transport times

The independent voice of transport

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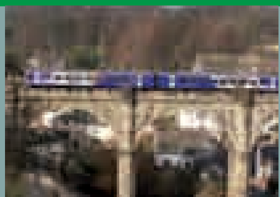

Is the North losing out on transport?

Tackling the imbalance in investment p25

Network Rail takes a more responsive route

David Higgins on devolution p13

Is airport expansion inevitable?

Why the benefits may not be clear cut p24

Time to get behind high speed rail

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If you support high speed rail let your voice be heard

It's time for those of us who believe in the case for high speed rail (HSR) to stand up and be counted. It would be complacent to assume that it will happen regardless. The Government has set out its stall, but faces a varied alliance of opposition ranging from local people in the Chilterns who fear for their quality of life, to the Countryside Alliance and the Taxpayers Alliance.

The "anti" movement is well funded and organised and has had some success in influencing opinion. The route, business case and concept have all come under attack. Labour's shadow transport secretary, Marie Eagle, has questioned the priority that should be given to the project. This is a 30-year project and it is vital that there remains cross-party support to ensure it has the backing of successive parliaments.

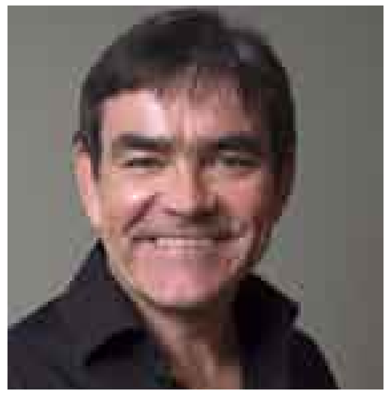
As you will have heard me rant on in the past, we have not been good at long-term transport planning in the UK. Short-termism has been our downfall. The HSR project looks at demand for inter-city rail travel over the next 30 years and concludes that new railway lines with trains travelling at faster, European-type speeds have the best business case to tackle the shortfall in capacity.

It is vital that those of us who support HSR stay united and don't fall out over the route it takes. That means supporting the Y-route. The first line has to be the stem from London to Birmingham (HS2) linking up our two largest conurbations. For an HSR network to become a reality in the Britain the case for HS2 has to be won.

This also happens to be the toughest battle to win as there is little benefit to the local population in the Chilterns and the business case, while still attractive with a benefit to cost ratio of 2 to 1, is not as good as the business case of future legs of HSR to Manchester and Leeds and to the North East and Scotland.

There are, however, five good reasons why HSR is worth supporting:

1. The capacity constraints on the West and East Coast main lines make it essential and not just desirable.



> **It would be mad to build a new line in 10 years with trains travelling at 125mph when our international competitors are designing them for 225mph**

Inter-city passenger numbers have been growing at 5% a year since the mid-1990s and the recent recession has done little to reverse this trend. In 12 years the West Coast main line will be at full capacity. Longer trains and platforms will buy a few years, but no more than that.

A new north-south rail line could be designed for conventional speeds. However, this would cost 90% of HS2 but only produce a third of the benefits. It would be mad to build a new line in 10 years with trains travelling at 125mph when our international competitors are designing them for 225mph.

2. The business case is a good one, but while a benefit/cost ratio of 2.6:1 for the Y-route passes the DfT investment hurdle, it fails to take account of the agglomeration benefits which proponents from the Northern Way have estimated at £13bn.

KPMG has also quantified wider economic benefits from HSR for the North of England alone at £12bn a year. Conventional cost benefit analysis only looks at time savings and fails to take account of real impacts on the economy.

Demand forecasts for HS2 are also very conservative. The assumption is that demand will grow at 1.4% a year when, as mentioned above, inter-city rail patronage has been growing at 5% a year for the past 15 years.

3. HSR will help to narrow the North-South divide. GDP per head is a third higher in the South than the North. If the North had grown at the same rate as the South over the last decade, UK GDP would be 2% higher.

The Northern Way study shows that wider economic benefits from HSR are greater in the North than in the South and that it will play an important role in narrowing the North-South productivity gap.

4. HSR allows us to make better use of the existing rail network. It will free capacity for more stopping trains and freight traffic. The UK rail network mixes inter-city trains with local and freight trains. They all need to travel at different speeds and it is frustrating that fast inter-city trains too frequently get held up by slower trains. This is one compelling reason why our European competitors have built dedicated HSR.

5. HSR is affordable. In the lifetime of this parliament expenditure is limited to preparatory work (around £1bn over the next four years); thereafter the capital spend will be around £2bn a year, which is equivalent to what is currently being spent on Crossrail. The major construction work on HS2 will begin after Crossrail is built.

Rather than just write the odd article supporting HSR I have set up a company: Campaign for HSR. Myself and others will be working with Westbourne Comminications. A start has already been made with the "Business for HSR" initiative. Your help is appreciated, whether it be through donations, writing letters, or speaking at public meetings.

David Begg

David Begg is publisher of *Transport Times*

contents

Speak up for high speed rail, Hammond urges supporters

By David Fowler

Transport secretary Philip Hammond sought to mobilise support for high speed rail at a *Transport Times* conference last week, calling on Northern transport leaders to rally behind government plans for a UK network.

Days after launching the official five-month consultation on the project's first stage, from London to Birmingham, he warned leaders at the Manchester conference: "The consultation will see opponents of high speed rail, mainly in the South, deploy every weapon available to them to try to stop this project. It is essential that those who see the power of high speed rail to deliver economic change and benefit Britain speak up loudly and clearly in favour of this project as the consultation progresses."

Consultation on proposals for a Y-shaped route beyond Birmingham is not due till next year. But Mr Hammond called on business to unite behind the project, and for civic leaders to mobilise public engagement, "just as civic leaders in the Chilterns are mobilising and bankrolling those who are opposed to HS2".

Setting out government strategy as well as details of the preferred route to Birmingham, the consultation documents describe a high speed rail network as "a transformational investment" and say that, with other countries pressing ahead with high speed rail projects, "Britain cannot afford to be left behind."

The full Y-network to Leeds and Manchester would cost £32bn and would generate benefits of around £44bn, as well as £27bn revenue. This gives a benefit-cost ratio of 2.6.

London would be brought within 49 minutes of Birmingham and 80 minutes of Manchester and Leeds. Travel times between Birmingham and Manchester would be reduced to around 50 minutes, and between Manchester and Leeds to just over an hour.

The document bases its case on the need for greater capacity on north-south lines from London. Demand on the West Coast main line is expected to rise by 60% to 2024, and on the East Coast and Midland main lines by 70% to 2036. It quotes Network Rail's view that the southern end of the West Coast main line will be "effectively full" by 2024.

A new high speed network "would generate significantly greater benefits for travellers in capacity, connectivity and reliability" than any of the other options, as well as helping to bring about "valuable strategic change in the economic geography of Britain, supporting sustainable long-term growth and reducing regional disparities".

It would improve access to markets in London and the South East for businesses in the Midlands and the North as well as catalysing regeneration at locations such as Old Oak Common in west London and the Eastside district of Birmingham.

There would be capacity for 14 trains hourly, each carrying up to 1,100 passengers, at the same time as releasing capacity on the existing lines – for example allowing as many as 12 trains hourly to Milton Keynes.

As many as six million air trips and nine million road trips could transfer to rail.

Reliability would be significantly greater than on existing lines and wider economic benefits would include contributing to increased business productivity, costed at around £4bn for the London-West Midlands section alone. The network would also be "broadly carbon neutral".

In addition the Government also believes that there would be "significant non-monetised benefits" such as a contribution to job creation and regeneration.

There would also be non-monetised costs, including the impact on the local environment and communities. These include "noticeable noise increases in a number of areas" as well as an impact on the landscape, including in the Chilterns area of outstanding natural beauty. However the document says: "Although these impacts cannot be eliminated entirely, HS2 Ltd's recent work to review and improve its proposed alignment demonstrates that sensitive route design and refinement can substantially reduce them."

The number of homes affected by high noise levels, for example, has fallen from 350 to around 10.

New conventional speed lines would not be significantly cheaper to construct or operate than high speed lines, and would have a similar environmental impact, but would generate fewer benefits and less revenue.

The Government commissioned analysis of proposals to upgrade the existing main lines from London and found that the works required would be substantial but the benefits would be far less. Only one option generated benefits greater than its costs, with a BCR of 1.4.

Though the enhancement options would have lower visual and noise impact and would require less land, "the level of disruption caused to travellers would be extremely high", the document says.

The Government proposes to build the Y-route in stages because of the length of time needed to gain Parliamentary approval and the scale of the works, beginning with the Birmingham section. It plans to deposit a bill in autumn 2013.

A direct connect to High Speed 1 would form part of phase one. A spur to Heathrow would be built in phase two.

Conference report, p19

Trains travelling at 225mph would reach Birmingham in 49 minutes

HS2 route refinements reduce local impact

The Government's proposed route between London and Birmingham is based on work carried out by the government-owned company High Speed 2 over the last two years and substantially refined since its report of December 2009.

Key characteristics are a line capable of operation at up to 250mph, but with trains initially running at 225mph. Trains will be up to 400m long with up to 1,100 seats. There will be capacity for up to 14 trains hourly in each direction initially.

Impact on the environment will be minimised by following existing rail or road corridors, using deep cuttings and tunnels, and avoiding sensitive sites "where possible".

The consultation document says that the economic case for HS2 relies on catering for journeys that people want to make: hence route design focused mainly on city centres for station locations. More than 90 route and station options were considered from the viewpoint of cost, engineering feasibility, demand and environmental impacts.

HS2 submitted recommended and alternative routes to the government in December 2009; additional advice was provided last autumn, including options for environmental mitigation, leading to the choice of the Government's preferred route for consultation.

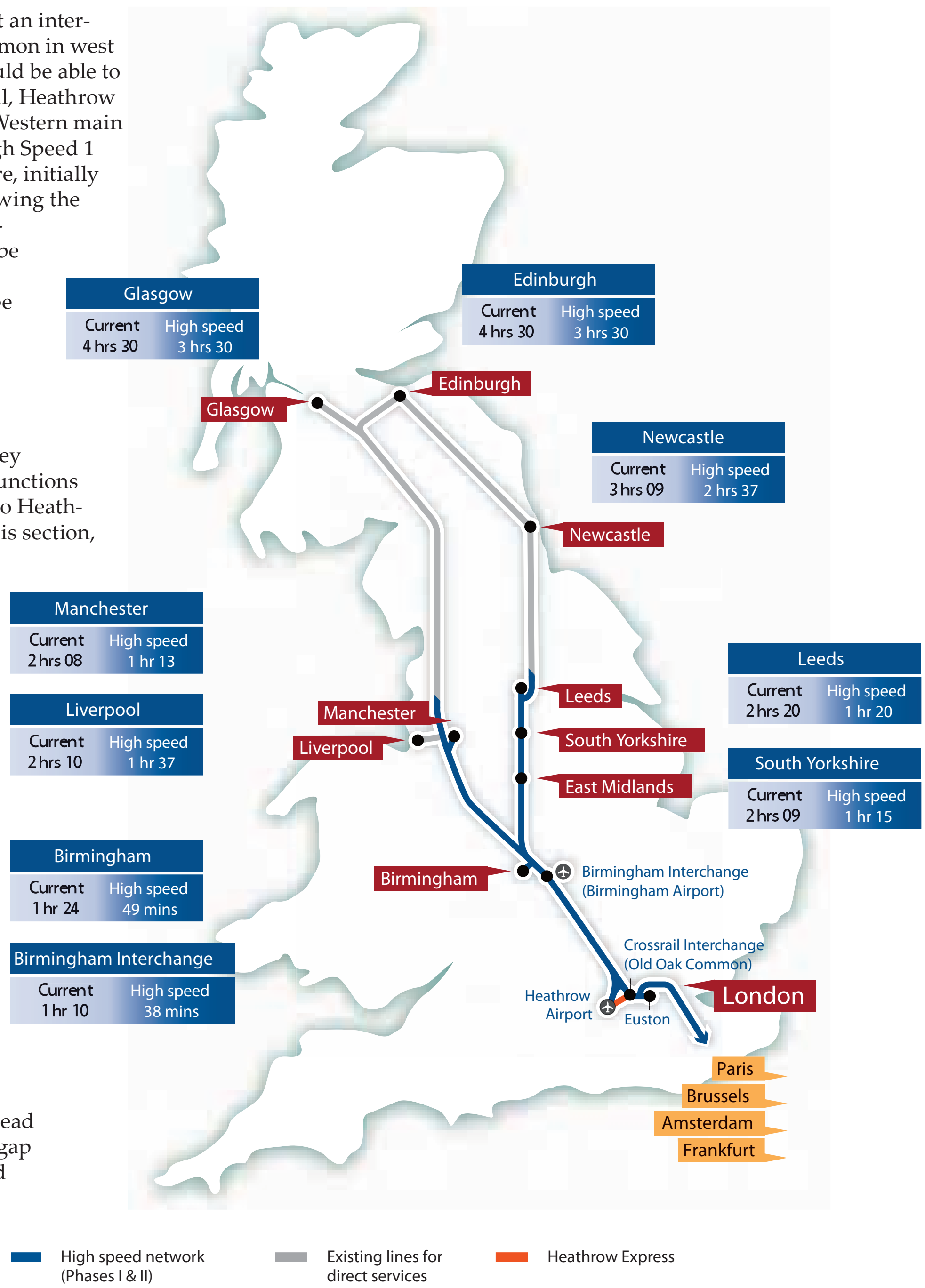
The preferred London-West Midlands route would have its terminus at a redeveloped Euston serving both high-speed and conventional lines. The station would need to be extended to the south and west. The platforms would be built 2m below the current level, allowing new development above them and opening up east-west routes across the site.

From Euston, the route would descend into tunnel for about four and a half miles, emerging at an interchange at Old Oak Common in west London. Passengers would be able to change here for Crossrail, Heathrow Express, and the Great Western main line. A direct link to High Speed 1 would also run from here, initially in tunnel and then following the North London Line eastwards. This link would be impracticable to build at a later date and so will be integral to phase one.

From Old Oak Common the route would follow the Chiltern line corridor to West Ruislip, and cross the Colne Valley on a two-mile viaduct. Junctions for a future connection to Heathrow would be built in this section, though the connection to Heathrow itself would follow in phase two.

Just before reaching the M25 the line would enter a six-mile tunnel, emerging just north of Amersham. It would continue towards Aylesbury, mainly in tunnel or cutting, along the A413 corridor. Beyond Aylesbury the route would broadly follow the disused Great Central Line corridor to Calvert, passing to the east of Brackley.

The line would then head north-west towards the gap between Kenilworth and Coventry, before curving north to Coleshill. An interchange sta-



HIGH SPEED RAIL TIMELINE

29 JULY 2011
Close of consultation

END OF 2011
Government announces outcome of consultation and final decisions on strategy

2012
Consultation begins on Manchester and Leeds route

OCTOBER 2013
Introduction of hybrid bill to Parliament for Birmingham route

EARLY 2015
Royal Assent granted to hybrid bill

What they say about the HSR consultation

Transport Times publisher David Begg this week announced that he is to set up a lobbying company to back the case for high speed rail The move comes in response to the perception that the anti-HSR campaign has been allowed to make the running in the debate so far. Prof Begg said the new campaign for HSR would complement the work of Greengauge 21, which for the last five years has been advancing the technical case for high speed rail.

Meanwhile, an array of organisations expressed reservations or outright opposition to the Government's plans.

The RAC Foundation, which has previously pointed out that the project has a lower benefit-cost ratio than many road schemes, called for "a broad transport vision". Its director, Prof Stephen Glaister, said: "The consultation must be a proper assessment of our transport problems and the supposed solutions high speed rail offers, as opposed to a slick sales job which leaves the public only hearing half the story.

He added: "Ministers have already tried to sell high speed

For and against: Michael Roberts (left) and Stephen Glaister

rail as a great green project and an economic wonder. The Government now wants us to believe it is about eradicating the north-south divide.

"Whatever the merits of high speed rail, it will help only a fraction of the nation's travelling public."

Friends of the Earth policy and campaigns director Craig Bennett said: "The UK urgently needs a fast and efficient rail system, but the current high-speed rail plans will do little to encourage people out of planes and cars or tackle climate change. Improving the UK's overcrowded rail network should be the Government's priority.

The Campaign for Better Transport also argued that high speed rail should form part of a broader national transport policy. It urged the Government not to neglect the existing rail network and other forms of public transport in favour of long distance high speed rail journeys. It warned that if the new line only served parkway stations rather than city centres, it would risk becoming a self-defeating strategy that would add to congestion and encouraging car use.

At the end of last month the Green Party conference voted overwhelmingly to campaign against the HS2 project, saying proposals currently on the table would be "economically and environmentally unsound". The party remains in favour of high speed rail in principle, but says any project would need to meet strict criteria.

The Stop HS2 campaign group denounced the consultation as a "sham", complaining that members of the public were excluded from the Birmingham launch.

Taxpayers' Alliance director Matthew Sinclair attacked claims that the project would create jobs, arguing that more jobs could be created by spending the £17bn cost of building the Birmingham leg elsewhere: "Our research shows that the wider economy could be expected to create four times as many jobs for every pound invested."

The House of Commons Transport select committee has announced it is to undertake an inquiry into high speed rail, but has not yet agreed on its terms of reference.

The plans were broadly welcomed by business. CBI Director-General John Cridland said: "We see real benefits from having a high-speed line linking London with Birmingham and the North of England, as long as certain conditions are met. The Government must commit to the full network. Other vital capital investment in transport infrastructure must go hand in hand with this. High-speed rail must result in climate change benefits, and lead to an increase in rail freight."

Association of Train Operating Companies chief executive Michael Roberts said: "By deploying the best of British design and engineering in the construction the high speed line in Kent we struck the right balance between national and local interest – we can do the same again."

tion would be built near the National Exhibition Centre and Birmingham Airport. North of this station, a junction at Water Orton would provide a link to Birmingham city centre, following the existing rail corridor and terminating at a new station at Curzon Street. Meanwhile the main route would pass west of Tamworth to Lichfield, where it would join the West Coast main line to reach Manchester, Liverpool and Scotland.

Since its report of December 2009, HS2 has identified refinements to around half the length of the recommended route. This includes adding over a mile and a half of "green tunnel" to maintain local access and minimise noise and visual impacts, lowering large sections of the proposed line and reducing the number of viaducts. Some changes to the alignment have moved it further from settlements and heritage sites.

Regeneration catalysed by HS2 could generate considerable numbers of jobs, the Government predicts. The station at Old Oak Common would contribute to the regeneration of the surrounding area and would "support planned employment growth of up to 20,000 jobs". Another 8,000 jobs could be supported around the Curzon Street terminus and the Birmingham International stations, plus another 2,000 jobs around Euston.

Demolition of around 200 mainly council-owned homes around Euston would be necessary – these would be replaced with "new, high-quality social housing". Around 30 homes would need to be demolished to make way for a proposed maintenance depot at Washwood Heath in Birmingham. Elsewhere only a small number of properties would go.

Around 10 houses would be likely to be affected by high noise levels, though another 150 would be affected enough to qualify for noise insulation. Around 4,700 properties would potentially experience a "noticeable increase" in noise levels.

Regarding the effect on the landscape, the Chilterns would be crossed mainly in tunnel or deep cutting with short elevated sections on embankment or viaduct to the south of Wendover, where the route is close to the A413 and the Chiltern line. Tree planting and the creation of planted earth "bunds", blended into the natural contours of the land, would help reduce noise, screen views and integrate the railway into the landscape. HS2 expects to plant more than two million trees along the route to the West Midlands.

Options discarded included a route which followed the West Coast main line more closely: this would make a connection to Heathrow impractical, would cost more and would lengthen journey times.

An alternative route through the Chilterns would create an entirely new transport corridor through the AONB and would be very intrusive in the Hughenden Valley, would cost more and would lengthen journey times. A route via Heathrow would be "substantially more expensive".

The Arup proposal for an interchange near Iver in Buckinghamshire, with a light rail link to Heathrow, was considered to share many of the disadvantages of the direct Heathrow route without offering the benefits of having a station on the airport.

EARLY NEXT PARLIAMENT
Construction starts

NEXT PARLIAMENT
Second hybrid bill

2026
Line opens to Birmingham

MID-2020s
Construction starts to Manchester and Leeds

MID-2020s
Lines open: 2032-33

Inter-city train programme gets back on track

Electrification of the Great Western main line and the procurement of a new fleet of inter-city trains are back on track following an announcement by the Department for Transport last week.

The Government announced it has decided to resume the £4.5bn Intercity Express Programme procurement to replace the current fleet of Intercity 125 trains. Preferred bidder remains the Agility Trains consortium comprising Hitachi and John Laing. The consortium will build a total of around 100 electric and dual-powered trains as well as a new assembly plant in Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, creating 500 jobs.

Electrification will proceed from Didcot to Bristol and Cardiff, the installation of overhead wires as far as Didcot, Newbury and Oxford having been given the go-ahead last year. Journey times from London to Cardiff will be cut by 17 minutes and to Bristol by 22 minutes.

The train procurement had been put on hold by Lord Adonis in the run-up to last year's General Election on the grounds that a decision to proceed would have been potentially controversial. Instead a review of the project's costs by Sir Andrew Foster was instituted.

The design of the train is complex because both electric, diesel and dual-powered versions were needed, the last to enable services to continue beyond electrified sections without the need for passengers to change trains. The number of each type of train needed is inextricably bound up with the electrification decision.

Transport secretary Philip Hammond said: "Alongside our plans for high speed rail, this completes a picture of massive upgrades to our intercity rail corridors over the coming years. Extending electrification westwards to Bristol and Cardiff will also bring the benefits of electric trains – faster acceleration, greater comfort and cleaner, greener travel – to rail passengers in Wales and the South West."

Agility Trains has refined the design of the Intercity Express

"This completes a picture of massive upgrades to our inter-city corridors"

There was disappointment in Wales that the original plan to continue electrification to Swansea was not confirmed. Mr Hammond said that journey times between Cardiff and Swansea would not be improved by electrification because of the geometry of the line.

However Mr Hammond said that other lines beyond Cardiff may be candidates for electrification. "We have established that a strong high-level case may exist for electrifying some of the Valley lines north of Cardiff. My department will work with the Welsh Assembly Government to develop a business case," he said.

Network Rail devolves powers to the regions

Network Rail has announced that it is to devolve power to regional business units to improve its efficiency and responsiveness to customers.

New chief executive David Higgins announced the plans, under which each region, or route in Network Rail parlance, will have its own managing director who will enjoy considerable autonomy.

Mr Higgins said: "To make further improvements in all areas we need to increase responsiveness at a local level. We're devolving accountability to the route level so that we can get closer to our customers and be in a better position to deliver improvements to passengers and freight users, while reducing costs. "Each new route managing director will, in effect, be running their own infrastructure railway business with significant annual turnover and resources."

The move is designed to address criticism of Network Rail as unresponsive to the needs of train operating companies, as well as improving efficiency.

The new managing directors' responsibilities will include safety, all customer service matters, asset management, operations, planning and carrying out maintenance, and some renewals and enhancements. The devolved businesses will be given the ability "to innovate within a framework which maintains the company's focus on making the most of network benefits, minimising whole-life costs, and providing a seamless service for all customers and rail users".

Mr Higgins added that there would be a continuing need for a central organisation to make the most of economies of scale, to plan and operate the railway as a seamlessly operating network and to maintain the company's focus on efficient management of long-life railway assets.

Scotland and the Wessex region (the area operated by South West Trains from Waterloo) will be the first to make the change, with power being devolved from April this year.

Network Rail said that as the changes prove successful in providing a better service to customers and passengers, other routes will follow as soon as possible.

There was no indication of which regions might be next, though Merseyrail has long been seen as a potential candidate for "vertical integration" under which maintenance as well as operation would be devolved to the franchise holder.

David Higgins, page 13

Businesses 'should adopt smarter working during the Olympics'

Almost three-quarters of transport executives think the UK's transport infrastructure will cope with the additional demands placed on it by April's Royal Wedding and the 2012 Olympic Games.

But businesses could be affected and should consider options such as changing shift patterns and using practices such as working from home and videoconferencing to avoid potential disruption.

Some 73% were very positive about how the transport infrastructure would cope under the pressure of increased number of visitors for both events. Halcrow Group director Dr Mark Brown said: "London hosts a large number of sporting and cultural events. Hosting major events is almost a weekly activity and while the Olympics are larger than any other event, we are very well practised in all the logistical needs and requirements."

The remaining 27% do not think the transport system will withstand the pressure. Dr Tim Ryley, senior lecturer in transport studies at Loughborough University's department of civil & building engineering said: "It's always difficult with such large events, and in London's case there will need to be very careful transport planning." Dr Alice Maynard, director of business consultancy Future Inclusion said: "There are likely to be more wheelchair users than can be accommodated on the available vehicles. In addition, priority seating will be at a premium and there is unlikely to be enough."

Just under half those questioned (46%) thought that London-based businesses should be concerned about the possible negative impact the Olympics could have on the day-to-day working practices. They were asked to suggest how businesses could lessen the impact. Dr Maynard suggested setting up a travel planning function to investigate the likely impact with LOCOG and then, nearer the time, advise staff on what to do. "That way, firms can also ensure that vital functions will be covered by, for example, changing shift patterns for the duration of the Games."

Sarwant Singh of Frost & Sullivan suggested that companies introduce smarter working measures such as working from home, teleworking, videoconferencing, encouraging flexible working arrangements and promoting active travel for journeys less than two miles.

Respondents were asked for their opinion on the proposed Olympic Route Network which will give priority to Olympic vehicles. Unauthorised motorists could face fines of £200 for driving in the wrong lane. Over half of the respondents (55%) did not support this measure. Halcrow's Dr Brown said: "The success of the games depends, in part, on the goodwill of Londoners. Big City Government imposing fines in this way is probably not the smartest way of courting residents and ensuring their goodwill." Mr Singh added: "It removes capacity from an already constrained network. Public transport should be encouraged as an alternative. It sends out the wrong message to the public to say that this is a public transport games, yet we are dedicating road space to officials and athletes."

Rob Sheldon, managing director of Accent, which co-sponsors the research programme, commented: "Over the next two years our transport infrastructure will be put to the test of coping with exceptional passenger demand. The outcome of this survey indicates that the majority of senior executives are feeling positive that our transport structure will withstand the pressure of these events."

● If you are a senior executive working in the transport industry and would like to take part in this bi-monthly poll on hot topics in transport please contact Katrina Van-Loon (katrina.van-loon@accent-mr.com).

Each survey will take no more than five minutes to complete and all answers will be treated in complete confidence unless you give permission for us to quote you.

Not quite down to zero

Emissions from electric cars are similar to those of the most efficient diesels when the source of electricity generation is taken into account, according to a new survey by consumer organisation Which?.

The consumer watchdog points out that the common claim that electric cars produce "zero emissions" ignores the fact that in most cases a conventional electricity supply, derived from burning fossil fuels, is used to charge them.

The magazine compared the first three electric cars to come on to the UK market and calculated an equivalent g/km figure for carbon dioxide produced from charging the car, based on the manufacturer's claimed range and the amount of electricity needed for a full charge. It used the Carbon Trust's figure that 544 grams of CO_2 are emitted per kilowatt hour of electricity consumed to convert this to a figure in g/km of CO_2. In practice the range could be less than claimed because it is affected by the use of electrical equipment on the car.

Comparing electric and diesel versions of the Smart Fortwo it found the electric version emitted an equivalent of 84 grams of CO_2/km driven, to the diesel version's 103g.

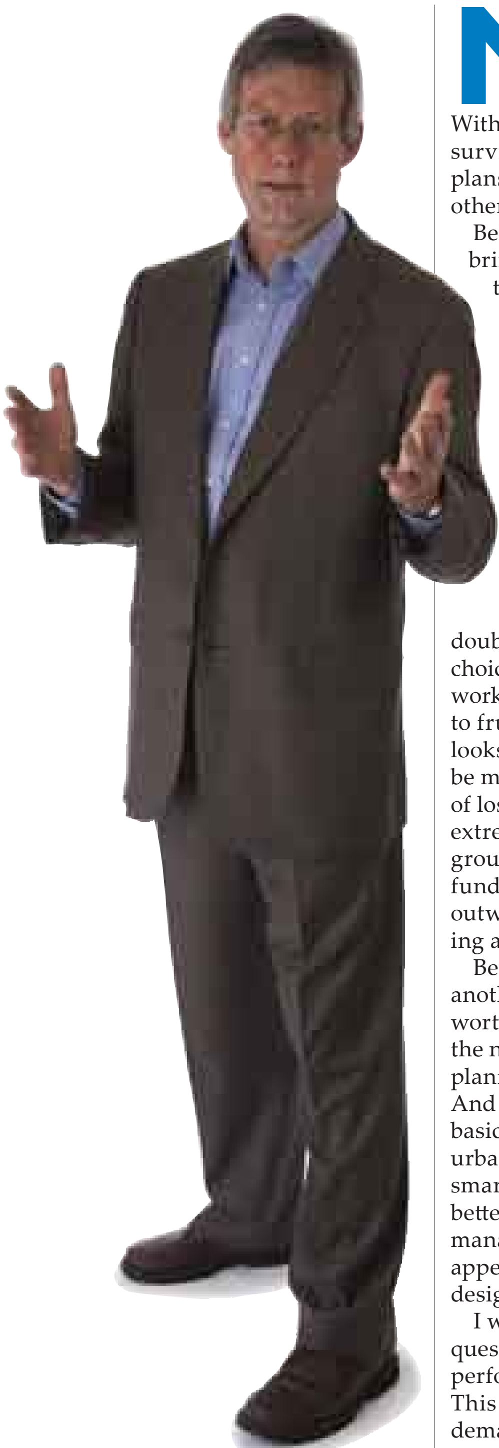
Which? goes on to say that electric cars are much greener than diesel cars when considering localised emissions, as they don't emit toxic chemicals that degrade air quality. This is especially significant in cities, where the uptake of electric cars is predicted to be highest.

Richard Headland, editor of *Which? Car*, said: "Until more electricity is produced from renewable sources in the UK, the carbon footprint of driving an electric car may not be as small as owners think."

The electric Smart's carbon emissions are similar to the diesel version, says Which?

Why the need for good strategic planning endures

Abandoning urban transport strategy appears at first sight to be a relatively painless area to cut back. In fact it is vital to the economic well-being of cities



Never in the past 40 years has there been such little appetite for study and forward planning. With such pressure on their mere survival, the initiators of transport plans for our towns and cities have other, more immediate, priorities.

Belt-tightening is one thing; bringing to a close an era when transport plans, strategies and projects were part of what helped characterise our cities is another. But with public sector funding this tight at local authority level and the abandonment of regionalism, it is what is happening. It may not be what is intended at the Department for Transport, but over at DCLG it looks to be another story.

Many would suggest, no doubt, that among the difficult choices, cutting back radically on work that often takes years to come to fruition is no bad thing. This looks like an area where savings can be made without any visible sign of losing "front-end services". In extremis, a road closure on safety grounds because of an inability to fund pothole repair might be an outwardly visible risk. But not having a plan hardly looks painful.

Before giving up and trying another career, though, it's at least worth thinking through whether the need for good urban transport planning will return, and if so, why. And to do so, we have to revisit the basic question of what it is that good urban transport planning – the smarter travel choice programmes, better information systems, traffic management arrangements, more appealing public transport – is designed to achieve.

I would suggest it is to a wider question about urban function and performance that we must first look. This is due to the nature of travel demand as being derived – that is to say, dependent on activities; activities that are usually location-specific. Transport planning choices are there to be made in pursuit of a wider policy agenda.

In these straitened times, it won't take too many lines of analysis to realise that transport is going to be absolutely critical because it will make or break attempts at generating urban success. Cities need to overcome the enduring temptation to permit development at the periphery and instead resolve in favour of their own unique identities already vested in their core areas, to have a chance of creating an appealing quality of life for an urban workforce and the economic success that follows. In short, transport planning is the medium through which urban dreams can be realised. In its absence, we have a disheartening prospect of lengthening travel times, congestion, poor air quality, historic buildings with no purpose and contemporary sheds to replace them: no appeal whatsoever to the inward investor or the footloose graduate.

> **Transport planning is the medium through which urban dreams can be realised**

At a recent regeneration and connectivity conference held in Cardiff, the most telling contribution came from the city's largest employer, Admiral Insurance. When considering where to locate its office as a start-up just 18 years ago, Cardiff just met a threshold of two hours' journey time from London. A successful and fast-growing business, it is now expanding not just in the UK but internationally. With offices spread across the globe will it keep its HQ in South Wales when the subject comes up for review? Not unless access to Heathrow is made easier, explained its COO. Will it stay in the city centre in the meantime or find itself lured to the nearest motorway intersection and the anonymity of a business park?

With its universities and cultural and sports facilities, Cardiff has a lot going for it, but it is at risk of losing its "anchor tenant" in business terms. Admirals don't appear often. There is an exciting regeneration project – Cardiff Central – which would bring about a transformation of a large area around the station of the same name. But this will generate its own issues, especially of additional traffic in the city centre. Economic success depends on finding a transport solution.

If it were as simple as adding road capacity, all would be fine. But it isn't, of course. It will be all about creating a coherent, legible expansion of public transport; about creating a fresh and exciting extension of today's city core. With a metro vision for the sub-region, suitably interfaced with the strategic road network to offer high quality park and ride, progressive improvement of the rail service to London and a direct rail service to Heathrow, all linked to a walkable destination, there's the making of a coherent plan relevant to the needs of business.

And how will it be funded? The average rail fare across Wales is only £3.50, and station car parks are free. The city centre could do with a cordon charge.

There are enough challenges all right, not worth facing were it not for the simple fact that the economic and cultural well-being of the city depends on resolving them.

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

Cuts can be the spur to greater efficiency

Slashed budgets present the chance for a radical rethink of what services local authorities should provide and whether there are better ways of providing them. They must grasp the opportunity

The dominant issue for local authorities in recent months has been dealing with the impact of massive cuts, and subsequent redundancies, as many authorities finalised their budgets for 2011/12. The budget cuts are presenting councils with redundancy bills up to six times as high as has been anticipated by the Government, thus creating a yawning chasm in funding. Redundancies could reach almost £1.5bn – more than the entire Regional Growth Fund over the next three years.

The situation is exacerbated for highway and transport authorities because the vast majority of cuts are destined to be found from a small proportion (typically 40%) of council budgets to provide a degree of protection for education and care related services. Some 52% of public sector employers intend to lose staff early in the next financial year because the pressures on local government are front-loaded, leaving little opportunity for growth in private sector transport capacity to help take on these skills and expertise.

The irony is that, against this gloomy background, there is a once in a generation opportunity for local government to transform the way in which it funds and provides transport services that without the current financial landscape would be unthinkable.

Over the past six months more than 120 officers and council members of the Local Government Association have been exploring new ways to bring about significant financial savings and "big wins" to help councils cope with the 28% cut to government grants. Efforts have concentrated on procurement, commissioning and the sharing of back and front office services. There is little sign at the moment that this will be translated into transformational service provision in the transport sector. But unless we begin to re-engineer and redesign transport provision in local government we will simply be left to flounder through the next decade hoping to survive. This approach would be completely unsustainable; doing more of the same with significantly less resources is not a practicable option.

In the front line of transport cuts are subsidised bus services, street lighting and road safety, as opposed to the traditional raiding of highway maintenance budgets. This is relatively new territory and it will be difficult to see the situation as a transformational opportunity rather than a series of cuts.

For example, councils' approach to bus subsidies has remained broadly unchanged for more than quarter of a century. After the 1985 Transport Act, local authorities took on board inefficient and loss-making bus services rejected by the private sector bus companies, but considered "socially necessary". This has resulted in a plethora of buses running around often carrying little more than fresh air. This cannot be the best way to provide services: what local authority would agree to take on new functions nowadays that are inherently expensive or ineffective, regardless of their perceived public value?

> **Councils must recognise that cutting costs can give rise to more sustainable solutions in the long run**

Councils have been presented with a chance to look at the whole issue of accessibility and mobility with a fresh pair of eyes – a chance they should not miss, even if it does mean taking controversial decisions.

The level of bus subsidies can vary dramatically, anywhere between 10p and £100 per passenger journey. On top of this, the Government has already announced that it intends to cut bus service operators grant by 20% next year, not to mention the massive shortfall expected in concessionary fares funding (many authorities are predicting shortfalls well in excess of £1m annually). We cannot carry on as we are.

Is the funding ploughed into such services the best use of scarce resources? At least 70% of councils are planning to cut bus funding during the next financial year, and more than £35m of cuts have already been announced. However, it should not be beyond our capability or ability to innovate to use the available funding to support new and different solutions at a fraction of the cost of bus subsidies. The "big society" concept may play a part in changing the thinking, but ultimately any new strategy will have financial implications, whether it is about introducing new technologies or supporting community activities in order to help people to help themselves.

Councils must question their spending programmes more than ever before to ensure that they are providing best value and to recognise that cutting costs can give rise to more sustainable solutions in the long run. Such a philosophy can be applied to a broad spectrum of council transport functions.

It is easy, and safe, to continue with tried and tested approaches regardless of the cost. But it does not necessarily follow, for example, that turning off street lights will increase crime or cause road safety problems or that casualty reduction partnerships should not challenge their safety interventions to discover what is truly effective in a particular area.

This would never happen were it not for the difficult financial climate we find ourselves in.

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

Who has the mettle to transform Oxford Street?

Polluted and clogged by buses, the main shopping street in London's West End is a disgrace to an international city. This is not a traffic management issue, it's a lack of political will

The test of a city is how pleasant a place is it to work and live in. London has made big advances in recent years. But in one crucial test of a civilised city, it lags far behind. All over the developed world, from New York and Copenhagen to Buenos Aires and Bogota, are large cities that encourage walking.

London, by contrast, has hardly any pedestrianised areas. Worse, it has the dubious accolade of having the most congested and polluted shopping street in Western Europe. Oxford Street in London's West End is a disgrace to an international city. Why has nothing been done about it? The problem is not traffic management but a lack of political leadership.

In the past, the fear that excluding cars and through buses from shopping areas would damage trading was an excuse for inaction. But retailers now realise that the opposite is the case. One of the surest ways to increase business is to improve the environment.

Less traffic boosts sales and increases retail values. Shop rents in pedestrianised areas are often up to 50% higher than in comparable sites. The New West End Company, which represents major Oxford Street retailers such as Selfridges and Marks & Spencer, has been an active lobbyist behind the scenes for less traffic. VIP day, when, once a year, all traffic is banned from Oxford Street in the run-up to Christmas, attracts an additional £32m of trading, an increase of roughly 15%.

The area around Times Square in New York, which the city's mayor Michael Bloomberg has made pedestrian-friendly with open air cafés and gardens, has also been hailed as a success over the past 18 months by both tourists and retailers. Copenhagen, the pioneer of pedestrianisation, has done so well in attracting walkers that the city has expanded its pedestrian-only central area sixfold over the past half century. It now covers not the only main shopping street, Strøget – the world's longest pedestrian shopping street – but also a network of five adjoining streets. The city and its retailers enjoy buoyant revenues as a result. Copenhagen also has one of the lowest rates of car ownership in Europe, at 208 per 1,000 population.

None of this is rocket science, but it requires political leadership. Unfortunately that is absent in London. One of the first actions of Boris Johnson after being elected as mayor in May 2008 was to scrap the pedestrian-friendly improvements to Parliament Square planned by his predecessor. According to the mayor in a characteristically ludicrous blast: "This scheme would have turned a green glade of heroes into a vast, blasted, chewing-gummed piazza." In fact, the real reason was that pedestrian improvements would have caused additional delays to drivers. Boris later admitted: "There is absolutely no sense in Londoners paying £18m from their already stretched transport budget in order to reduce capacity on London's roads."

> **If the political test is what benefits car drivers, the improvements to Trafalgar Square should be reversed and that whole area turned once again into a heaving mess**

But what does the mayor expect? Traffic is a zero-sum game. If you favour pedestrians and take road space away from cars, then vehicle delays will inevitably increase. The real issue is not traffic flows but how a small historic area visited by millions of foreign and domestic tourists each year can be protected. If the political test is simply what benefits car drivers, then the improvements to Trafalgar Square should be reversed and that whole area turned once again into a heaving mess.

It is easy to turn London into a racetrack. The trick is how to accommodate essential traffic within a good urban environment.

Sadly the mayor does not appear to have a long-term vision for the future of the capital. Without it, I doubt if he will be re-elected in two years. A plan to improve Oxford Street would be a start. The claim that it is physically impossible to do anything is often made, but this is demonstrably false.

Transport for London says the reason why Oxford Street is clogged with stationary buses is that there is nowhere else for them to go. But if there was a will there is no reason why bus routes could not be diverted at either end of Oxford Street so that no through buses were allowed. The through connection for those who did not want to go by Tube, and who could not or did not want to walk along Oxford Street, could be supplied by electric shuttle buses running along a guided busway. Another possibility might be fleets of jitneys which would pick up and set down passengers along the street.

Whatever the solution, a determined mayor would simply say to London's transport commissioner: "I don't want to hear any more excuses from you why this cannot be done. If you want to continue in this job, there will have to be a plan on my desk within six months."

That would concentrate minds.

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

Devolution will be the route to a better service

Making each route an autonomous business unit with its own managing director will allow Network Rail to be quicker and more responsive in its decision-making, says **David Higgins**

In my very first day in the job as Network Rail's chief executive I stated: "My priorities are to drive further a culture of safety, to get even better value for money for the British people and to be more attuned to the needs of our customers and passengers. I also want people to associate these words with Network Rail: Open. Transparent. Accountable. Responsive."

These words have to be put into action. So among the first (of what will be many) big decisions I made was to give the go-ahead to our devolution agenda. Too often Network Rail has been accused of being slow to act and insufficiently customer- and passenger-focused. By empowering new route managing directors we will place authority with the routes, allowing quicker and more responsive decision making.

Starting with pilot schemes in Scotland and Wessex, route infrastructure maintenance directors will report to the new route managing directors, so we can better plan our maintenance work to serve the needs of the operational railway. Also, the routes will have greater power to direct enhancements.

With each route becoming its own business unit we will achieve something else, too. Each will have its own accounts, so we will be able to benchmark financial performance and efficiency across the company and learn from best practice.

This is not a return to the zonal structure that was developed by Railtrack. There will still be clear central accountabilities for Network Rail. A thinner, more strategic centre will still be needed to direct policy and planning, for timetabling and capacity development and for managing major projects.

Also, we need to secure the gains we have made in the past eight years on safety and performance by maintaining clear national standards. Our freight and open access customers will want the assurance of dealing with a company that can take a whole-network view. Finally, we will not relinquish the big, national purchasing power it has for economies of scale across the country.

Our changes do not pre-judge any recommendations that may flow from Sir Roy McNulty's study, Rail Value for Money, as commissioned by the transport secretary. Network Rail has been fully engaged in the McNulty process and has been leading the debate about how we can build not just a bigger and better railway, but a better value railway too.

Network Rail has changed before, but the change has always been uniform across the whole business. This is different. By devolving power to our routes, each route will be able to find its own way of working with its customers.

> **By devolving power to our routes, each will be able to find its own way of working with its customers**

There will be no one-size-fits-all – indeed, different train operators will have different appetites as to what level of extra responsibility they wish to take on. However, the direction of travel is clear – only by working even more closely together, by being less proscriptive and more open to new ideas will we be able to drive a greater service culture for the railway while cutting the cost to the British people.

This does not require a wholesale structural shake-up of the industry. Let's not forget the gains we have made in recent years – record punctuality, the most passengers carried for seven decades, record levels of passenger satisfaction and a safe railway, too. The greater change is attitudinal – being more responsive to our customers. Also what will help are longer franchises and developing ways for train operators and Network Rail to better align risk and reward.

Just achieving the tough efficiency targets Network Rail was set by the Office of Rail Regulation – a 22% reduction in our costs between 2009 and 2014 – is a difficult task. Structural turmoil in the industry would make that impossible. But change is nonetheless inevitable and desirable. To get even greater value for money from 2014 and beyond, all players in the rail industry must embrace change.

We must have a more productive workforce – across the whole industry we often fall short in this respect. We must also embrace new technology and open ourselves up to new ideas from other industries and engage more creatively with our supply chain. In February we launched a new initiative through a dedicated website – www.networkrail.co.uk/brightideas – whereby we have challenged technologists, engineers and entrepreneurs to come up with solutions for Network Rail issues.

I believe that a company gets great results when it has great teams. Great teams work best when they have clearly-set goals and are empowered to achieve them. This is what I hope to achieve in devolving power to the routes. What we need is more than just organisational change, but behavioural change too. Of course, many decisions Network Rail has to make need us to take a very long-term view about assets that may be with us for decades.

Yet I want the Network Rail team to put themselves in the place of our customers, whether they are passengers or freight operators, whenever they make a decision, every day.

David Higgins is chief executive of Network Rail

David Higgins: "All players in the industry must embrace change"

opinion

Are we missing a trick with bus technology?

Hybrid technology has the potential to reduce bus fuel consumption dramatically, but its cost remains a barrier. Cheaper solutions are available which could make a big difference, says **Keith Ludeman**

People who read about transport generally enjoy a good statistic. The bus industry offers some great ones. Go-Ahead's bus services transport more than 1.7 million passengers a day; the industry as a whole transports millions more. With nearly 50,000 buses in service in the UK and millions in service throughout the world, you would think that, as such a major form of transport, buses would be a hotbed of technological innovation.

Alas not. While some significant strides are being made – cleaner engines; better passenger information systems; air conditioning and wi-fi – the reality is that most innovation trickles down from other uses. And while there are lots of excellent designers and developers in the bus world, the economies of scale mean it is very expensive to bring new products to market. The car industry will sell tens of thousands in a model line, so the scale is there. This is one of the reasons why the Government has introduced the Green Bus Fund to reduce the purchase cost of hybrid buses: to help build the scale needed to reduce costs.

We cannot rely on intervention in the market, and equally, we need to find other ways to solve the economy of scale conundrum. The answer could come from a surprising source. The defence industry is driving many of the new technologies that could be used on buses, and with many nations cutting their defence budgets, that industry looks set to expand into other areas.

BAE Systems, for example, has been developing technology – originally for use in tanks and other heavy vehicles – that is already making its way into the hybrid bus market. While hybrid technology will remain expensive in the medium term – a hybrid bus typically costs £300,000 whereas a regular bus costs around £180,000 – a shorter-term solution could be to introduce stop/start technology on diesel buses. Stop/start technology on vehicles that by their very nature do a lot of stopping and starting seems a very sensible way forward.

"Stop/start technology on vehicles that by their very nature do a lot of stopping and starting seems a very sensible way forward"

While, in an ideal world, it would be good to have many more hybrid buses on our roads now, the reality is that achieving this is some way off. There is still significant potential to reduce emissions by merging existing, cheaper technologies.

While engineers will tell you it is harder to make stop/start technology work with a large diesel engine as opposed to a small petrol one, it can be done. That technology alone could, in busy urban areas, reduce fuel use by as much as 20%. If you applied that across a city like London where buses cover 300 million miles a year, you can immediately see the benefits.

Stop/start technology could also provide an opportunity to solve another technical bugbear that has an impact not only on fuel efficiency and the environment, but on reliability: the robustness of the electrical systems on vehicles.

Stop/start technology would necessitate an electrically-powered air compressor driven remotely from the engine. Most compressor systems in buses are not dedicated designs and they can overheat under the demands of bus operations. Electrically-driven compressors will help to reduce oil contamination in the air system – a common problem leading to failures on buses. Newer electrical systems have the potential to draw less power, reduce wear to the engine, and in turn reduce fuel consumption and emissions.

We estimate that the stop/start technology and revised electrical systems could be provided for an additional £50,000 on the cost of a £180,000 bus. We could make use of the technology now and achieve some radical savings. We are already in discussion with designers and producers to see whether we can make the stop/start technology available for use with diesel engines.

At Go-Ahead we have already reduced our carbon emissions by 9% and we are working towards our target to double the reductions to 20% per passenger journey by 2015. We did not achieve those savings through one big idea, but a range of measures which, combined, made a significant difference.

Hybrid is the medium term and hydrogen is the future, but stop/start technology could make a real difference to the present. Sometimes, in the quest to deliver tomorrow's big solution, we miss an opportunity to make swifter progress today.

Keith Ludeman is group chief executive of the Go-Ahead Group

Keith Ludeman: "There is potential to reduce emissions by merging existing, cheaper technologies."

Can concessionary fares be sustainable?

Concessionary fares policy and reimbursement are in a mess. **Andrew Last** of Minnerva and **Andrew Meaney** of Oxera argue that now is the time for reflection on what the policy is trying to achieve, and how to achieve it

Despite the largest spending cuts for decades, both Westminster and the UK's devolved governments have decided to preserve free bus travel for elderly and disabled passengers. The only reduction in generosity is in England, where the age threshold is being increased progressively with the female retirement age.

Although telling us something about the political significance of the policy, this decision doesn't explain what the spending of around £1bn is meant to achieve. While concessionary fares are supposedly very popular, there was no appraisal of the policy before it was introduced nor subsequently, and no one is entirely sure of its objectives. The contrast with road pricing, for which there is massive analytical support going back many decades, but which is a political hot potato, could not be greater.

Evidence is growing, however, about who is (and, more importantly, who isn't) making use of the free concession. It is clear that use is highly skewed. A very small proportion of passholders make a very substantial proportion of the total concessionary trips, but a surprisingly large proportion of passholders make virtually no use of the concession at all.

Analysis of smartcard data, undertaken by Andrew Last as part of Leeds University's research for the Department for Transport (DfT), established that over a five-week period 56% of passholders made no use of the concession. In contrast, a very small number (2.4%) of passholders made more than 10 trips per week, which in total accounted for more than 25% of all trips made.

Spending cuts will have two major impacts. It seems likely that the large proportion of passholders who use buses less frequently live in areas where buses are fewer and routes more sparse. These are precisely the areas which are likely to suffer from cuts in bus services arising from reductions in local council spending. The statutory nature of the concession, however, means that councils have to prioritise spending on the free concession at the expense of supporting marginal bus services. It is therefore likely that maintaining the free concession will reduce the mobility of many passholders due to the availability of fewer buses. A free concession will be of little value to passholders in areas where marginal bus services become non-existent.

Second, as money available for reimbursing operators falls – and in England, the DfT estimates that it will drop by at least £120m per year – operators will have to choose between reducing services and raising fares to maintain profitability. Providing fewer services will damage the mobility of all bus users, including passholders – but for non-concessionary passengers, the double whammy is probable higher fares. Non-concessionary bus users who, in socio-economic terms, might be worse off than the typical passholder, will therefore end up paying higher fares for poorer bus services to maintain the free concession for a separate group of passengers.

> **Councils have to prioritise spending on the free concession at the expense of supporting marginal bus services**

As if these impacts were not significant enough, the question of reimbursement in England remains fraught with controversy, despite new guidance from the DfT. The appeals process for dealing with disputes remains messy, and represents poor practice compared with other regulatory systems. Conflicts over reimbursement will inevitably undermine the partnership between local authorities and bus operators that was supposed to be a key part of the Local Transport Act 2008.

What is needed is an intelligent debate about objectives, and the means of achieving them, as well as improvements in how benefits are delivered. It should involve the following questions:

- Is the policy intended to achieve transport benefits or social benefits? What are those benefits supposed to be?
- How effective is the policy? What is the evidence? And what modifications to the policy could improve effectiveness – and reduce unintended consequences?
- Are there better ways of dealing with reimbursement so that conflicts are less damaging to partnerships between councils and bus operators?
- Finally, assuming that reimbursement continues to be based on hypothesis and judgement, how can the appeal system be made more fit for purpose?

We are convinced that many passholders would suffer if concessionary bus use were regarded as unsustainable, and abandoned. Without a clear sense of what the policy is trying to achieve, however, there is a danger that the baby will be thrown out with the bathwater, especially when the evidential support for it is so weak compared with other areas of public spending.

Concessionary travel affects many stakeholders: the intended beneficiaries, taxpayers, local authorities, bus operators, and other bus users. It has become the largest single element of local government spending on local buses. It is in everyone's interests to get the policy right.

Andrew Meaney is managing consultant and head of transport at Oxera Consulting.
Andrew Last is a director of transport consultancy Minnerva

Andrew Last (top) and Andrew Meaney: "Farepayers will pay more for poorer services."

opinion

Effective appraisal can help secure best value

The traditional approach to evaluating projects needs to be expanded to include wider considerations, such as the environment, health, social inclusion and local objectives, says **Jon Bunney**

Jon Bunney: "Transport can contribute to environment and health objectives."

With pressures on government funds becoming ever tighter, local authorities need to effectively demonstrate how programmes will achieve objectives. For transport, this is likely to mean not only demonstrating delivery against traditional transport objectives, of efficient and inclusive movement of people and goods, but also the wider roles transport plays in helping the government achieve its core policy objectives.

Recent government announcements have demonstrated that, while funding remains for some major transport infrastructure investment, there will be much less to go around for local transport programmes and schemes. With details of new transport funding mechanisms now emerging, it appears that securing government funds will require a much more holistic view of how transport can support the wider economy. This, ultimately, could lead us to a more integrated approach to the planning and execution of projects across different sectors of the economy.

Existing transport appraisal systems across the UK require assessment of the impacts of transport investment against a range of wider government objectives, primarily: environment; safety; accessibility; integration; and economy. In practice, there is still a tendency to focus on the traditional elements of transport appraisal, such as journey time savings, vehicle operating costs, and road accidents, which serve as proxy measures for the wider outcomes.

These elements are often more straightforward to quantify and turn into monetary values, and hence can be readily incorporated into financial benefit-cost ratios that command attention. They don't, however, present the full impact that schemes have on society and it is therefore important that other, wider, elements of the appraisal process are given greater credence.

At a practical level, what should a wider-reaching appraisal process mean in developing schemes? First, the focus must be on the Treasury's revised criteria for investment, as set out in the Spending Review Framework. These encompass a range of value-for-money criteria, including: how essential investment in a project is to meet government priorities; the ways in which investment can be targeted and efficiency savings made; and whether non-state bodies can carry out elements of the investment.

Second, greater consideration should be given to the full range of government objectives across all sectors. There are three clear areas where transport can potentially offer significant benefits to other departmental objectives: environment; health; and social inclusion.

> **Scheme promoters may have to establish much stronger partnerships with the private sector and communities**

The third tier to appraisal will be the localism agenda. The appraisal process has always incorporated an assessment of local planning objectives; however, given the change in emphasis in risk allocation it would seem inevitable that scheme promoters will seek to ensure that local objectives are fully understood and prioritised.

Will a wider appraisal process also mean a more protracted one? The picture that is emerging from the Department for Transport (DfT) is, if anything, the opposite, with less onus being placed on large-scale appraisal and repeated modelling of variations to update the benefit/cost ratio.

In reality, this might be slightly misleading as it is not necessarily the requirements for appraisal that are changing but rather the allocation of risk (and costs) between the DfT and scheme promoters. So while an extensive appraisal process may no longer be requested by DfT, the trade-off is that more of the risk associated with scheme delivery will be transferred to the scheme promoter. It will therefore be imperative that promoters are confident that schemes will provide the benefits suggested by the appraisal and justify the identified risk levels.

Another element of any discussion on funding and risk will be the involvement of the private sector. There is a government presumption that private sector investment and community involvement will need to replace public funds and help to ensure economic growth. This will mean accounting for the potentially different objectives of private sector partners and community organisations in the appraisal process.

Scheme promoters may find themselves having to establish much stronger planning and delivery partnerships with the private sector and communities. The involvement of the private sector will inevitably require much greater scrutiny of financial risk and will, potentially, open up much more robust mechanisms for contract delivery.

One thing needs to be clear: engendering a wider appraisal process shouldn't be about re-promoting old schemes and trying to tick off as many wider benefits as possible. We must establish the wider objectives first and identify how transport can contribute to them, then develop the schemes and programmes that will truly meet these objectives.

In times of limited funding, we need to pursue schemes that provide the widest possible benefit to society. Done properly, multi-criteria appraisal can be the best tool to do this.

Jon Bunney is an associate director of JMP Consultants

From: **Peter Hendy**

Subj: **Cross-modal planning in London**

Thank you, Jim Steer, for complimenting TfL on Oyster and our customer information systems (We're ignoring big gains in cost-efficiency – *TT* last month). But Jim is wrong when he says there is "no cross-modal strategic planning [at TfL] to admire and emulate". I would say our cross-modal strategic planning is world-class and bears comparison with New York, Paris and any other major international city, and with other cities across Britain.

This cross-modal planning happens at several levels. At the top level, there is the Mayor's Transport Strategy. The new MTS was integrated with and, for the first time, produced in tandem with the London Plan, Economic Development Strategy and the Air Quality Strategy. The MTS looked at the huge expected growth in London – 1.25 million more people and 0.75 million more jobs by 2031; it considered transport in multi-modal way and produced policies and proposals from this as a result, as well as looking at alternative land use assumptions. Proposals in the MTS included strategic interchanges, building on the case of Woolwich Arsenal, which will improve linkages between the rail, Overground and Tube networks. The MTS also proposed a multi-modal approach to developing a package of river crossings in east London.

At the next level down, TfL has developed sub-regional transport plans, alongside colleagues in London boroughs, supported by five new sub-regional multi-modal models. Again, these involve multi-modal strategic planning and will enable TfL, boroughs and developers to plan transport and development together.

There are many other examples of our multi-modal planning, including:

- the way TfL considers, with others, the appropriate transport response when there are major developments, including the work that concluded that a Northern Line extension (rather than a heavy rail solution), complemented by buses, is the appropriate solution to developments at and near Battersea Power Station;
- the way we plan buses, taking into account information such as changes in land use, growth in demand from population and employment, highway changes, and changes to rail and Tube services and demand;
- the way that we ensured that the introduction of congestion charging was accompanied by substantial improvements to the bus network; and the way that we are working with others to improve cycle parking at rail, Tube and DLR stations.

TfL's delivery and the multi-modal strategic planning that preceded it has led to a huge increase in public transport and cycling, and a 7% reduction in the car mode share. That is equivalent to 1 million fewer car trips in London every single day – a huge achievement. We in TfL are continuing to plan, cross-modally, to encourage further mode shift to deliver better outcomes for Londoners.

Peter Hendy
Commissioner of Transport
Transport for London

Send your comments to david.fowler@transporttimes.co.uk

Northern delegates keep their eye on the prize

Transport secretary Philip Hammond used a *Transport Times* conference to garner support for high speed rail, but transport chiefs from the North were interested in more immediate investment. **Alan Salter** reports

Northern Rail has had no new carriages for five years

Transport Secretary Philip Hammond girded his loins and used last week's *Transport Times* conference in Manchester to issue a passionate rallying call to supporters of high speed rail to help him in the battle ahead.

In a speech of rare zeal for his post, Mr Hammond, who launched the High Speed 2 route consultation last week, made a bold move to recruit northern business leaders and politicians – and even the Opposition – to the HS2 cause. Although the consultation involves the route only between London and Birmingham, Mr Hammond is banking on the enthusiasm of supporters north of Lichfield, who are waiting for their turn to discuss the "Y" extensions to Manchester and Leeds next year.

"The consultation will see opponents of high speed rail, mainly in the South, argue their case and deploy every weapon available to them to try to stop this project," said Mr Hammond. "It is essential that those who see the power of high speed rail to deliver economic change and benefit Britain speak up loudly and clearly in favour of this project as the consultation progresses.

"That includes the Labour Party, who were, in office, pioneering on this issue but have wobbled dramatically over the last few months in their commitment to what was clear policy.

"It includes business which has to unite behind the proposal and it includes civic leaders who have to mobilise public engagement, just as civic leaders in the Chilterns are mobilising and bankrolling those who are opposed to HS2."

The conference theme posed the question "Is the North losing out on transport?" But the transport secretary made a bold attempt

turn to page 20

I was slightly discouraged by what the secretary of state had to say about the Northern Hub and particularly the relationship he was building between it and high speed rail
Sir Richard Leese

We are actively working with HS2 Ltd to address those interfaces as we continue to develop the Northern Hub. We don't see any deflection in its timetable
Richard Eccles

from page 19

to recruit northern forces to his cause. He said: "High speed rail is a transformational economic benefit to the cities of the North and the Midlands. This exciting and ambitious proposal lies at the heart of our strategy to rebalance and rebuild Britain's economy and spread prosperity across the country by shrinking the distances between our nation's regional capitals, tackling the North-South divide more effectively than half a century of regional policy has succeeded in doing."

The project, he went on, "would reshape Britain's economic geography, bringing the North, the Midlands, and the South closer together".

"It would generate economic benefits of around £44bn to the economy and support the creation of tens of thousands of new jobs. It would help us hold our own in a globalising economy by transforming Britain's productivity and competitiveness as profoundly as the coming of the original railways did in the 19th century."

Britain is behind its main competitors, he said, and joked: "It is slightly frustrating that in the time it is going to take us to obtain consent for and construct the 300-400km of high speed rail that we are talking about here, the Chinese will have managed to build another 8,000km.

"But I have been told they have a slightly different approach to planning objections," he added. Britain, he insisted, cannot afford to be left behind.

But many of the delegates had their eyes on a benefit needed more urgently – Network Rail's proposed £530m of improvements to the Northern Hub around Manchester to free rail congestion across the whole of the North.

Mr Hammond said: "In the future, we also recognise that the Northern Hub programme could offer strong benefits and good value for money and we will be considering the case for investment in July next year when we publish the next high level output statement. I congratulate everybody who has been involved in the Northern Way project for the tireless promotion of the Northern Hub. Sometimes I feel I'm being stalked by Northern Hub promoters."

But he raised some concerns in a question and answer session when he said of the Hub: "We have to look at this in the context of the commitment to bring high speed rail into Manchester. Where is the station going to be built and how is it going to connect with the rest of Manchester's transport infrastructure?

"We will consult next year on the detailed route proposals on the lines from Birmingham to Manchester and Leeds and we need to look at the Northern Hub discussion in the light of that."

Manchester City Council leader Sir Richard Leese picked up on the possible delays to the hub improvements due to the High Speed 2 work. He said: "I guess I was slightly discouraged by what the secretary of state had to say about the Northern Hub and particularly the relationship he was building between it and high speed rail.

"I think they need to be separated off completely, not least because they ought to be operating in completely different time spans."

Delegates were enthused by the suggestion of an early start on a link between Manchester Piccadilly (below) and Victoria stations

Network Rail's new chief executive David Higgins had told the House of Commons transport select committee that the Northern Hub was now its top priority and the company's director of planning, Richard Eccles, told the conference that it was Network Rail's "next vital challenge".

He said that Mr Hammond may have confused some delegates a little by linking the Northern Hub to HS2. "He is quite right that there are links, but we don't see there being a conflict about the order they should be done in," he said. "We are actively working with HS2 Ltd to address those interfaces as we continue to develop the Northern Hub. We don't see any deflection in its timetable."

He raised the pulses of the Mancunians in the room when he added: "I can tell you today that we are in discussion with the DfT to bring forward some of the developments of the Hub, particularly the Ordsall chord (which would provide a long-awaited link between Manchester Victoria and Piccadilly stations), because we can see how it can contribute much earlier benefits.

"The secretary of state was absolutely correct that there are interfaces, but he would not want you to get the impression that one was interfering with the other."

Afterwards, however, Network Rail played down talk of bringing forward the Ordsall chord, insisting that the discussions were routine and action would be taken only if funds were available.

The possibility of a direct link between the two stations has been on the books for decades and there has even been serious discussions about building a tunnel under the city. Councillor Keith Whitmore, vice-chair of Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority, said after the conference: "The sooner the better. There are one or two issues – including the danger of cutting off rail access to the Museum of Science and Industry which they use to deliver steam locomotive exhibits – but we

In the time it is going to take us to obtain consent for and construct the 300-400km of high speed rail that we are talking about here, the Chinese will have managed to build another 8,000km
Philip Hammond

Northern Rail has had no new carriages in the last five years London and the South East has had 580. It's hard to see how the economic rebalancing will occur if current spending patterns continue
Neil Scales

can sort that out and we certainly want it before HS2."

Mr Hammond tried to tackle what he described as "the persistent hint of a bias towards London". He said: "The model that we use in the DfT for analysing transport investment priorities treats working time saved as exactly equal in value across the UK. That, far from being a bias in favour of London, in fact builds into the formula a very substantial bias to the rest of the country because, as we all know, earnings levels are not the same across the whole of the UK."

And he added: "When I arrived in the department, not knowing too much about the details of transport funding allocation, I asked the question: why is it that I am seeing so many projects put forward by promoters in the North in particular and in other regions failing to score high net present value scores? Why is it that when I look at the proposed rolling stock allocations, I see that most of the new rolling stock is going into the South East and much of the rolling stock provision in the northern franchise, for example, will be cascaded rolling stock released by the new rolling stock in the South East?

"When our transport economists explained how the system works, I discovered that the level of fares has a critical role in determining the net present value of projects because the discounted fare revenue nets off the public investment cost in making that calculation, and the simple fact is that the level of fares around some of our northern cities, including this one, are very significantly lower than they are around London.

"That means that when the calculations come to be done on the proposed investment – rolling stock for example – the calculation shows higher cost/benefit ratios for those investments around London than they do around equivalent-looking northern cities."

After he had gone, however, Merseytravel chief executive and director general Neil Scales took issue. "Frankly, there is no contest," he said. "Northern Rail has had no new carriages in the last five years and London and the South East has had 580 new carriages over the same period.

"We have seen massive investment in the basics since 2000, providing a safer and more reliable railway. However, with the

turn to page 22

Network Rail sees the Northern Hub project to remove bottlenecks on the rail network as a "vital challenge"

from page 21

exception of the West Coast, most of the specific enhancement investment has been concentrated in the South East.

"The general picture has continued since the general election, with London and national rail as the biggest winners and local transport spending and national roads the biggest losers."

And he added: "My basic point is that it is hard to see how the economic rebalancing will ever occur if the current patterns of spending continue. And it will be to the ultimate benefit of London and the people who live in it that this rebalancing does occur, in terms of pure quality of life, if nothing else."

John Jarvis, the Northern Way's transport director, spoke on overcoming barriers to growth of the North's port and airport gateways to the world.

There were many warm tributes to Mr Jarvis's work in the light of fears that the Northern Way – the multi-regional partnership funded by the north's three regional development agencies, which are to be abolished – may be wound up.

The role of the RDAs is being taken on by the private sector-led Local Enterprise Partnerships, introduced by the coalition to offer "local areas the opportunity to take control of their future economic development".

So far, 30 have been declared, but the transport secretary told the conference: "It is clear to me as the pattern is emerging that most LEPs are going to be too small to act as truly strategic units for transport capital investment purposes.

"I want to see how we can work with the LEPs to form consortia that would allow capital funding for any major schemes to be devolved to LEP consortia to allow decisions to be made in the best regional interest."

Anthony Smith, the chief executive of Passenger Focus, chaired a debate between Blackpool MP Paul Maynard, a member of the transport select committee, and Adam Marshall, director of policy of the British Chambers of Commerce, on whether London was the best place to spend transport investment.

The conference also heard from Julie Mills, director of Greengauge 21, Alexandra Jones, chief executive of the Centre for Cities, and Jonathan Spruce and Steve Payne from Tees Valley Unlimited.

Lower fares result in lower benefit/cost ratios for Northern projects

Cash is there for transport – if it creates long-term jobs

Regional Growth Fund has £1.4bn to invest in the next three years, but bids are subject to strict criteria

Transport Secretary Philip Hammond expressed disappointment at the lack of transport bids to the new Regional Growth Fund – but was reminded that only projects that create jobs can win funding.

The Department for Transport is responsible for a third of the first £500m tranche of the coalition's Regional Growth Fund (RGF) and Mr Hammond told the *Transport Times* conference in Manchester: "Transport made a significant contribution to this fund and I have as an ambition to see at least as much coming back to transport projects."

Speaking later at the conference, Lord John Shipley, a member of the RGF advisory board, warned that, to get money, transport project promoters would have to recognise that their bids will need to "produce sustainable, long-term, private sector jobs" more quickly than before.

Mr Hammond appeared to depart from his prepared speech to add: "I have to say that on what I've seen so far, I'm slightly disappointed that we have not had more transport project applications to the first round of the regional growth fund.

"I hope that those who are looking at good worthwhile transport projects without a clear idea of how they should be funded yet will think about the Regional Growth Fund as a potential source of funding," Mr Hammond said.

Bidding for the first phase of the fund – which will pay out £1.4bn over three years – ended in January and the first results are due soon.

Lord Shipley, the former leader of Newcastle City Council, said that the second round of bidding, which will close in the autumn, will be helped by the first results because people will see the kind of projects which have been successful.

But he added: "In the context of the assessment of a bid which is primarily around transport, it will have to pass the test of producing sustainable, long-term, private sector jobs. That is absolutely central to the RGF. There are other budget heads that can be used for transport."

He suggested successful bids could be transport projects which help create jobs by, say, unlocking a site. But he would be "very surprised if there is a transport project which got through which didn't clearly have a contractual number of jobs that will be generated".

"It can be part of a bigger project – a development which will generate a number of jobs," he added. "If we actually need a road constructing or we need a railway line… but it has to be really clearly understood that Whitehall departments can be giving money to the pot but they don't then own the money.

"It is owned by the Regional Growth Fund. The decision on where the growth fund is going to be spent will then be based upon the criteria that has been set."

Mr Hammond also pointed to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund as a source of backing for projects. Merseytravel chief executive Neil Scales described the two funds as "exciting and important developments".

He added: "They are competitive and will not make up the gap, of course, but we are working on some exciting projects here in the North and we are confident that they will prove to be valuable sources of funding."

And, despite the caution, at least one man took the transport secretary's encouragement to heart. Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority vice chair Councillor Keith Whitmore, who chaired the conference, immediately asked his officials for a cost analysis of local projects which could qualify.

Flying in the face of the expansionists

The economic benefits claimed by supporters of airport expansion in South East England are not as clear-cut as they suggest. Nor is it inevitable demand will rise as predicted, says John Stewart

It was the key theme which ran through the last edition of *Transport Times*: the Government put political considerations before economic reality when deciding to rule out new runways in the South East. Politics, of course, did play a role in the decision. That was inevitable in the run-up to a General Election. But I would argue that the new policy is not economic folly. In particular, there are sound economic arguments which suggest that a third runway at Heathrow is not essential to the health of the wider economy.

The Economics of Heathrow Expansion, the 2008 report commissioned by HACAN from the Dutch consultant CE Delft, is quite clear: it says a third runway is not critical to the London economy because, for business as a whole, other factors, such as the vibrancy of London's financial centre, are of greater importance than Heathrow's size.

According to the recently published report from York Aviation – *Aviation Services and the City* – London is "the world's pre-eminent financial centre". It has more branches and subsidiaries of foreign banks than any other centre worldwide. All without a third runway at Heathrow.

It is not disputed that the extra transfer passengers which a successful hub airport attracts can enable airlines to run more frequent services to a greater range of destinations. The point which I question is whether Heathrow, given London's importance as a destination, needs to expand as a hub to maintain its worldwide connections. I would suggest that no hard analytical evidence has been produced to show that London's economy will suffer if Heathrow doesn't expand – in other words, if a third runway is not built. Anecdotal evidence on its own is not sufficient to make the case.

Furthermore, London is already the best-connected city in the world. In 2009, the last year for which full figures are available, more than 130 million passengers used London's five airports – more than any other city. Paris was London's closest European competitor with just under 86 million passengers using its airports. This total capacity is particularly relevant if my argument is correct that there are no pressing economic reasons for Heathrow to expand as a hub.

Sir David Rowlands makes much of the fact that new runways at Heathrow and Stansted would generate net benefits of £15bn. Yet this is a much disputed figure. The Department for Transport puts the benefits of a third runway at Heathrow closer to £5bn. A report by WWF – *Alchemy Economics* (2008) – reveals that, if a more realistic carbon price is factored in, the third runway will result in a net loss of £5bn. And a later report from the New Economics Foundation – *Grounded* (2010) – shows that, when the wider societal costs of a third runway, such as noise and community dislocation, are fully accounted for, Heathrow expansion will result in an overall loss to the economy.

It is similar to the argument used in the most recent CE Delft report – *A Ban on Night Flights at Heathrow Airport* – which reveals that, if the full costs of sleep deprivation (health costs, the price of lower productivity at work) are factored in, a ban on flights before 6am at the airport will be likely to lead to overall economic savings.

There is clearly a debate to be had. It is neither helpful nor sensible to try to shut that debate down by claiming that the Government simply ignored the economic facts for the purposes of political expediency. That suggests to me that some

Less demand for air travel doesn't necessarily harm the UK, argues John Stewart (below left)

A report by WWF revealed that, if a more realistic carbon price was factored in, Heathrow's third runway would result in a net loss of £5bn

of the people making the claim may be afraid of having the debate.

I now want to turn to future demand. It is not clear-cut. At the very best, the demand forecasts behind the 2003 Air Transport White Paper are outdated. Even many of the 2009 forecasts look questionable – for example, the projection for oil prices: that in 2030 they will range (in 2007 prices) between "low ($45 a barrel); high ($105 a barrel); and 'high high' ($150 a barrel". Currently the price is hovering around $100 a barrel.

The new forecasts the Department for Transport is expected to publish in July could be very different. We are in a recession; oil prices are rising. A new high-speed rail line will have some impact on demand, particularly if it goes to Scotland. More businesses are turning to video conferencing and, according to the WWF report *Travelling Light*, many expect to reduce the amount of flying they do.

An updated version of the report, published this month, found that, following the recession, businesses are making a permanent commitment to fly less. The report says that nearly half the businesses questioned have cut business flights over the past two years and, of these, 85% say they don't intend to return to "business as usual".

The European Commission is currently looking again at slot auctioning and is about to revise its energy and VAT directives, although, in reality, Europe may be reluctant to make significant changes in these areas. But, overall, we don't know what future demand will look like. We do know, though, that it will be different from the past.

Furthermore, demand can be managed through the price mechanism. It is the argument made for road-pricing or the fuel price escalator on the roads. There is a debate to be had, and research to be done, into the actual sensitivity of business and leisure demand to pricing.

Other factors, particularly the growth in people's incomes, play a role. But the CAA, in its 2005 report *Demand for Outbound Leisure Air Travel and its Key Drivers*, indicates there is a "moderate" link between pricing and leisure demand.

A key point to emphasise is that less demand for air travel doesn't necessarily harm UK plc. To some extent, but only to some extent, is air travel a driver of the economy. A lot of the growth in demand in recent years has been the result of a successful economy; of people having higher disposable incomes. If, through the price mechanism, demand for air travel is reduced, people would spend at least some of their money elsewhere, thus benefiting other areas of the wider economy.

These are not easy questions. Some of the solutions may require European or international agreement. But they are the issues future policy must address. Re-running yesterday's solutions, as so many *Transport Times* contributors seem to be doing, is not an option. Let's debate the future.

John Stewart is Chair of HACAN and a trustee of Campaign for Better Transport

Daniels takes the reins at TfL's surface transport division

Leon Daniels: joins TfL from FirstGroup

Transport for London has named **Leon Daniels** as its new managing director for surface transport. Mr Daniels joins TfL from First Group, where he is currently customer service and communications director for the UK bus division. He will take up the post in late April, succeeding **David Brown**, who is joining the Go-Ahead Group as group chief executive.

London Transport Commissioner, Peter Hendy, said: "I'm delighted to welcome a transport professional of Leon's quality and experience to the TfL leadership team. Leon has extensive experience in the UK and overseas of delivering high quality public transport."

Mr Hendy added: "David Brown has done an exceptional job in running TfL's surface transport team for the past five years. On behalf of all Londoners, I thank him for his hard work and wish him well in his new role."

David Leeder: chief executive officer of Marwyn European Transport

Meanwhile outgoing Go-Ahead group chief executive Network Rail has appointed **Keith Ludeman** as a non-executive director. Mr Ludeman will join the board of Network Rail on his retirement from Go-Ahead in July.

Network Rail's chairman, Rick Haythornthwaite, said: "Keith Ludeman brings to Network Rail decades of experience of leadership in Britain's transport industry. His appointment completes a task I set myself as chairman to totally overhaul the non-executive element of Network Rail's board, strengthening it to provide world-class corporate oversight."

Mr Ludeman and **Graham Eccles**, former deputy chairman of London Midland, fulfil Network Rail's requirement to have at least two non-executive directors with "substantial relevant experience of working in the railway industry".

Marwyn Management Partners has announced the launch of Marwyn European Transport to pursue acquisition opportunities within the European transport sector.

MET's management team includes **David Leeder** as chief executive officer and **Iain Lanaghan** as non-executive chairman, who have more than 30 years' combined experience of building businesses in the bus and rail sector.

Mr Leeder is a former main board member and development director at First Group. He has over 20 years' experience in the transport sector and was previously managing director of First Group's UK bus division, chief executive of National Express subsidiary West Midlands Travel and is a past president of the Confederation of Passenger Transport. He is a founder of the advisory and management services company Transport Investment Ltd.

Iain Lanaghan is a former finance director of First Group and founder and finance director of NedRailways subsidiary Abellio. He is currently group finance director of Faroe Petroleum.

Bluestar, the Go-Ahead Group company that operates the Uni-Link bus operation for Southampton University, has appointed **Lee Murphy** as manager to oversee the day-to-day running of the bus network, which has a team of 60 drivers and support personnel.

His appointment follows a career that started in the transport industry in 1999 when he joined as a trainee driver for a Welsh coach operator. Over the past 10 years he has gained management experience in the bus and coach industry with Flightlink and National Express.

"I have watched the growth and success of Uni-Link from its beginnings in 2001. Uni-Link illustrates the benefits of a small brand within a larger organisation. There is room for autonomy and development," said Mr Murphy.

Cressida Spachis
27 September 1976 – 6 March 2010

Atkins is to dedicate the Young Transport Professional of the Year award at next month's London Transport Awards to Cressida Spachis, who passed away on 6 March last year at the age of 33 following a pulmonary embolism. The award will be presented not just in memory of Cressida, but as a tribute to her contribution to Atkins and the industry.

Cressida was deputy business manager for Atkins' Transport Planning & Management business, and had been with the company since 1999. She joined as a first class honours graduate in civil engineering from Imperial College, and during her career worked on a variety of projects for public and private clients across the UK as well as on a number of secondments. Over the years, her clients included Transport for London, BAA, LOCOG and a range of local authorities.

Cressida was project manager for the Route 38 Corridor Management pilot study, which has developed principles for intensified bus priority now being used across London. The project received many accolades and Cressida was due to

be part of the client/consultant team receiving the Improvements to Bus Services award at the 2010 London Transport Awards.

Dr Andy Southern, Atkins managing director for transport planning and management, said: "Cressida was enormously talented, bright and well-respected, not only as a manager, but also as a team player, displaying a passion for her work and a vitality that endeared her to all who worked with her. She will be greatly missed. Her contribution to Atkins will be remembered for years to come."

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- **Shashi Verma,** Director of Fares & Ticketing, TfL
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- **Elaine Rosscraig,** Head of Customer Insight, Stagecoach UK Bus
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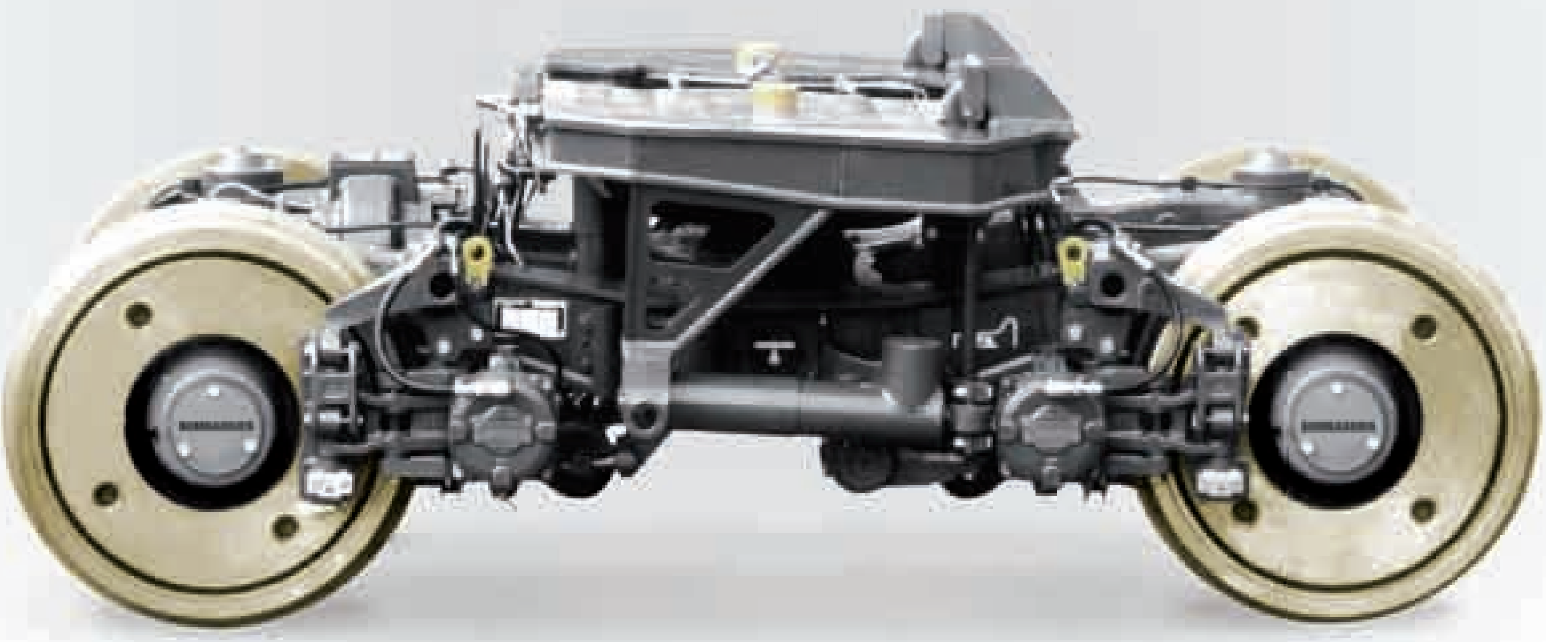

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