

Bus priorities

Are we missing the main point?

- 
- Enhanced partnerships ☒
 - Franchising powers ☒
 - Open data ☒
 - Real-time information ☒
 - Smart ticketing ☒
 - Free Wi-Fi ☒
 - Leather seats ☒
 - Solve congestion ☒

London needs a new bus strategy

A rethink is needed to stop the decline in passenger numbers
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Thriving on complexity

Mario Mostoles on the key to Ferrovial Agroman's success
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Start of a new cycle

Ealing's attempts to become more like Copenhagen
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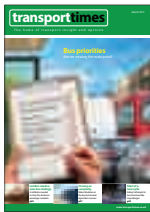
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Congestion remains a pervasive threat

The third UK Bus Summit earlier this month wavered between optimism and pessimism.

There was confidence that features such as free Wi-Fi, USB chargers, real-time information and better-appointed interiors, together with bus priority measures, have the potential to attract new passengers, and there are numerous well-rehearsed examples of areas where patronage is increasing, usually based on effective partnerships between operators and local authorities.

There was enthusiasm for the opportunities the Bus Services Bill will offer through its provisions for enhanced partnerships and opening up data – though the question of franchising remains divisive.

But for all the bright spots, the underlying trend in passenger numbers is still downwards. And hovering in the background throughout the proceedings was the spectre of congestion.

Like last year it topped a survey of delegates' concerns. Yet there was a feeling that a solution was no nearer now than 12 months ago. The problem remains intractable.

As TT's David Begg said, "The public thinks that it's other people's problem." Since Ken Livingstone was London's mayor, no politician has been brave enough to risk the ire of voters by introducing a road charging regime. And even in London the effectiveness of the congestion charge has been eroded. A reduction in road space and the lack of political will to increase the charge has allowed congestion to return to its former level.

Wi-Fi and real time information don't count for much if the bus is stuck in traffic. Bus speeds have been declining in London and the trend of rising patronage has gone into reverse – though there are compet-



The public thinks that it's other people's problem

ing explanations for this, as well as views on how permanent the effect is (see David Leeder's article on page 22 of this issue).

Prof Begg urged local authorities to set bus speed targets to prevent further decline, and there were calls for such targets to be enshrined in partnership agreements. Bus priority measures could then be triggered if targets were being missed – but with the constrained space in many UK towns and cities there is only so much bus priority can achieve.

Prof Begg's prognosis was that congestion

would not be solved until a new, politically acceptable way of paying for road use could be found. And politicians would only accept something that left no one worse off.

Meanwhile, a betting person might have put money on the prediction that delegates' second most severe concern would have been the threat posed by personal transport/cab hailing technology such as Uber and Gett. In fact, this came lower down the rankings with a score of just 8%, behind cuts in government funding.

Funding cuts may be a more immediate concern, but Uber and its ilk are a threat on several fronts. Most obviously through their convenience they pose a direct threat to bus services.

As a second order problem, an upsurge in the number of private hire vehicles adds to congestion, reducing bus speeds and adding another twist to the vicious circle of declining patronage once again.

Internet delivery vehicles are similarly adding to congestion, while the attraction of internet shopping means people are less likely to travel to the high street, affecting one of the bus's prime markets.

Regulation was not keeping up with the Uber phenomenon, said Transport for London managing director for surface transport Leon Daniels, and road space would become saturated before demand for such services did.

"This type of thing is really starting to eat into the public transport market and is coming at us very quickly," he said. Public transport had to adapt, "and we have to be in front of the trends".

The concern raised by our survey result is that far from being ahead of the trends, for a large part of the industry the magnitude of the threat from disruptive technology such as this is not yet fully appreciated.

If that is the case, the industry will need to catch up fast.





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A combination of factors from declining speeds and the prioritisation of cycling to the rise of Uber are resulting in bus passenger numbers in the capital going into decline. David Leeder argues a complete rethink is needed

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Over the last 15 years Ferrovial Agroman has built on its international reputation to establish itself as a leading contractor for major infrastructure projects in the UK and Ireland. The region's managing director Mario Mostoles tells Jackie Whitelaw an innovative spirit is key to its success

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Ealing Council leader Julian Bell recently invited former mayor of Copenhagen Klaus Bondam over to share his experience as the council develops a new cycling strategy. David Fowler met them

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Buses Bill welcomed, but congestion is still the main concern



Provisions in the Bus Services Bill to encourage partnership working were broadly welcomed by speakers and delegates at the third annual *Transport Times* UK Bus Summit earlier this month.

But a survey at the conference showed that congestion was still the number one concern of bus operators, leading to the suggestion that the bill is not addressing the main issue facing buses today.

The bill makes provision for “enhanced partnerships” between operators and local authorities, allowing closer cooperation over bus standards, ticketing, and frequency of services. It will introduce franchising powers for areas with elected mayors, and provides for data on fares and services to be opened up, to make more comprehensive information available for passengers.

Speakers for the most part avoided reference to the franchising provisions, which are supported by local authorities but disliked by operators, though buses minister Andrew Jones confirmed that the Government would seek to overturn a Lords amendment which would make the powers available to all local authorities.

Speakers were generally positive about partnership. Transport for West Midlands managing director Laura Shoaf said for her region partnership

would be an evolution rather than a revolution. By providing further opportunities for working in partnership, and by opening up data, it would allow networks “to be planned more holistically”. She added that franchising powers were “vital”, but perhaps not applicable for the West Midlands, which she said was not typical of other areas. Go-Ahead group chief executive David Brown said: “The Buses Bill contains a wealth of possibilities, because it’s enabling

not prescriptive. Used properly it could be very valuable.”

But others warned of the challenges facing buses. Stagecoach chief executive Martin Griffiths reminded delegates that congestion had been the top concern at last year’s summit. “A year later, we’re no further forward. Will we be here next year and not have done anything about it?”

Several warned of the dangers of disruptive technology such as personal transport apps Gett and Uber. “This type of thing is really starting to eat into the public transport market and is coming at us very quickly,” said TfL managing director of surface transport Leon Daniels. He said the number of private hire vehicles in London had nearly doubled from 67,000 to 120,000 in recent years. Regulation of services such as Uber was justified because demand for road space would be saturated before the market for private hire vehicles was. But regulation was failing to keep up with the changes.

Transport Times chief executive Prof David Begg reminded delegates of evidence that falling bus speeds were linked to declining patronage. The previous year he had described congestion as “the disease that will kill the industry”. On the disruptive technology front, as well as the threat from Uber, the rise of online shopping was adding delivery

vans on to the road, contributing to congestion, and at the same time meaning that people were less likely to go high street shopping, eating into the bus market.

He urged politicians and transport authorities to set bus speed targets. “Even if the target is just to stop speeds declining further that would be a start,” he said.

This was echoed by National Express UK Bus managing director Peter Coates who called for more bus priority. He continued: “We want to see bus journey speed targets in partnership agreements – and then the Bus Services Bill will mean a lot to passengers.”

Prof Begg said he believed the two most important things for bus companies to do were “reduce boarding times, and get to know your passengers”, because the disruptive technology companies coming into the market “will own the customer”.

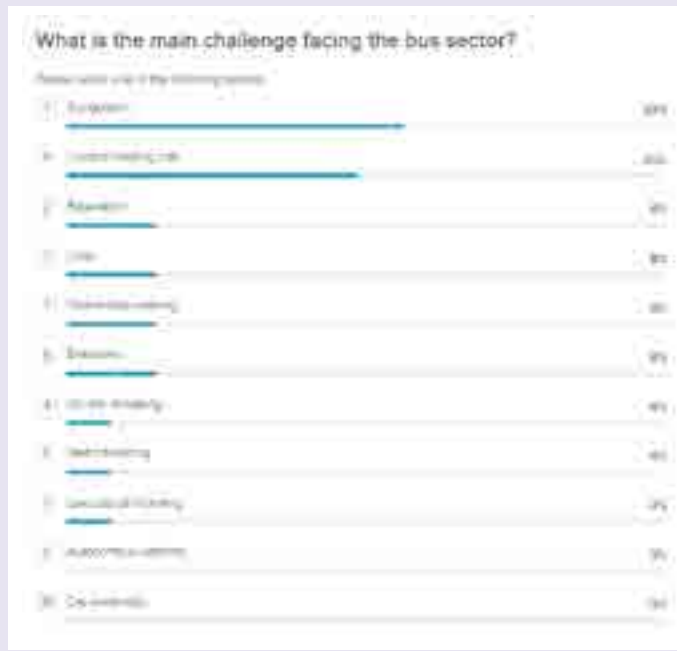
He remained pessimistic about finding a way to tackle congestion until “a new way of paying for road use that’s politically acceptable” could be found. This would need to encourage the movement of people rather than vehicles. But even if this made only some people worse off politicians would not be interested, he said. “That’s the challenge,” he said, “to find a way of paying for road use that politicians can run with.”

Survey results – delegates’ top concerns

Congestion emerged, as last year, as the chief concern of Bus Summit delegates. Council funding cuts were a close second. Only 8% thought Uber was a threat, which may suggest the magnitude of the potential challenge from new technology has not yet become apparent.

Delegates thought that bus passenger numbers would be lower in 10 years’ time by a margin of over two to one, but rejected the suggestion that the industry was facing structural decline by a similar margin.

A majority of six to one thought the focus on emissions was an opportunity rather than a threat. Only one in four thought more than 50% of the bus fleet would be electric in 10 years’ time.



Explore retrofitting to tackle diesel emissions, says LowCVP

Retrofitting some older diesel vehicles with emission reduction systems or replacement engines could be more cost-effective than scrapping, says the head of the public-private partnership that advises the government on its low emission transport strategy.

Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership (LowCVP) managing director Andy Eastlake said: "We have most experience in retrofitting buses, where there's been a very successful SCRT retrofit programme, with significant NOx benefits. There's the same potential in trucks, and we're starting to see some interest in the van sector as well."

Earlier this month London mayor Sadiq Khan urged the Government to introduce incentives of up to £3,500 for scrapping older diesel cars and vans. He also announced that a new £10 toxicity or T-charge will be introduced over the London congestion charge area in October.

Mr Eastlake said that scrappage had a place for the oldest vehicles, but there was "a clear role for retrofit of proven technology to mitigate scrappage costs for some of the vehicle fleet".

His own experience in the bus market had shown that retrofitting older buses with selective catalytic reduction technology could reduce real-world emissions of nitrogen oxides by up to 95%, effectively bringing them up to the latest Euro VI standard.

He said early discussions had revealed that suppliers believe that a solution could be found for vans, which have smaller engines than HGVs and buses but a wider dynamic range.

The situation is complex because a different, more stringent emissions regime applied earlier to HGVs and buses than to cars and vans (see box).

"My personal view is that there's more to be gained from trying to retrofit vans," Mr Eastlake said. "The principle of trying to get the oldest vehicles off the road isn't bad, but we should be clear what we are trying to achieve as regards NOx, particulate matter and CO₂ reductions."



Lothian Buses pioneered fitting SCRT systems to its older buses

More data on actual emissions performance of the latest vans was needed, but evidence so far has "cast more doubt" on the real world performance of early Euro 6 cars and vans, he said. By contrast, "for HGVs and buses everything we've seen says Euro VI works."

Mr Eastlake added: "You don't want to scrap a Euro 2 van and replace it with a secondhand Euro 6 one that may not be significantly better in NOx performance," he said.

For cars and vans the market for after-treatment solutions is less developed than for buses, but some suppliers believe there are solutions that could be made to work for a cost "not dissimilar" to the proposed £3,500 incentive for scrappage.

Fitting an older vehicle with SCRT could reduce NOx emissions by 80%, whereas the latest European data indicates the first Euro 6 standard vans may only be 20-30% better for NOx emissions than Euro 2 or 3, he said.

The large van sector (up to 3500kg) is not required under current legislation to meet the most stringent Euro 6d standard until 2022, but a combination of sticks such as clean air zones in cities, and government incentives and support to improve vehicles "could encourage manufacturers to meet the requirements early," he said.

All new trucks are already fitted with SCRT, which uses the additive marketed as AdBlue to remove NOx, so developing an aftermarket solution for HGVs should be relatively straightforward.

The cost for fitting a bus is around £15,000, which has been eligible for support by incentives such as the Clean Vehicle Technology Fund.

Acceleration management systems such as Zeta Automotive's Econospeed, adopted by Arriva, have also demonstrated their ability to cut NOx emissions by 20-30% in buses at a lower cost than SCRT.

LowCVP devised the definition of a low-emission bus used by the Government and is working on a similar definition for HGVs. It is also working with the Government's air quality team to devise an approval regime for retrofit systems.

LowCVP is to hold a Low Emission Bus Workshop in Manchester on 30 March. For details see www.lowcvp.org.uk/events

Euro emission standards

Emissions limits for cars and light goods vehicles are defined differently in EU legislation from HGVs. For cars and light goods vehicles (which are split into three bands according to weight, up to 3,500kg) emissions are measured in g/km. For trucks and buses the standards for heavy duty diesels apply, with emissions measured in g/kWh.

For cars and light goods vehicles, the Euro 6 requirements were introduced for new type approvals from September 2014 and for new vehicles sold from a year later. NOx requirements have been reduced to about a sixth of the levels permitted by Euro 3, introduced in 2000. They range from 0.080g/km for diesel cars and LGVs below 1305kg to 0.125g/km for the

highest category of LGV, weighing between 1760 and 3500kg.

Under the Euro 6d standard to come into force in phases between 2017 and 2022, the limits will be applied to real on-road driving emission testing. This is likely to require SCR technology for diesels.

The NOx emission limit for heavy duty diesels was reduced from 8.0g/kWh under Euro I in 1992 to 2.0g/kWh under Euro V in 2008. Euro VI (from 2014) was a significant advance on all the preceding regimes, reducing the NOx limit to 0.46g/kWh and implementing real on-road driving requirements.

Emissions of particulate matter were effectively dealt with in the Euro IV standard in 2005 for heavy duty vehicles and by Euro 5 in 2009/10 for cars and LGVs.

Infrastructure bond could finance Northern Powerhouse Rail, says thinktank

The Government should recognise the importance of long-term funding for large infrastructure projects and give subnational and other bodies greater freedom to invest, a new report from IPPR North says.

Transport for the North should have similar investment powers to Transport for London, and Northern Infrastructure Bonds should be issued to fund projects such as Northern Powerhouse Rail, the thinktank says in *Paying for our Progress*.

The east-west connectivity provided by Northern Powerhouse Rail will be crucial to rebalancing the economy, the report concludes.

Transport spending in the UK is still heavily biased towards London and the South East, with London receiving £1,940

per head of population, while Yorkshire and the Humber receives £190, and the North East £220. Only the North West shows signs of closing the gap, though at £680 per head it is still a long way adrift. The IPPR puts the increase down to long-term projects such as the M60 Quadrant and the Northern Hub coming to fruition. IPPR North director Ed Cox said: "There is a long way to go to rebalance the UK, but these figures suggest we're seeing the first signs of the Northern Powerhouse idea being more than mere bluster."

The report identifies a number of factors that make financing and funding major infrastructure projects difficult: there is a lack of clarity surrounding the circumstances in which the Government, the private sector, or a combination of the two are expected

to finance and fund infrastructure projects; the appraisal process by which transport projects are judged is based too heavily on demand relief rather than wider economic benefit; and local and combined authorities and organisations such as Transport for the North have insufficient powers and fiscal autonomy to broker infrastructure investment.

It recommends that the Government should recognise its critical role in securing northern infrastructure projects where there are clear social and economic benefits, and make specific commitments to new investment in the forthcoming budget.

Public sector bodies responsible for infrastructure appraisal should take greater account of wider economic benefits, and the Treasury Green Book should be redrafted accordingly.

The Government should allow local areas and subnational bodies, including Transport for the North, to borrow more freely on international capital markets, working closely with one another and with the private sector. This should be combined with further fiscal devolution.

Working with the new Municipal Bonds Agency, the Treasury should make provision for a wide-ranging UK scheme to enable individuals to make tax-free investments in UK municipal bonds as part of personal pension plans. This should allow for subnational schemes for particular purposes, including a Northern Powerhouse Infrastructure Bond.

Report author Grace Blakeley said: "New bonds could help raise vital funds from long-term investors such as pension funds, as we see in the US and other countries."

Design consultants appointed for HS2 phase two

HS2 Ltd has appointed a development partner and design consultants for phase 2b of the high speed rail project, covering the section from Crewe to Manchester and Birmingham to Leeds via the East Midlands and Sheffield.

CH2M will become phase 2b development partner. It will work with Arup, and joint ventures comprising AECOM/Capita/Ineco and Mott MacDonald/WSP. They will provide the expert engineering and environmental support needed to develop the route and produce a hybrid bill, which is expected to be submitted to parliament in 2019.

The Government gave the go-ahead for the route last November, subject to consultation on a number of refinements.

As *Transport Times* closed for press, it was reported that the High Speed Rail (London-West Midlands) Bill would gain royal assent this week, clearing the way for construction to begin next year.



Second Manchester cross-city route to open

Manchester Metrolink's second city crossing, a new alignment through the city centre to add capacity on the original route, is due to open to passengers this Sunday (26 February).

The new link will allow more frequent trams through Manchester city centre, as well as

improved service reliability and greater operational flexibility. It runs from a new stop at St Peter's Square to Exchange Square and Victoria. The second city crossing is the final piece in Metrolink's £1.5bn "big bang" expansion programme, which included extensions to MediaCityUK, East Didsbury, Rochdale via Oldham, Ashton and Manchester Airport.

The new line will support the tram network's future growth by allowing increased services to run on some lines as demand for travel grows.

Peter Cushing, TfGM Metrolink director, said: "The return of passenger trams to this area of the city will be a historic day and the culmination of years of hard work."

TfN strategic transport plan takes shape

Transport for the North chief executive David Brown welcomed indications from the Government that it recognised the need for more powers and investment to support devolution, as the organisation published a progress report on its strategic transport plan.

A draft plan is due to be published in the autumn for consultation, and finalised next year.

Mr Brown responded to comments by business, energy and industrial strategy secretary Greg Clark at the regional launch of the Government's industrial strategy green paper. He said: "I welcome Greg Clark's recent comments about greater powers and investment in relation to infrastructure, both of which will be key elements in making our Strategic Transport Plan for the North perform at its best."

Since March last year, TfN has been commissioning research

in a number of areas to inform its plan. These include a report on international connectivity, outlining how better transport links across the North could unlock significantly greater opportunities for international trade and travel, and a freight and logistics report showing the potential for ports and airports to play a greater role.

TfN is currently identifying strategic road routes in the North which are important for economic development and working with Highways England and the Department for Transport on three strategic road studies to improve east-west road connections in the North. It is developing proposals for the Northern Powerhouse Rail network which will provide faster and more frequent rail connections between six major cities and Manchester International Airport. TfN's major roads and major rail reports will be published in late spring.



David Brown: "Potential to create a million new jobs"

Mr Brown said: "We are bringing together a strong set of proposals which, we believe, have the potential to not only transform travel in the North, but also add close to £97bn

and almost a million new jobs to our regional economy."

He added that TfN would not "trample" on local authorities' territory, but identify where there is added value. "The hope is that the days of places like Carlisle and Newcastle bidding for transport investment funds in isolation when there is clearly a common interest will be over."

Meanwhile Greater Manchester's transport strategy to 2040 has been unveiled, which with a five-year implementation plan comprises the fourth Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan.

The plan was developed by Transport for Greater Manchester, on behalf of the region's combined authority, and Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership. It contains proposals for improved links for neighbourhoods, the city-region, the regional centre, between cities and globally.

TfL brings Bakerloo Line extension forward two years

An Underground train would run between Lewisham and central London every two to three minutes under Transport for London's plans for the Bakerloo Line extension.

TfL set out proposals for the extension with the launch of a consultation earlier this month.

TfL says the extension, to Lewisham via Old Kent Road and New Cross Gate, would support growth in south-east London through new housing, improved connectivity, increased transport network capacity, and reduced journey times between Lewisham town centre and the West End. It is expected that the extension will lead to the creation of at least 5,000 new jobs and 25,000 new homes. Capacity for an extra 65,000 Underground journeys in the morning and evening peak will help to relieve congestion on local bus services and National Rail services as well as on the road network.

Four new stations are proposed: two along Old Kent Road, one at New Cross Gate providing an interchange with London Overground and National Rail, and one at Lewisham, providing an interchange with the



TfL plans to complete the extension by 2028

DLR and National Rail. Capacity upgrade works would be needed at Elephant & Castle station on the Bakerloo Line.

TfL's business plan proposes to bring the completion date of the extension forward by two years to 2028, to coincide with

the timetable for the upgrade of the existing Bakerloo Line.

Work is continuing to develop a case for a second phase, extending beyond Lewisham.

London mayor Sadiq Khan said: "I'm delighted to be pushing ahead with the Bakerloo Line

extension two years earlier than originally planned. It will provide substantial benefits for thousands of Londoners, providing a new direct route for commuters into the heart of central London and joining up key transport links across south London."

MPs call for reform of rail franchising system

Rail franchising is not achieving its core policy objectives. The current model is failing to improve conditions for passengers, drive industry efficiencies, promote competition, reduce the taxpayer subsidy or transfer financial risk to the private sector.

This is the conclusion of a new report by the Commons Transport Select Committee. "Without changes to the current model, it is difficult to see how franchising is sustainable in long term," the committee says.

"While franchising enabled passenger growth and service improvements when it was first rolled out, passenger satisfaction with the railways is falling. Its core objectives are no longer being met," said committee chair Louise Ellman.

The report says: "The premise behind franchising was that competition would increase

efficiency, reduce the taxpayer subsidy, lower fares and improve services. It is clear that it has not yielded all the competitive benefits initially envisaged by the Government in the early 1990s."

Franchising brings the most benefits to passengers where there is robust competition between bidders to operate services, the report continues. "Direct awards and the recent fall in market interest demonstrates that genuine competition has been restricted to a limited number of franchises."

It suggests an expansion of open access: "Open access could provide opportunities for new entrants to the market to promote greater competition on intercity long distance routes. This model of passenger operation has been a success in Britain." But before it is expanded, "reform is urgently required to equalise the current track charging structures, which create an uneven play-

ing field between open access and franchised operators".

The transfer of financial risk to the private sector was another central premise of rail franchising. "It is clear that there has been a relatively low level of financial risk from operating a passenger rail franchise", the committee concludes. The current structure of franchises limits the ability of the private operator to drive efficiencies and benefits for passengers, it says, with the general size of current franchises too big to provide a clear market focus, and the relatively short length reducing the incentive to invest or drive down costs. It proposes that franchises should generally be longer and smaller.

While the committee is "encouraged" by some of the work the DfT has done to improve its franchising operations since 2012, it remains concerned about a number of "serious shortcom-

ings" in capability and capacity. It recommends that the DfT commissions an independent review of its franchising functions, to address the question of transferring franchise monitoring and enforcement functions to the Office of Rail and Road.

On the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise, the DfT "has failed to take responsibility for some of the failings" in the handling of the franchise. It notes that some factors "were beyond the department's control", but "serious deficiencies in the department's monitoring and enforcement of this franchise" have been exposed. And "the use of a management contract for this franchise, where the department receives fares income and the operator receives a fee for running services, exposes the department financially". A net loss to the taxpayer of at least £38m has been incurred for the latest financial year.

Network Rail considers PPP for digital signalling

Network Rail is exploring a new type of public/private partnership in which signalling specialists could be rewarded for investment that led to an increase in rail capacity.

The scheme could be a way of accelerating the adoption of the digital railway.

The *Financial Times* reported that Network Rail is considering a plan whereby signalling contractors would be encouraged to invest in installing their systems, earning a return from the revenue generated by creating additional train paths.

Network Rail chief executive Mark Carne said that

contractors were best placed to manage the risks involved because "they understand their technology". He said that rather than Network Rail specifying how to create new capacity, "we should be saying: how does the market think we should be creating this capacity?"

The digital railway, in which

new signalling systems know each train's location and speed, allowing trains to run closer together, has been hailed as a way of squeezing considerable extra capacity from the network. Signalling equipment would be mounted on trains rather than at the trackside, reducing maintenance costs.



Daytime test run for Aventra

An Elizabeth Line Aventra test train stands at Liverpool Street last week after its first daytime run. The trains have been undergoing overnight testing on the Liverpool Street to Shenfield route since January and are due to enter passenger service on that route in May.

The first trains will be seven carriages long; the first full length, nine-carriage trains will be introduced between Heathrow and Paddington from May next year.

Bombardier designed the trains in the UK and is building them at its Derby site.



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The rail industry must rediscover innovation

Rail privatisation led to an influx of new ideas. But the pace of progress has slowed. A return of the pioneering spirit is needed to meet the challenges the industry faces, says **Paul Maynard**



What is the future of transport? Is it Elon Musk's Hyperloop? Passenger drones, flying Segways, levitating bicycles? Perhaps, but my ambitions as rail minister are a little more modest. I want to see punctual trains, passengers receiving exemplary customer service, and stress-free journeys.

There are times when this is what happens, but not always, and not often enough. During my first six months as rail minister, I have argued that our railways are facing long-term challenges which the rail industry needs determination to address.

The industry has achieved many great things since privatisation. Passenger numbers have more than doubled, and they keep rising. While we can never be complacent, thanks to new technology and procedures our railway is the safest it's ever been.

And the rail industry is an essential part of our economy, directly supporting 200,000 jobs, indirectly supporting millions more, and boosting the UK's productivity by £10bn a year.

Private rail firms have done all this on a railway that is the oldest in the world, the most intensively used, and which has suffered decades of underinvestment. That is a profound set of achievements.

Yet that record of success has come at a price. The railway was not designed to serve the numbers of people it now carries. The ever-growing demand for rail travel has led to crowding, and an over-reliance on a constrained network. Ask many rail commuters about their journey and they won't regale you with tales of a travelling experience that is getting better and better. They will talk about crowding, delays and poor provision of information.

It is in response to record passenger growth that we're spend-

ing vast sums on upgrades. We are buying thousands of new carriages, rebuilding stations, and in Crossrail and HS2 building brand new lines. In December we had 24,000 people out improving our rail network in the biggest engineering works ever undertaken. All in all, it adds up to the biggest investment in our railways since the Victorian age.

Clearly, the improvement works taking place on the network are contributing to some frustrating journeys, and the Government must do everything it can to support passengers. Recently we applied the Consumer Rights Act to train companies, increasing passengers' rights to compensation. We've also announced that passengers will

Rail spends little on R&D compared with industries such as automotive and aerospace

get compensation for any train delay longer than 15 minutes. We've set a timetable for the introduction of smart ticketing across the network. And we are bringing back together the operation of track and train, to end the hard organisational divide between train companies and Network Rail and get problems fixed sooner.

There is more for the rail industry to do too. I have argued that the industry needs to look at how it has succeeded in introducing change in the past – and repeat that success.

I believe that a key ingredient in the last two decades' rise in passengers was the way that privatisation unleashed innovation. It led to the introduction of advance saver tickets, better train management allowing more services

to run on existing tracks, and those improvements in safety.

Yet in recent years, innovation has slowed. The rail industry spends little on R&D compared with other transport industries such as automotive and aerospace. Perhaps it's because the industry has become used to a world of ever-increasing passenger numbers matched by record investment.

Perhaps it's also because the way that franchises are set up doesn't create the ideal incentives. Whatever the cause, I fear the railway has become conservative – with a small 'c', I hasten to add – so that progress in other industries is allowed to pass rail by.

The candidates for attention are obvious. The industry must go further in offering automatic compensation when trains are delayed. It must go further in offering passengers real-time location information about their trains – the kind of information that many bus passengers now take for granted. And speaking of buses, why is it now increasingly common for even rural buses to offer free Wi-Fi, yet not many intercity trains?

Innovation is only part of the solution. I've talked to the industry about the need to improve disabled access, information on fares, and its operational response to disruption. In a number of cases I've been heartened by industry's response.

But we mustn't imagine that winning back passengers' confidence will be easy. It will take a readiness to listen, face uncomfortable truths, and above all, determination to put passengers at the heart of the service.

Paul Maynard is minister for rail and MP for Blackpool North and Cleveleys.

The unwritten rules that undermine rail efficiency

An incremental approach holds sway in investment decisions when a bolder approach such as total route modernisation would allow improvements to be introduced faster and more cost-effectively

Like it or not, the rail sector is going to have to use the next control period (2019-2024) to complete late running projects from the current one. The scope for new projects, to be determined later this year, is clearly limited (although it wouldn't be unprecedented to have late entries, arriving say around 2019, in the run up to election time).

In this debate, pressures are immense, and confidence is shot. Nobody will want to give up on previously announced electrification projects, even if the arrival of multiple classes of bi-mode trains renders them unnecessary.

Continuing to pursue safety investments (level crossing elimination, for example), on the other hand, would be wise. As will essential schemes to relieve passenger capacity pressures at main stations, or the commitments made recently to improve infrastructure on the troubled Brighton main line, or flood defences, or spill-over schemes from Crossrail and Thameslink. And that's before the significant funding needed for Northern Powerhouse Rail is found – and the Midlands Engine and other regional ambitions.

What's missing is pressure to find more cost-effective ways of dealing with these demands, devising ways to improve the existing railway affordably (see McNulty). With its new route-based devolved structure, this should be a primary aim for Network Rail. But it will need some changes of mindset from the staffers at DfT who now set the homework, and a supportive – even innovative – response from the ORR.

I think there are three presumptions, unwritten and unnecessary, that need to be put to one side to get more efficient investments on the railway. These presumptions are:

First, that no service must ever be removed or downgraded, regardless of its value or con-

tribution. Second, line closures for major works, together with major diversionary routes (or effective bus transfers), are only to be considered in extremis. Third, design and operating standards are set in stone and cannot be challenged.

Add to these, three great lost opportunities: the total route modernisation concept, in which stations, rolling stock, track and signalling, and service plans are updated together; the selective application of a fare premium when an improved service or new trains are introduced, to offset some of the upgrade costs; and investment and service restructuring designed to achieve operating cost savings (including off-peak service reductions).

The three presumptions and opportunities identified here point the way to major project cost savings

These six points together spell out the current approach (HS2 aside) to rail investment planning: incrementalism. No wonder progress can seem glacial. That may be acceptable and affordable when network capacity has not been reached. But we are past that point – so for projects large and small, a new approach is needed. It means selectivity and tough decisions. McNulty sought savings: this is how to get them.

We are being incremental even with the most hi-tech of initiatives. The three presumptions and opportunities identified here point the way to major project cost savings. They also create a reality path for the just published rail industry's R&D outline – the Rail Technical Strategy Capability Delivery Plan. Its plans for train platooning and virtual coupling might sound like science fiction. For the transformation sought

in the plan to be realised, a start has to be made on changing the current incrementalist paradigm.

Total route modernisation, with service restructuring and homogenisation of train service and fleet over the upgraded section of network, currently unthinkable, has to be made allowable. Alongside deploying European Train Control System level 2.3.0d, which leaves lineside signals in place but with increased numbers of block sections, some parts of the national rail network need to move to full automation and large-scale operating cost savings.

It would be extraordinary not even to consider such an approach to the busiest parts of the rail network at a time when the automotive industry can hardly contain its excitement at the technically far tougher challenge of autonomous road vehicles. The central section of Thameslink is a start. We can't afford to have only free-standing metros running autonomously 50 years on from the Victoria Line application. Instead, I am suggesting, we need to find a way to face the cost-escalating presumptions identified here, to confront self-imposed constraints.

The same message applies equally with small-scale investments. Each of the investment proposals that come before the control period 6 process should be subject to rigorous testing against these presumptions and opportunities, as well as the usual value for money appraisals.

That way the rail industry can re-establish its ability to provide greater capacity to accommodate demand with the highest standards available on safety, performance reliability, speed, cost-efficiency and customer appeal: in other words, exploiting the natural strengths of rail transportation.

Jim Steer is director and founder of Steer Davies Gleave.



The Rail Technical Strategy Capability Delivery Plan is available at www.rssb.co.uk/rts/Documents/2017-01-27-rail-technical-strategy-capability-delivery-plan-brochure.pdf

A revolution in ticket selling could be here soon

Rail ticket machines don't always offer the cheapest fare, guide the passenger through the options or explain when tickets are valid. A new rail industry plan aims to tackle these shortcomings



Buying a ticket is often the first way that a passenger interacts with the rail industry. The process can shape their attitudes to it, and they should have confidence that they are getting the right ticket for their needs.

In recent weeks, there has been a flurry of activity which should make a difference to that experience. The Government, the industry, ourselves at Transport Focus and other consumer groups have committed ourselves to the Action Plan for Information on Rail Fares and Ticketing. It considers improvements on how passengers choose their ticket, what they buy and where and how they buy them. It includes some points for action on ticket vending machines.

In an ideal world, buying tickets from a knowledgeable human ticket clerk is probably the best option. Clearly, ticket machines are useful in reducing queues at stations and providing flexibility. But our own research has shown that passengers are not getting the best deals with these machines.

We found that passengers can be presented with a vast array of ticket options right at the beginning, which can be confusing, rather than being guided through to the ticket they need. By contrast, some ticket options are not available to buy through ticket machines at all.

Further confusion can result from a lack of clarity on the validity restrictions, when they buy the ticket. Ticket machines do not necessarily sell tickets to all National Rail stations or add new stations as soon as they become operational.

They do not automatically offer GroupSave tickets once the qualifying number of passengers is reached, so denying people access to those cheaper deals.

They do not allow passengers to buy off-peak tickets until the last more expensive train

has departed. This timing can sometimes prevent passengers from catching the first off-peak train out, something they would be able to do if they bought the ticket in an office or online.

Recent Office of Rail and Road research emphasises the problems further: one in five of the ORR's mystery shoppers selected a more expensive ticket than necessary or were at risk of a penalty fare when buying from a ticket machine. Over half (57%) found that the difference between peak and off-peak tickets was not explained, and around a third reported no information on ticket restrictions or validity, which could have resulted in a penalty fare. 39% said they would have given up and gone to the ticket office.

Buying the right ticket from a vending machine should not be so hit and miss. Some-

Buying the right ticket from a machine should not be so hit and miss

thing needs addressing.

The action plan includes the industry's 10-point improvement plan for ticket vending machines. It will minimise some of the problems such as letting people know when they can buy tickets before the off-peak time begins. Operators also want to reconfigure the machines to inform passengers if a cheaper ticket is available, even if not from the machine itself.

As part of the overall plan, the Rail Delivery Group has given the fare structure a much needed shake-up. It has decided to introduce some pilots on single-leg ticket pricing. This means that rather than a situation where a return fare is just £1 more than the single, each single fare will be half the return. We have long called for such a change.

This move poses questions about how to set the ticket prices. If a return fare had been £50, with the single £49, will the return remain as £50 with the single at £25? No one would pay more, but those going one way would have a significant reduction in their ticket price. The company clearly needs to secure the revenue to maintain investment levels. Should it increase the return fare to maintain revenue neutrality? The pilot will be important in showing how passengers behave in the real world.

The ORR research has demonstrated the problem that a ticket bought from a machine could result in a penalty fare because its validity was not explained. Our own research has shown that some passengers can make an innocent mistake and be caught out by the rules, yet they are treated as though they are guilty.

The Government has now agreed to introduce greater fairness, accountability and an independent right of appeal. This is a welcome step that should make sure that passengers who make a genuine mistake won't be penalised. But it would be even better if ticket machines prevented this happening in the first place.

While long term, more fundamental reform is still needed to establish trust, the action plan provides an important focus for change. Whether it will improve passengers' confidence that they are buying the right ticket for their needs remains to be seen. But everyone needs to start somewhere.

Anthony Smith is chief executive of Transport Focus.

Give communities a chance to lead services

Current governance structures allow connectivity problems to be passed around rather than solved. Reforms to allow communities to take more control are overdue

Connectivity is a widely stated goal, but not everyone is clear what connection they want. Electronic broadband connectivity is defined as anything from a 2MB/s connection upwards, since this allows practical internet use. Similarly transport connectivity is only meaningful if it makes possible some opportunity that would not otherwise have been accessible.

In January, the Jimmy Reid Foundation published a report by Dave Watson, head of policy and public affairs at Unison Scotland, that gets to grips with many of the most important barriers faced. The new report explains why many worthwhile connections depend on both socially and commercially funded elements. However, there is a need for a stronger focus on serving the public to overcome the current barriers to progress.

The new report cites the recent example of the Bo'ness commuter bus service to Edinburgh as an example of transport delivery failure. Bo'ness has many attractive yet undervalued homes less than 20 miles from Edinburgh, but the residents lack attractive transport options to commute to the city. The local people are therefore working together to start up a community transport commuter bus service. The voluntary social inputs of the local community combined with the fare income could make the service viable.

Across the country there are many places like this, where potential services are not quite commercial, and not quite the highest social priorities, so are missed as opportunities. Yet towns like Bo'ness receive far less transport investment than wealthier towns with rail stations. The leadership seems to be lacking to tackle problems of poor access to opportunities.

The new report shows that the transport services are often

provided despite the investment decisions of transport authorities, rather than because of them. Mr Watson calls for root and branch reform of the public sector to allow delivery from the bottom up, with the needs of people and places determining how public funds are spent.

What sort of business model would work? Few would disagree with the report that public sector reform is both vital and urgent for effective democratic governance for places and communities across the country.

On the west of Scotland, the Dunoon-Gourock ferry service was due for retendering, but transport minister Humza Yousaf has suspended the process while he seeks to extend the franchise with publicly-owned

The evidence is not of emerging new business models, but of growing bureaucracy

company Argyll Ferries. Local MSP Alan Reid published a recent survey of the people of Dunoon, showing much higher satisfaction on the unsubsidised commercial Western Ferries services on this crossing than for the subsidised public services.

Perhaps the minister realises that competition is not the best way to fix the current problems. In practice, mechanisms for sharper accountability on service performance might be a better way to improve services by both Argyll Ferries and Western Ferries. Time and money spent creating performance improvement partnerships would be a more fruitful approach.

Current transport governance has highly optimised systems for passing problems around, such as between Transport Scotland and the EU, yet only weak processes for ensuring that legiti-

mate partnership delivery models succeed. Successive reports on public sector reform have sought a stronger ethos of service provision and joint working, but progress continues to be disappointing. The evidence is not of emerging new business models, but of growing bureaucracy.

Underpinning new governance approaches must be payment for results. Competent social governance systems should be capable of enabling people in towns like Dunoon and Bo'ness to have better and more accountable transport services. Across the country there are under-performing towns where better connections would transform economic prospects. Rail is highly supported to provide wide network coverage, but much more needs to be done to offer similar support for connections by bus, taxi and community transport.

In repeated attempts at legislative reform for transport, the desire to control top down by politicians and transport operators has trumped a focus on service. Any success achieved has often come through rebuilding governance systems from the bottom up. As new technologies transform transport, the need is growing for governance capable of connecting communities through more collaborative and accountable delivery.

The Jimmy Reid Foundation report is another reminder that battling for control of transport rather than providing connections ultimately serves nobody. In a fast changing world, transport operators and authorities which champion the interests of the communities they serve will be the winners.

Derek Halden is director of transport data and technology business DHC Loop Connections and is secretary of Scotland's transport think tank STSG. www.dhcl.co.uk



Ministers must embrace radical rail reform

Dissatisfaction on parts of the rail network has fed into a public mood for change. Rewards for franchisees no longer match risks. The Government may be forced to act, says **Stuart Thomson**



Stuart Thomson: "A sector on the edge of crisis"

Rail has become a series of contradictions. Rail passenger numbers continue to increase but customer satisfaction has declined significantly on several lines. The Government constantly claims to be making the largest investments since the Victorian era, but the experience of many travellers is one of unexplained delay for a service they think is too expensive. The Government should take action. Now is the time to look at radical reform.

If not a sector in crisis, rail is at least teetering on the edge of one. The recent apparent resolution of the industrial dispute on Southern was a chimera, rejected by Aslef and which didn't include the RMT in any case.

The issue of driver-only operation is being championed by the Government but not always very publicly. Even if a resolution is found on Southern, the matter will simply move to other parts of the network, including Merseyrail.

Network Rail is obviously working hard to address the infrastructure challenges. While the problem of high-profile overruns seem to have been resolved, smaller ones that have a direct impact on the passenger continue.

The Government is, according to the franchise prospectus for the new West Coast Partnership, talking of a "new approach", "new thinking", "new ideas", a "new benchmark in rail travel" and several other innovations. The prospects is heavy on what the Government wants of the bidder but light on how a bidder, let alone a potential new market entrant, might benefit from its involvement.

What high-flying organisation is going to put its reputation at risk and get involved in the current rail system? The franchisee's room for manoeuvre is limited, it would have little say over the infrastructure, the risks are large

and the rewards comparatively small. The risk is not theoretical; it can have real impact on a business. There could be regulatory intervention and high-profile political criticism, and consumers may take action themselves and stop using the brand across all its business areas.

The general feeling of the public is that the railways need to be renationalised. This will obviously not be the preferred model for the Conservative government, so it is on the back foot. It appears to have little choice but to consider radical options.

There has been talk about merging franchises to recreate Network South East. That may have merit but would it make more than a superficial difference?

What high-flying organisation is going to put its reputation at risk and get involved in the current rail system?

Radical ideas have been put forward in the past. The tradition is that the Government is showered with independent reports, often hard-hitting and radical, that then lie on a minister's shelf and gather dust. Worse still, a report is commissioned by one minister, who is then replaced with a less enthusiastic successor.

There also remains a lack of agreement about what the position of rail is in the devolution process. Though Rail North and now Transport for the North are ensuring local involvement in franchises, the lack of agreement for London appears to talk more of the politics than the policy.

The establishment of the five-year settlement for rail spending was a huge step forward and one that is now being used for roads as well. But it is considered by some to be a dead hand, pro-

viding clarity for one five-year period but not for any further into the future. That is not good for business planning, especially as the country approaches Brexit.

The 'B' word is not often mentioned in the context of rail, but its potential effects are as meaningful here as for other parts of the economy, not just for franchise revenue but also for business planning and resource allocation.

The National Infrastructure Commission might help plan the future for bigger schemes, but not the sort of much-needed improvements that Network Rail undertakes through "smaller" schemes. Without greater certainty in the market, firms will not keep people on their books or in this country. That, in turn, has an impact on costs.

Structures should not remain in aspic. Instead, reform should be constant and evolutionary. By simply stopping after every change is made, the Government has forced itself into revolutions. It may have no appetite for radical reform, but passengers seem eager for change.

And if the Government wants new entrants into the market then change is definitely needed. Relying on clichés such as "partnership working" will not be enough to secure real change.

Some of this would require strong ministers standing up and no longer simply managing the network but instead being prepared to take potentially challenging political decisions.

If the Government really does want to change the way in which rail services are provided and regain public confidence, then ministers need to find some radical zeal. And convince No 10 while they are at it as well.

Stuart Thomson is head of public affairs, government and infrastructure at Bircham Dyson Bell

Is franchising about to come off the rails?

The Transport Select Committee believes that franchising is no longer fulfilling its aim of encouraging competition and innovation. But does the DfT have the appetite for reform, asks **Mike Indian**

Four and a half years ago, when I first began to cover transport policy, an intense debate was under way.

The West Coast main line fiasco pulled the debate about how we run our railways into front page news. It exposed deep flaws in the Department for Transport's role in the process and raised questions over the system of rail franchising.

Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin, at the time only a few weeks into his job, took a number of steps intended to remedy the process. In addition to suspending the franchising process, he commissioned two reviews into what had happened. The first, under Centrica executive Sam Laidlaw, examined what had gone wrong with the InterCity West Coast competition process, while the second, under Eurostar chair Richard Brown, delved into the wider rail franchising programme.

In spite of the process and structural reforms suggested, particularly by the latter, the Government acted on the main recommendation to restart the paused franchising process swiftly.

Times moved on and franchises continued to be let. The 2015 general election presented a brief opportunity to change the status quo with then Labour leader Ed Miliband's commitment to allow public sector operators to bid for franchises. But Labour's shift to support for full renationalisation cannot be seriously considered while the party appears to be so remote from power at present.

So we are left with the Conservative government and its firm commitment to the maintenance of privatisation. With this political reality, it has fallen to others to challenge the current system.

In February last year, the Commons Public Accounts Committee spelt out its concerns

that it was far from clear when passengers would see promised improvements in service quality. It urged DfT to do more to encourage competition among franchise bidders, encourage innovation in franchise letting and do more to build up capacity within the department itself to handle the process.

Many of the same concerns were raised when the Transport Select Committee published its report earlier this month. In particular, MPs urged ministers to streamline bidding costs in order to reverse declining competition in the franchise process. The sale of National Express's c2c operation to the Italian company Trenitalia marked the exit of a firm that was previously one of UK rail's biggest operators.

The committee suggested creating smaller franchises to attract new entrants

Strong criticism of the DfT's capabilities in both that report and by the PAC challenges one of the core concerns that the department claimed to have addressed nearly four years ago. Most importantly, the call for an independent review of DfT's franchising functions and the possible transfer of monitoring and enforcement powers to the Office of Road and Rail underlines the real questions facing the long-term viability of the system.

Several other factors emerged, which under normal circumstances would push franchising reform to the top of Transport Secretary Chris Grayling's in-tray.

Concern about a lack of competition among bidders arises repeatedly. The immediate response from DfT to cite capacity constraints is a well-worn one and another explanation could soon be needed.

Suggestions for reform of the system are forthcoming. For example, the Transport Committee mooted the possibility of creating smaller franchises to attract new entrants to the market and encourage competition. However, the Government's decision to create the West Coast Partnership franchise by combining HS2 and the West Coast main line franchise runs counter to this suggestion.

In addition, the reluctance of Mr Grayling to press ahead with rail devolution in south-east England poses another challenge and shuts down another avenue for reform.

The protracted industrial dispute on Southern Rail raises questions over the DfT's ability to effectively police the system. With a deal rejected by Aslef members and further industrial action likely, the ability of the department to strip Govia of its franchise remains unclear.

"We are of the view that the department does not have sufficient capacity to revoke a franchise from an operator... With a rather weak penalty regime, the department appears to have very few levers with which to manage performance and enforce a contract", the Transport Committee concluded.

Nor should we make the mistake of believing that the lacklustre performance of the Labour party in the polls makes the likelihood of a public option on our railways remote. The option exists north of the border under the Scotland Act 2016 and similar calls have been made for Wales.

The question of rail franchising has not been settled, as much as ministers might wish that it were. To paraphrase Tony Blair, Brexit leaves the Government with little "bandwidth" for anything else. Mr Grayling urgently needs to find some capacity for this issue.

Mike Indian is a senior political analyst at DeHavilland



Mike Indian: "Declining competition in the franchise process"

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TT chief executive Prof David Begg introduces buses minister Andrew Jones (far right)

Adapting to change

Congestion and disruptive technology such as Uber remain major concerns for the bus industry, the third annual UK Bus Summit heard. But many believed there were also grounds for optimism. By **David Fowler**

Progress of the Bus Services Bill has been slower than expected, but the Government is committed to it becoming law before the mayoral elections in May, buses minister Andrew Jones told this month's *Transport Times* UK Bus Summit.

Over 250 delegates attended the third annual event, held at London's Queen Elizabeth II conference centre.

In his keynote speech Mr Jones said the Government would seek to overturn amendments made to the bill in the House of Lords, particularly to allow all local authorities to adopt franchising. "We will be working hard to return the bill largely to its original form," he said. He added that the Government believed that for franchising to be introduced, an elected mayor was essential to provide accountability.

For other areas, the Transport

Secretary's approval would be needed and this would be given only where the local authority had a clear plan to show how franchising would benefit customers, Mr Jones said.

He added that the Government wanted to work closely with the industry in framing secondary legislation and regulations under the bill when it becomes law. "Industry views matter enormously. We want it to be a practical bill," he said.

In the first session, on Bus policy in a post-Brexit world, London deputy mayor for transport Val Shawcross said that buses were a flexible way to provide services and to increase the economic viability of regeneration areas. "To play its role the bus has to continuously adapt," she said.

But since 2015 there had been a decline in demand in London, particularly in central areas, linked to congestion. This also partly reflected more

people travelling by the Underground as upgrades took effect. TfL would reallocate capacity to areas of population growth such as London Gateway.

A revenue recovery plan had been adopted, and a network recovery plan would focus on journey time variability. A new bus priority programme had been devised, working with partners including the boroughs. It would focus on central London corridors with the highest patronage. 11 low emission bus zones or clean bus corridors would be introduced on radial routes.

Buses would be improved, with better heating and ventilation and Wi-Fi. When the Elizabeth Line opened there would be more opportunity to redistribute capacity, but TfL was committed under its recently published business plan for the next five years to maintaining the same level of mileage operated.

Humza Yousaf, minister for



transport and the Islands in the Scottish government, said that a Scottish Transport Bill would shortly be introduced, of which the most substantial part would be on buses. It would be looking at ways of reducing congestion and cutting boarding times. "The Transport Bill will be the first step in tackling the dominance of the car in city centres," he said.

Scotland was not in favour of re-regulation, believing partnership was more effective. It would also consider franchising and would adopt elements of the Bus Services Bill if it thought them appropriate.

Stagecoach chief executive Martin Griffiths reminded the audience that he had sounded the alarm about congestion at last year's summit. He said: "A year later, we're no further forward. Will we be here next year and not have done anything about it?"

Another challenge concerned rural bus services in the face of declining local authority budgets for subsidised services. He suggested smaller vehicles or demand responsive services might be the answer. "We don't want to be dependent on public subsidy," he said. He pointed out that reimbursement for concessionary travel was not a subsidy. "As operators we are delighted to take

concessionary passengers, but we have to be properly compensated."

The combination of congestion and disruptive technology such as Uber meant conditions facing the bus industry were "more challenging than they've been for a long time."

Systra West Scotland business director Neill Birch pointed out that despite success in increasing passenger numbers in areas such as Bristol, "there is still an underlying decline in patronage. For every Bristol there is somewhere else where services are in a tailspin."

The bus and society

The theme of the second session was The Value of the Bus to Society. Greener Journeys chief executive Claire Haigh paid tribute to the work of the organisation's research partners, which had helped to establish the economic benefits of bus services and, most recently, societal benefits. For the first time a link had been demonstrated between the availability of bus services and health, wellbeing, the economy and a reduction in social deprivation. "This is not just about cost-benefit analysis," she said. "It's about people's lives, and improving the life chances of the worst-off."

Transport Times chief executive Prof

Will we be here next year and not have done anything about congestion?

David Begg referred to his research report last year that established a link between declining bus speeds and falling patronage. He had set out a five-point plan to address this, but above all he urged politicians and transport authorities to set bus speed targets. "Even if the target is just to stop speeds declining further that would be a start," he said.

TfL managing director for surface transport Leon Daniels said that in a world where people were increasingly sharing services rather than owning things, transport was moving towards more personal forms, exemplified by Gett, Uber and so on. "This type of thing is really starting to eat into the public transport market and is coming at us very quickly," he said.

He argued that regulation of services such as Uber was justified because demand for road space would be saturated before the market for private hire vehicles was, but regulation was struggling to keep up with the changes. Private hire vehicles in London had nearly doubled from 67,000 to 120,000 in recent years.

But he said that the bus played a hugely important part in all aspects of

Clockwise from top left: Andrew Jones; Val Shawcross; Peter Coates; Claire Haigh; Leon Daniels; Neill Birch; Humza Yousaf

turn to page 20



Clockwise from top left: Dr Manfred Rudhart; Andy Eastlake; Giles Fearnley; John Henkel; Laura Shoaf; Robert Drewery

The cinema adapted and reinvented itself. That's what we have to do

from page 19

the mayor's agenda – for example with a role in improving air quality.

He said there were grounds for optimism. "At one time people predicted the end of the cinema. Now it's never been more popular, because it adapted and reinvented itself. That's what we have to do, and we have to be in front of the trends."

Arriva chief executive Dr Manfred Rudhart said the industry should not spend too much time on forensically probing the causes of decline. Instead, he said, "we have to understand our passengers much better. We must understand the travel patterns of current passengers and also what non-users want from us. Why are they not using our services?"

The old philosophy of "putting buses on a route and people will follow" was outdated. Instead of "double-deckers on a fixed timetable" the industry must consider more closely "smaller vehicles, on-demand services and integration of modes".

Any journey by green bus

Emissions and clean air zones "are absolutely an opportunity for buses," said Low CVP managing

director Andy Eastlake, opening the third session, on Green Buses. The LowCVP and Greener Journeys launched the third report in a trilogy on green buses, *Any Journey is Greener by Bus*, at the event.

"A Euro VI bus today is cleaner per mile than a brand new diesel car," he added. However, public perceptions had not kept up and there remained work to do to change this. A survey for the report had asked the opinions of people actually on board buses. It found that they valued real-time information, mobile ticketing, Wi-Fi, USB chargers and multi-operator tickets.

However, said Mr Eastlake, "Green technology was not important per se. Passengers notice quieter engines, reduced vibration and stop/start technology. But they don't really grasp the huge investment that's gone into green buses." He added that continuing government incentives such as the Green Bus Fund remained critical for encouraging the take-up of green technology.

He said that the "pockets of optimism" where bus patronage was increasing were mostly in the South East and South West, sometimes in unexpected areas, such as Milton Keynes, which was designed for the car. But these areas were where congestion was worst. "It's becoming

so inconvenient and expensive to drive into places like Milton Keynes that people are turning to the bus instead, or to park and ride," he said. "Congestion is arguably our best friend in some areas as well as our worst enemy in others."

First Bus managing director Giles Fearnley said five UK cities had a 2020 deadline to introduce clean air zones, but "in other cities air quality is also a top priority. The industry has to grasp the nettle. Industry and manufacturers must bring clean vehicles to the forefront."

He added: "There's no question about it – Euro VI is a phenomenal advance." But the stigma attached to diesel was "translating into political reluctance about diesel as the way forward".

He put forward the Manchester-Leigh-Atherton busway, where First's Vantage services are carrying 29,000 passengers weekly, as a reason for optimism in challenging times. He paid tribute to Manchester politicians for going ahead with the scheme "despite massive opposition" and added: "It has shown the power of the bus and the opportunities we have together."

Optare commercial director Robert Drewery addressed some of the myths about electric buses.

First was that "they don't go far enough". The average UK daily bus mileage was 126 miles, and less in London. "We now have a bus capable of over 150 miles on a single charge, so it can operate all day without the need for expensive opportunity charging."

To maximise carrying capacity Optare had developed lightweight bodies to minimise dead weight, and also the number of batteries needed, he said. Electric buses were proving reliable in operation and were low maintenance. The latest battery chemistry was expected to provide at least eight years of operation.

Over 50% of UK electricity came from low-carbon sources and this figure was growing. Some argued that there would not be enough electricity. But the UK had 20GW surplus of supply over demand at night. "Charging the entire UK bus fleet would only require 10% of that," Mr Drewery said. He said that limitations of distribution infrastructure capacity would present problems only in London.

The biggest barrier remained cost, where electric buses carried a premium of 75-100% over diesel. Optare was seeking to reduce that through maximising the efficiency of the bus as a whole and through battery leasing.

Zeta Automotive chairman Philip Shadbolt described his company's EconoSpeed Connect technology. This limits acceleration to a predeter-

mined value for a smoother ride and better fuel consumption. The device communicates with the control centre so that the acceleration profile can be changed in real time if needed.

Its Intelligent Speed Adaptation system, combining positioning data with a database of speed limits, could prevent the bus exceeding the speed limit, with potential to improve safety. A trial with TfL last year had proved it "99% effective" and the system was to be added to all buses TfL orders from September. "The technology links together to provide a lot of data we can learn from to further improve efficiency," he said. In the future this could lead to systems to avoid minor bumps and collisions.

Impact of the Buses Bill

The fourth session asked What will the Buses Bill mean for passengers? Transport for West Midlands managing director Laura Shoaf said that for her region the bill would mean "evolution rather than revolution". "We have been doing bus partnership for a long time," she said. This began with a voluntary agreement between the passenger transport executive Centro and National Express, the main bus company in the region; this evolved into statutory quality partnerships for Birmingham and Solihull, resulting in investments in buses and infrastructure.

The West Midlands Bus Alliance, established in 2015, makes further commitments on air quality, journey time, reliability, planning, branding and journey speed.

"We still need to make progress on journey speed," Ms Shoaf said. There had been a drop of 0.7% in the last year over the network, she said. This was a factor in declining patronage and it also meant the number of people within a given journey time of the city centre was shrinking.

The bill would provide further opportunities for partnership working, Ms Shoaf said and, particularly in view of the bill's requirements to make data available, it would enable the network to be planned more holistically.

Transport for the North executive sponsor for integrated and smart travel John Henkel said the organisation had looked closely at what passengers want, and also at the views of "those who aren't passengers but might be if the offer was right". It had drawn heavily on work conducted by Transport Focus in different areas of the north of England.

This showed the public thought public transport was not as easy to use as it could be; it was uncoordinated, and smart ticketing and payment options were long overdue. They wanted public transport to be more like London.

Of ten priorities identified by Transport Focus, fares, ticketing and information were relevant to six.

TfN's vision was to make it easier to work out the best journey and travel options, make the pricing simpler to understand and make it easier to pay. It had developed a phased implementation plan, to culminate in the introduction of account-based travel from 2019.

The Bus Services Bill, he believed, would support TfN's objectives, by providing the framework and encouragement for collaboration, and through its requirements for the publication of fare and timetable data.

Go-Ahead group chief executive David Brown said: "The Buses Bill contains a wealth of possibilities, because it's enabling not prescriptive. Used properly it could be very valuable." It would encourage partnership between bus operators and local authorities.

He said more needed to be done to tackle congestion. "We must do better to free road space. Neither bus companies nor local authorities can solve congestion alone."

He added: "Circumstances really have changed since two years ago. In the last 50 years we had predictable, incremental technological changes." Now technology was moving faster, in areas like electric buses and in the automation of journey planning. "On a citywide scale it's time to help each other," he said.

National Express UK Bus managing director Peter Coates said that in the West Midlands £150m was being invested in what surveys had shown bus passengers wanted: safe, reliable, punctual and quick services.

National Express was investing in new ticket machines, contactless m-ticketing, Euro VI buses and "route branding that makes sense". Completion of a new bus priority programme on Lode Lane in Solihull had saved eight minutes on the journey to Solihull town centre in the morning peak.

He said: "The disruption that worries me most is congestion." On one route where once 16 buses had been needed for a 10-minute frequency, now 20 were required, which he would rather use to provide earlier or later services.

"As the minister said, more public money is not the answer. What we want is more priority for multi-occupancy vehicles." Lode Lane showed that it need not be expensive. "We want to see bus journey speed targets in partnership agreements – and then the Bus Services Bill will mean a lot to passengers."

Summing up the event David Begg said he believed the two most important things for bus companies to do were "reduce boarding times, and get to know your passengers". Disruptive technology companies were coming into the market "who will own the customer".

He remained pessimistic about finding a way to tackle congestion until "a new way of paying for road use that's politically acceptable" could be found. This would need to encourage the movement of people rather than vehicles. But even if this made only some people worse off politicians would not be interested, he said. "That's the challenge," he said, "to find a way of paying for road use that politicians can run with."

A trial of intelligent speed adaptation proved 99% effective

More than 250 delegates attended the event at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre





Parts of the central bus network are scheduled to run at less than walking speed
Image © Songquan Deng – Shutterstock Inc

Why London needs a new bus strategy

A combination of factors from declining speeds and the prioritisation of cycling to the rise of Uber are resulting in bus passenger numbers in the capital going into decline. **David Leeder** argues a complete rethink is needed

For over 20 years, the debate about bus policy in Britain has been founded on a logical error – “Bus patronage in London is rising. London buses are regulated. Therefore, London patronage is rising because of regulation.”

This analysis was always grossly simplified, conflating a variety of independent factors, including London’s uniquely favourable demographics, its high levels of subsidy, and wider traffic planning priorities. What is now clear is that London has passed a tipping point: London’s current policy mix now offsets its uniquely favourable demographics. So London bus traffic is falling, quite quickly.

The decline in numbers

There have been seven successive quarters of year on year decline (starting in Q1 2015). Bus journeys from April to June 2016 were 18 million fewer than for the same period in 2015, a 3% drop. 84 million journeys have been lost over a rolling 12 months, a 4% drop. Traffic in the second quarter of last year had fallen back to the equivalent number in 2010.

Speed effects are offsetting positive demographics

London continues to enjoy demographic advantages that don’t apply in other large UK conurbations. Population is rising strongly, car parking

is constrained, and the density of housing, retail and employment have been growing for years. Only the English cathedral cities show these features, albeit on a micro scale.

In contrast, the major metropolitan areas are characterised by static or falling population, weak city centres (sometimes disguised by flagship retail or office developments) and anaemic economic growth.

So why is London bus patronage falling so sharply?

Anyone who has attempted a bus journey in central London over the last 18 months will have their own hypothesis, but the competitive position of the London bus is becoming weak.

David Leeder is managing partner of specialist strategy consultant Transport Investment Limited (TIL), and chief executive of German bus group MET.



The old idea of the omnibus, catering for a huge variety of journey types and segments, is fading away

A number of factors are at work.

Rail capacity in the capital has been rising for 15 years. The Jubilee Line and DLR have been followed by more capacity and lower fares on the Overground, and from 2019, Crossrail. Even awkward multi-leg journeys are now much faster than the equivalent bus links, and the price premium is concealed by the opacity of the Oyster Card pricing regime. The revenue impact of bus users switching to rail is likely to be positive for TfL overall.

Large parts of the central bus network are now scheduled at less than walking speed. Moreover, peak spreading means that bus journeys are often intolerably slow throughout the day, at weekends, and even beyond midnight and well into the early morning.

The congestion charge has not kept up with rising demand, either in the level of the charge or the duration of congestion. The high operating costs of the charge mean that net revenue is insignificant to TfL's overall finances, and the political will to vary the price has quietly disappeared.

London's good work in the 1990s with bus priorities has been slowly eroded by a variety of measures designed to improve the emphasis on walking and cycling.

Both Boris Johnson and Sadiq Khan have actively prioritised cycling, which has taken on a cultural aspect. To ride a bike in London is to publicly signal your hipness, environmental concern, healthiness and moral virtue. Buses have slipped down TfL's priorities. Reallocation of road space to cycles is removing buffer capacity, so that even minor traffic problems create significant disruption, and large volumes of cyclists dictate traffic speeds in shared bus/cycle lanes.

TfL's laudable efforts to improve conditions for walking must be eating away at short hop journeys, which are often quicker on foot.

Worsening bus speeds simultaneously harm revenue, increase bus costs, and improve the attractions of rail.

TfL has been shortening bus routes since the 1980s, but we have now reached an absurd position where even three-

mile journeys have become extremely slow in a segment in which buses should be highly competitive.

Meanwhile Uber is expanding steadily, eating into traditional London bus markets, as well as those of the Hackney and private hire cabs. Its position is increasingly anomalous given TfL's grip over almost every other element of London's transport mix, leaving Uber as the only "free market" transport mode, not (yet) under TfL economic control.

Most of these are secular trends, unlikely to be reversed quickly.

There has also been a loss of collective memory. Never the leanest of organisations, TfL grew increasingly flabby during the years when taxpayer funding was plentiful. Recent cuts to TfL overheads are therefore overdue. However, the rush to reduce costs has resulted in the departure of a significant number of TfL's brightest and best – the hardworking backroom managers who pulled the whole thing together, and achieved the huge improvements of the Hendy era.

What is the bus network for?

It therefore seems clear that the London model as we have known it since the 1990s cannot carry on. TfL will need to think clearly about what the future bus network is for, and who it is intended to serve.

There are three options.

Option 1 – Do Minimum

TfL could accept that bus speeds will keep falling, and that costs will keep rising. This was London Transport's policy from the 1950s to the 1980s. In this scenario, the only way to keep the network going will be through subsidy. Given the Treasury's desire to eliminate TfL's operating grant, this will require cross-subsidy from rail to bus. And with rail's own tendency to cost inflation, such an approach seems highly unlikely to work. Bus mileage would need to be cut, year by year, as demand reduced.

TfL would need to decide where the bus has competitive advantage. The old idea of the omnibus, catering for a huge variety of journey types and segments, is fading away. Since the 1970s, London has moved towards an undifferentiated, single product offering. Compared with some bus networks outside the capital, London buses are utilitarian, poorly marketed, and unfriendly.

Long-distance buses (the cross-London Green Lines of the 1930s and 1950s), have almost totally faded away, victims of chronic congestion and rail competition. They are now being joined by those long sub-



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Greater rail capacity, as on London Overground, has attracted passengers from buses, while road space has been reallocated to cycling

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urb-to-centre red bus routes that were the backbone of the London business.

In recent years, bus policy has tended to target what I would call “second order” objectives. The pursuit of wheelchair accessibility as an end in itself has led to awkward interior layouts that make travel less attractive for the commuter, the shopper and the “ambulant disabled” – the elderly, and passengers with luggage or small children – who constitute the mass of the market.

The latest mayoral priority is to reduce the environmental impact of buses. This may be laudable, but is unlikely to do anything to increase patronage, and will certainly increase medium-term costs, locking TfL into experimental technologies, more expensive buses and residual value risk.

Option 2 – a social service

This is the standard model in many European cities. Buses essentially fulfil a niche role, as rail feeders, education transport, suburban links for schools and shopping, and a skeletal network for people too old or too frail to cycle or use rail services.

This option would see significant lopping of mileage that parallels rail routes, presumably focused on central and inner London. Growth would continue in the suburbs as population rises, and where the pattern of travel is too complex for rail to become the dominant mode.

TfL has been signalling some moves in this direction with the planned closure of Oxford Street and some “temporary” cuts becoming permanent.

Option 3 – radical bus priority

There is no doubt that buses could do more in London, but it seems unlikely that there is currently much political ability to introduce widespread bus priority of the type needed to turn the current trends around. There are simply too many competing demands for road space, and too much political capital invested in cycling. This probably means that the central and inner London network is doomed to major cuts.

But across London as a whole, there will be corridors where radical bus priority could be applied. This would be politically difficult, but undoubtedly cheaper than light or heavy rail alternatives.

In conclusion, the current model has begun to fray. This should act as an alarm signal to those provincial cities which believe that public control is the one-way route to a utopia of rising demand and low fares. Equally, London itself may need to borrow some of the marketing techniques that hard-pressed provincial operators have long needed just to remain in the game.



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Thriving on complexity

Mario Mostoles:
attracted to
challenging
programmes

Over the last 15 years Ferrovial Agroman has built on its international reputation to establish itself as a leading contractor for major infrastructure projects in the UK and Ireland. The region's managing director Mario Mostoles tells **Jackie Whitelaw** an innovative spirit is key to its success

Since December, contractor Ferrovial Agroman and BAM-Morgan Sindall, as part of the Fusion joint venture, have been planning the enabling works for the central section of High Speed 2.

Having been awarded this contract, Fusion has also been selected to bid for main works contracts at the southern section of the line into and under London to Euston, and at the northern section into Birmingham.

For Ferrovial Agroman this success is the latest in a string of high profile work secured. It has been 15 years since the UK and Ireland division of the Spanish contractor was established. In that time the business has gone from new entrant to a core player in the delivery of major projects.

The firm undertook Ireland's first PFI road scheme. It was able to demonstrate its abilities to a wide UK

audience on the T5C baggage tunnel and Terminal 2 – the Queen's Terminal – at Heathrow Airport, one of the UK's largest construction projects and the world's first BREEAM Excellent-rated airport. From there it has been working on two major Crossrail contracts, the M8/M74/M75 improvements in Scotland, Thames Tideway Tunnel, the Northern Line extension in London and now HS2 (see box).

"When Ferrovial Agroman entered the Irish market in 2002 the strategy was specifically to target complex infrastructure projects," says Mario Mostoles, Ferrovial Agroman UK and Ireland managing director. "That is our strategy worldwide and it has been a success here.

"We are attracted to delivering challenging programmes of work that can showcase as many of the Ferrovial Group abilities as possible. We can deliver the whole cycle of a major

scheme including finance, design and build, operations and maintenance."

The concentration on major projects also allows Ferrovial Agroman to differentiate itself from another UK-based Ferrovial Group company, Arme. "Arme belongs to the services division of Ferrovial. We find that our activities actually complement each other, rather than make us compete, since their model is based around providing services and operating and maintaining infrastructure assets," Mr Mostoles explains.

Ferrovial Agroman in the UK and Ireland is part of the €4bn worldwide business that constructed 25% of Spain's high speed rail network and is part of a consortium building a section of the California High Speed route in the US. Ferrovial Agroman is a member of the international Ferrovial Group, whose combined revenue across its business streams

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Top: Ferrovial Agroman is working with Laing O'Rourke on the Northern Line Extension
Right: Crossrail platform tunnels at Bond Street, part of the Royal Oak-Farringdon tunnelling contract with BAM Nuttall and Kier (image courtesy of Crossrail)
Opposite: Heathrow Central Bus Station roof replacement

is €9bn, owning and operating assets round the globe, including Heathrow.

"Being part of a large company is a benefit for us; the underlying financial position is very strong and that gives a high level of confidence to our clients," Mr Mostoles says. "But that is not the reason we are successful securing work. If we couldn't do what we promise, we would never be successful in the long term. It is important to always deliver what we say we will."

"What also sets us apart is the quality of our work and our innovative spirit. We focus on providing value for our clients, underpinned by our commitment to deliver safely and on programme."

At the core of the business is a conviction that it is important for contractors to co-operate with designers to come up with the best solution for a project.

As well as working with external consultants, Ferrovial Agroman has a strong central engineering services department with experts in most aspects of construction design. In addition, each country-based business that produces its own designs has technical directors at its heart.

"This is one of our most important differentiating factors," Mr Mostoles says. "We like to think that the quality of our alternative proposals along with our innovative spirit have been the key to our success."

"Since we have the same skills as our external designers, we can have the same level of conversation to reach bespoke and optimised solutions. Innovative businesses create more efficient work processes and have better productivity and performance."

Mr Mostoles can point to numerous examples where smart contractor design thinking has saved time and cost or improved sustainability, local employment aims and the overall outcome of projects. The creation of a precasting plant next to the site of the Barcelona Line 9 metro scheme is one such example. This was a positive not only for the environment because of reduced lorry movements, but was an opportunity to upskill the local community.

On-site precasting was an added bonus too on the Dallas, Texas LBJ expressway, a £2bn PFI scheme led by Ferrovial. The Texan Expressway was an opportunity for the contractor to successfully propose a construction solution that added six new lanes of traffic within existing land take by putting them in a depressed section, with the original lanes partly covering the new cut.

An example closer to home is the redesign of the Eastern Bay Link in Cardiff as a 1.2km elevated dual carriageway, which cut the risk of various factors including disturbing contaminated ground, with consequent savings for the client.

"We find our innovative spirit is put to good use when collaborating with a client during the early contractor involvement period to establish the best way to structure the package and complete the work," Mr Mostoles says. "ECI allows us to get involved early and support the client – in that respect it is a good model."

But if UK transport clients seek to access real economic value there needs to be a step change in how the UK plans and develops its public sector investments, Mr Mostoles believes. "What we can do here within the UK is

dictated by planning and hybrid bills, so the level of flexibility to change an overall proposal is not always there," he says. "It is different in Spain and the United States. There, there is much more scope to change, question and challenge the original concept, and that is where the big savings come from."

More flexibility in the system regarding procurement would also allow more innovation to happen, he suggests. "In an ideal world, contractors should also be competing on who has the best ideas. But this is not where industry is at the moment. What we can do is provide innovation in terms of practical delivery, but it is the solutions themselves where the big opportunities are."

The Ferrovial Agroman culture is friendly and has a family feel, so many people stay a long time, allowing them to develop their skills and ideas. Mr Mostoles himself joined as a civil engineer almost fresh from university and now, at the relatively young age of 42, has been with the firm for 16 years. "We understand that talented individuals chase the next big scheme, so we try to make sure there is something to challenge them coming up in our pipeline. We have a core team of people who have developed and progressed with the company since the first days in Ireland."

Working regularly with other contractors in joint venture has helped Ferrovial Agroman build a supply chain and understanding of local markets. "Around the world we almost always work in joint venture with local partners who know the market," Mr Mostoles says. "And generally the intention is to continue operating in joint ventures with a blend of existing and new partners." This includes companies such as Laing O'Rourke, with which it is in joint venture for the Northern Line extension and Thames Tideway Tunnel, as well as BAM and Morgan Sindall working as part of Fusion.





For the wider supply chain, adopting local norms does not mean that the contractor will tolerate all indigenous customs and quirks. "There are contractors that go with the flow and accept certain things because that is how business has always been done. But if there is not a valid reason to do something, we will not do it. Ferrovia Agroman has much closer commercial control compared with what is typical in the UK – because we continually push for those smart solutions during ECI and the design stage bringing benefits to UK clients."

Mr Mostoles is confident about the next five years in the UK. "We already know we are going to be very busy. My concern is for the five years after that. We hope to see Crossrail 2, Lower Thames Crossing and strategic highway plans come to market with programme certainty."

He has no concern about being a Spanish-owned business in post-Brexit Britain. "The positive support the Government has given to infrastructure has cleared the level of uncertainty – HS2 is moving forward,

the Hinkley C nuclear power plant deal has been agreed and airport expansion is looking positive.

"The Ferrovia strategy is to adapt to the market and do what adds value. We are not under pressure to grow in size, but to target projects where we can add value."

Mr Mostoles' ambitions for his business are to improve it in every aspect. "Our safety, health and wellbeing record is very good but there is always more to do and continually strive to achieve zero safety incidents. We are not perfect but we try to lead the construction sector in diversity – women, for instance, make up almost a fifth of the engineering workforce in Spain, but there is more to do in the UK. Members of the Ferrovia Agroman team, Sofia Guerrero and Belen Marquina, won best woman civil engineer and best woman contractor respectively at last year's Women in Construction and Engineering Awards, but my target is to develop our women staff still further and ensure their progression in the business to the most senior roles is clearly defined and supported."

Ferrovia Agroman UK and Ireland – the first 15 years

- 2002:** Business established in Dublin for the M4-M6 Kilcock-Kinnegad motorway PPP
- 2005:** First project in Northern Ireland for the A1-N1 trans-border motorway; awarded Leeds Bradford Schools BSF
- 2006:** Opens a permanent office in London; Ferrovia Group buys Heathrow Airport
- 2007:** Secures Heathrow T5C Connectivity Baggage Tunnel
- 2010:** Secures design and build of Heathrow Terminal 2A in JV with Laing O'Rourke; awarded Crossrail C300/410 Royal Oak to Farringdon running tunnels and C435 Farringdon Station with BAM Nuttall and Kier
- 2013:** Awarded M8/M74/M75 road improvement scheme in Scotland with Lagan
- 2014:** London Underground awards Ferrovia Agroman/Laing O'Rourke (FLO) Northern Line extension contract; award of Eastern Bay Link Road in Cardiff with Dawnus
- 2015:** FLO wins central section of Thames Tideway Tunnel; formation of the Fusion joint venture to bid for HS2
- 2016:** Fusion wins HS2 central section enabling works and shortlisted to bid for four main works civil contracts.

Start of a new cycle



Ealing Council leader Julian Bell recently invited former mayor of Copenhagen Klaus Bondam over to share his experience as the council develops a new cycling strategy. **David Fowler** met them

Above: a cycle hub has been built outside Ealing Broadway station
Opposite: an artist's impression of the mini-Holland scheme at Ealing Common

Ealing's cycling strategy is due for renewal. The London borough has made progress over the life of its current strategy, culminating in a mini-Holland bid that led to the award of £15m for cycling improvements from Transport for London.

But council leader Julian Bell is keen to move things up a gear, and has brought together an 11-strong expert cycling commission. The commission will take evidence and make recommendations for the next cycle strategy by early summer this year. Membership includes Clyde Loakes from the London Borough of Waltham Forest and Feryal Demicri of Hackney, both ambitious cycling boroughs in their own right; Ian Davey, former deputy leader of Brighton & Hove City Council; and former London cycling commissioner Andrew Gilligan.

Mr Bell says good progress has been made so far: "We've increased our cycling modal share – not dramatically but still by a reasonable amount, to between 2 and 3%. We've improved our cycle facilities – we've got a cycle hub outside Ealing Broadway station, and another at North Acton tube station." Extensive cycle training

has also been undertaken, especially among children and in schools.

Work began last October on the three-year mini-Holland programme, with improvements in Ealing town centre which will include segregated cycling routes, new paving for footpaths and improved road crossings. It addresses the one-way system in the town centre, which was identified as being intimidating and the borough's main problem in cycling. Improvements for cyclists are also planned along the Uxbridge Road, as well as a number of Quietways on less busy roads.

"We've already put some infrastructure in – we've got a Danish roundabout at the junction of Horn Lane and Acton High Street. That's got cycle-only lanes as you come up to the roundabout and then on the roundabout itself.

"I'm a regular cyclist, I'm quite hardened but I never felt comfortable going round that roundabout. Since we made the changes it's transformed. You feel you've got a route through which is yours, and cyclists don't have to joust with traffic in the way that you used to."

The council wants its next cycling strategy to be more ambi-

tious than the current one and also more specific about what the council and its partners need to do to achieve its ambitions. Hence the commission was set up.

"We feel we've made a start but we've still got a long way to go," says Mr Bell. "We're politically committed, we're investing in cycling, but we haven't had the modal shift that we really want. I have a bit of competitive tension with Hackney and I want us to be at the same level as them – say around 7%."

He adds that one aim of the commission is "to find out why we've not had that modal shift, what's worked and what hasn't worked in Ealing and what more we can do. But we also wanted to contribute more widely to the London debate about increasing cycling participation, so we wanted to learn lessons from the first round of cycle superhighways and the first round of mini-Hollands."

The borough is tapping into international expertise too, and on the day we met the commission had been addressed by Klaus Bondam, former mayor of Copenhagen and director of the Danish Cyclists Federation. "Klaus gave us a really visionary long term aspiration

for Ealing – we want Ealing to be the London Copenhagen. It's about where we want to be in 2030."

So more of a mini-Denmark than a mini-Holland. Is there any reason, I ask Mr Bondam, why London can't be like Denmark and have the same level of cycling as Copenhagen (where cycling mode share is well over 30%, and higher in the city centre)?

"I think that London and its boroughs are like any other mega-city in the world," says Mr Bondam. "They have to have a strong focus on mobility. Because if we're not able to go from A to B, we cannot create that growth, that prosperity, that welfare, for future generations. So first of all, I think it's about keeping an eye on how to create that mobility. In my eyes, London has so many possibilities to become a cycling city. It's kind of flat; the climate is acceptable, and it has a very intensive grid of small roads. So from a cycling perspective it is really interesting that boroughs like Ealing and Waltham Forest are taking very positive steps in this direction."

He adds, however, that for success, "Lesson number one in these processes is that there has to be political leadership. It is of vital importance that the leader of the council sat in a meeting for over two hours talking seriously about this matter, engaging in it, not just a junior council member."

Equally important is to make sure the programme can survive changes of leadership. This means creating a cross-party consensus – in other words, "within the different parties creating a core understanding that this is a part of our vision for the future", as well as engaging with politicians at city level and national level

so that it becomes accepted that "this is a part of who we are politically".

Cycling should not be a party political matter. He acknowledges that "what is probably the tricky thing in the UK is understanding that cycling policy has nothing to do with left-wing politics. There are many reasons why it should be easy to agree on this: public health – who's against public health? Noise reduction – who on earth is against noise reduction?

"Cycling should be as you see in many Danish and Dutch cities, a completely integrated part of the entire traffic system. It's not an ugly cousin that was invited to the party. I'm a cyclist but I'm also a car driver, a user of public transport, and a pedestrian, and I want the same level of quality no matter how I move around."

There is also a social aspect. Areas of deprivation often also have public health problems, and cycling "is an extremely easy way to work with residents in those areas, as well as increasing their access to mobility", making it easier to reach work, education and public services.

Ealing must be ready for a long haul, though, Mr Bondam says. "I told the commission to be patient, to understand that this is a long process." Also in the future there will be a need to engage with citizens more and to improve communications, convincing cyclists in the borough they are really valued.

Has the UK evolved differently from places such as Copenhagen where there are much higher levels of cycling? Are there big things the UK is missing, or is it just funding?

"There's definitely not been enough funding," says Mr Bondam, "and

Ealing Cycling Commission

Ealing's cycling commission has the following objectives:

- To set out what constitutes best practice in cycling strategy to guide implementation in Ealing
- Clarify the council's cycling objectives, such as targets for modal share and journey length
- Make recommendations to support current cycling initiatives, such as Ealing Broadway mini-Holland and the A40 cycle superhighway and on the extent and quality of Ealing's future cycling network; and for a prioritised plan, focusing initially on 2017-2022
- Establish clear requests to TfL, the GLA and other funding partners to help carry out the commission's recommendations, specifically the action plan to 2022
- Establish clear strategic priorities consistent with the corporate plan and other council strategies, which integrate with relevant developments in Ealing and beyond and are part of an integrated approach to enabling more people to travel by bike, on foot and by public transport
- Produce a briefing report summarising the work on all elements described above, to serve as the framework for formal report to cabinet

The commission's terms of reference allow it to call expert evidence, testimony, research and support for its work.

We want Ealing to be the London Copenhagen

I also say it is unfair to expect that all that funding should come from the municipal side, from the borough side. There has to be state funding in this, like there is state funding in building rail, building highways."

State funding for cycling in Denmark is high, "but not even to the degree that the Netherlands are doing. The Netherlands are really investing a lot, and they have been for a longer time than we have."

Was there a stage when Denmark was at the stage the UK is now, or have there always been higher levels of cycling? "There has always been, because we have never been a car-producing country and that does play a role. If you go back and look how the car companies influenced, lobbied at the urban level back in post Second World War times – probably not as much in Europe as they'd done in the US, but neither Denmark nor the Netherlands have had a car industry."

He adds that the car industry was very valuable after World War II, "it created jobs, it created prosperity, hope, the freedom to move to the suburbs, it just went a little bit too far".

Mr Bell says another lesson from the morning session was that "if you build the infrastructure the cyclists will come". But the first question people ask him if they're not cyclists is: aren't you worried about the safety implications? "Part of the discussions we had this morning regarding the Dutch and the Danish model is that the Danish model is more based on segregation. For me, if you give



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Top: Julian Bell (left) and Klaus Bondam
Middle and bottom: the Danish roundabout at Horn Lane/Acton High Street has cycle-only lanes on the approach and around the roundabout

from page 31

safe space to cyclists, then you will get the increase in numbers who are prepared to cycle. It needs to be safe enough for a six-year old."

As an example he cites a "horrendous" junction at Vauxhall where even experienced cyclists felt intimidated. "When I cycled it for the first time since all the new superhighway infrastructure had been put in, it was just a joy. The thing that kept coming back to me is that you could cycle safely around that junction with a child." Ealing's director of highways has been told to go down and take in its philosophy, "and bring it back to Ealing."

Is putting an emphasis on segregation more difficult to achieve because of scarce road space in London?

"We've had a discussion about Brighton this morning in which it was said that Brighton was actually built for horse and cart, but I always say where there's a will there's a way, and it's also about being prepared to make some quite dramatic changes. Where you've got four lanes of traffic, why not give away one lane solely for cycling?"

Mr Bondam adds: "In my eyes it's a choice that you have to make. You also make choices that are very pro-car when you build a motorway – it's a non-pedestrian, non-cycling

environment, which is fine. But that was the reason why I mentioned the grid of roads in London – there are so many alternatives if you do the planning right. I think you've seen it in Waltham Forest: you can change the layout of the roads and still make it accessible for people who live there to go there in their cars, but not to drive through."

Returning to communication, Mr Bell makes the point about broadening the debate to include, for example, the argument about health benefits. Mr Bondam quotes statistics from the Danish ministry of transport: "You save 80p for every kilometre you use a bicycle, in prolonged life and reduced health costs. These are numbers from the Danish ministry for transport, and it's important that public authorities have that courage to say this is a good investment case for our society."

Mr Bell describes his vision for 2030. "Ealing is known for its quality of life. We have our wonderful parks and green spaces and lots of trees and greenery, but what I want to do is have a sustainable borough which has a high quality of life, reduced air pollution, more active travel, bringing some of the current quality of life that we have in our parks and green spaces into the urban realm. That was one of the real positives about this morning for me, that this is about improving the urban realm for everybody."

pwlc projects

Creating sustainable communities





Mark Thurston



Joanna Whittington



Simon Pringle



Mark Ferrer

Mark Thurston named as new HS2 chief executive

Mark Thurston has been appointed as the new chief executive of HS2 Ltd, following a five-month global search to find a successor to Simon Kirby.

Mr Thurston is currently the regional managing director overseeing CH2M's European operations, which includes those in the UK. He began his career in the rail industry over 30 years ago as an apprentice with TfL, before fulfilling a series of roles with the Nichols Group and Metronet. He has worked for CH2M since 2008 on the London 2012 Olympics and Crossrail, where he led the programme partner joint venture for three years.

He will take up the position in the spring.

HS2 chairman David Higgins said: "Mark not only knows the UK rail industry from the bottom up, but has worked for organisations operating at the highest level globally. His grasp of how to manage the transition from page to reality makes him not only the right person to take over at HS2 as we are on the verge of royal assent, but also to see it through the years leading up to the first train being commissioned."

Joanna Whittington has been confirmed as chief executive of the Office of Rail and Road. Ms Whittington has acted as interim chief executive since January last year. She had been ORR's director of railway markets and economics since March 2014 as well as a member

of the ORR board. She had responsibility for ORR's economic regulatory role, including leading initial planning for the 2019-2024 funding period.

An economist with a masters' degree in transport planning, she had previously worked at the ORR from 1995 to 1999, including as director of economics and finance. In 1999 she joined Ofgem, where she was responsible for regulation of the UK wholesale gas and electricity markets and held a number of senior posts, including director of gas distribution.

Steer Davies Gleave has launched a new economic development practice, SDG Economic Development. It will be led by **Simon Pringle**, formerly managing director of consultant SQW.

Mr Pringle is an economic development specialist whose career has spanned central government and consulting. He has worked extensively in the UK and in central and eastern Europe, with much of his work focused on strategy development and innovative action planning. He recently led the independent economic review of the Northern Powerhouse, and has just been appointed by Liverpool Partners to write the city region's science and innovation audit.

The new practice has been established to build on Steer Davies Gleave's existing strength in transport, and to add to its capabilities in adjacent policy

- **Joanna Whittington confirmed as Office of Rail and Road chief executive**
- **Simon Pringle to head SDG economic development practice**
- **Rob Morris to head new operational structure at Siemens Rail Automation**
- **Peter Cattell rejoins Clearview Intelligence**

areas such as enterprise, knowledge, skills and governance.

The emphasis of the new practice will be on integrated economic development, and it will have offices in Manchester, Leeds and London. Work for clients has already begun, including studying the scope for establishing a science and innovation hub at Toton in Nottinghamshire for East Midlands Councils, and assisting the National Infrastructure Commission to identify performance measures for use in the National Infrastructure Assessment.

Scott Dickinson and **Dr Mark Matthews** have been appointed associates.

Siemens Rail Automation has announced a new structure for its UK operations, designed to meet the changing needs of its customers and to more effectively develop new technologies and solutions for the industry.

The new structure will be led by Siemens director of operations **Rob Morris**, with **Mark Ferrer** appointed as operations

director for the digital railway.

Mr Ferrer will have responsibility for new technology, control systems and communication information systems, as well as for a newly-created mobility digitalisation unit. This team will bring together products and systems from across the Siemens organisation, to develop systems to improve the operation of the railway.

Richard Cooper and **Matt Kent** will take on the roles of operations director east and operations director west respectively, as well as retaining their existing roles as delivery directors for Scotland and the Midlands. **Adrian Stubbs** continues in his role as delivery director, mass transit and international.

Peter Cattell has rejoined intelligent transport systems, traffic sensors and data analytics specialist Clearview Intelligence, in the capacity of senior solutions manager.

Mr Cattell has had a long career in the ITS solutions industry, learning his trade at Siemens before moving to Clearview and then on to project management and sales roles at Colas, Dynniq and most recently at Rennicks.

He has extensive knowledge of creating and implementing innovative ITS solutions for clients across the UK, as well as a strong network of contacts across the supply chain. In his new role, Mr Cattell will assume responsibility for Clearview clients in the Midlands and Central UK area.

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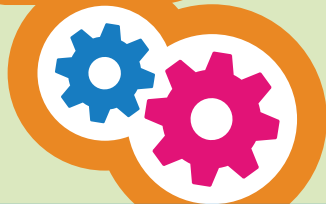


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