the essential guide to experiencing the pleasure of cycling safely and efficiently. With colour photos on every page, and lots of demonstrations of how the IAM advises cyclists to carry out manoeuvres safely, the book is informative and detailed.

With six individuals tragically having died while cycling in the country's capital so far this year alone, it is clear that action needs to be taken to reduce the vulnerability of cyclists. While there is no doubt that other road users also have a part to play in this, Advanced Cycling teaches individuals increased hazard awareness and anticipation: key skills for avoiding trouble. By better understanding how the traffic system operates and how cyclists



can best integrate with it, cyclists can respond dynamically to the changing traffic situation, in a way that makes cycling safer and also more enjoyable.

The IAM, the UK's largest independent road safety charity, is also offering a membership option for cyclists which will include various goodies including the book, vouchers and some essential hi-viz

equipment. Unlike other membership options, passing the Advanced Driving Test is not a prerequisite for membership, although there will be cycle training options for those who wish to improve their skills.

IAM cycling development manager Duncan Pickering says: "We are pleased to be able to offer cyclists the same opportunities to improve their riding safety and

awareness as other road users. Cycling is economic, environmentally friendly, and has fantastic health benefits, as well as often being a more convenient way to get around, especially in congested areas such as London."

To find out more about the IAM's new role in cycling, please visit the website at www.iam.org.uk.

We have three copies of *How to be a better cyclist* to give away to *Transport Times* readers. All you have to do is answer the following questions:

1. What two skills does the IAM believe are key for avoiding trouble?
2. In what year was the IAM formed?
3. In 2008, which city was named England's first Cycling City?

Email your answers to chelsea.robison@transporttimes.co.uk with "Cycling Competition" in the subject line, to arrive no later than Friday, 4 June. The first three correct entries to be selected at random after this date will be the winners.



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