

Rail Delivery Group

**London Infrastructure Plan
2050
A Consultation**

October 2014

The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) was established in 2011 to provide industry leadership following Government review and consulted on by the ORR. The RDG brings together members Network Rail, passenger and major freight operators and provides leadership for the industry to inform Government, funders and regulatory bodies on priorities and solutions for the rail industry.

The Rail Delivery Group welcomes the development of the long term infrastructure plan for London, which enables both infrastructure and service providers to prepare for the growth described in the document. We recognise the importance that the capital plays in the economy of the country – and the key part that transport has in delivering the aims set out in the document.

The consultation document notes that the agglomeration of jobs in the central zone will continue, hence the requirement to provide significant additional capacity on radial routes at peak times. Peak capacity on the rail network is largely fully utilised today which has resulted in the current programme of investment, including Crossrail, Thameslink and train lengthening, as well as the longer term schemes such as High Speed 2 and Crossrail 2. To meet the challenges described in the consultation document suggests a further step change in capacity provision on the transport network. These challenges highlight the potential difficulties in providing the additional capacity whilst maintaining safety and performance.

The consultation document describes the potential of the rail network to carry twice the number of passengers than at present, whilst reducing crowding and improving the customer experience. We welcome that ambition. However, in order to meet that aspiration, a more radical approach to delivering transport solutions is likely to be required. Much of the existing rail network exists within its original Victorian footprint, and on many lines and stations there are physical constraints that may prevent additional capacity being delivered at an acceptable cost.

The railway in London is characterised by a dense network of lines and junctions with relatively limited terminal platform capacity. Although significant additional capacity may be released through technological innovation such as new signalling systems, additional traditional infrastructure may also be required to support this. From a station perspective, existing concourse space and transport interchanges are under severe pressure at major stations. Similarly, longer or double deck trains may not release significant extra capacity if trains take longer to clear junctions and station dwell times are increased. These challenges underline that low level investment in incremental capacity enhancements on the existing network will be subject to diminishing returns in the future and that there may be trade-offs to consider between capacity provision and performance.

One vision of a radical solution could consider greater cross London linkage of radial routes to relieve congestion at terminals. The success of Thameslink points to such a strategy. This should be considered alongside the addition of capacity on existing popular routes, or even new radial routes.

The consultation document presents a number of specific rail investments across the capital. Several of these projects are currently being developed by Network Rail, TfL and other stakeholders, hence we are supportive. By exception, the following investments are where we anticipate further engagement in the near future.

- Extending the Bakerloo Line. The consultation document emphasises the need to improve capacity on radial routes. Whilst we acknowledge that additional capacity may be available through conversion of this line to a different mode, this must be balanced by the potential loss of rail capacity through Lewisham and direct

connectivity to the City via London Bridge. We note that TfL are currently consulting on this scheme and welcome further engagement at the appropriate juncture.

- Further Crossrail projects. In addition to Crossrail 2, we suggest the specific inclusion of current proposed Crossrail extensions to the West Coast Main Line and North Kent, which will not only improve connectivity across the capital, but will enable better use of residual capacity on existing lines.
- Gospel Oak to Barking line extensions. We are supportive of the scheme to Barking Riverside, subject to further studies on the impact to other services. The case for extension across the river appears uncertain on the assumption that costs will be high when compared to a benefits case that will not include journeys to central London.
- Although not an infrastructure scheme, the consultation describes greater devolution of train services to TfL. We do not object to this, subject to considering the network as a whole, ensuring that boundaries are managed appropriately and that the move does not detriment outer London services. We note that the increased investment on London Overground has driven improved ridership and believe that a financial appraisal of all options should be performed in order to deliver the benefits sought through the most appropriate delivery mechanism.

The scale of the potential growth in transport requirements suggests a bolder strategy may be required than what is described in the document. For example, East and Central London sub-regions are identified in the supplementary projections document with the largest growth in population and employment to 2050 (nearly 60% of the population growth and nearly 70% of the employment growth). It is a safe assumption that there will be a proportionate increase in the transport requirement between these two sub-regions. However, the investments described in the consultation document do not appear to address this. Further work appears to be required to establish where the capacity pressures will occur within the transport system and developing an investment programme to address the priority areas, rather than promoting schemes that do not fully meet the anticipated requirements. This work should not preclude addressing current overcrowding challenges of course. Where major investment is planned, we advocate capturing greater value where possible.

We would therefore recommend that economic developments are prioritised in areas where surplus capacity may exist, or where it may be delivered at an acceptable cost. Such capacity may be available through the development of High Speed 2, Crossrail (including extensions) and Crossrail 2. Each scheme provides new capacity to, and potentially allows better use of residual capacity on, the existing network. Where other priorities override the case to align economic and transport investments, consideration should be given to developing new transport corridors rather than enhancing existing lines with diminishing returns on investment.

We are pleased to note that the consultation recognises the importance of freight to the London and UK economy and that the suggested plans look to facilitate freight movement.

The rail industry is developing a Digital Railway strategy in order to deliver improved rail operations fit for the 21st Century. The Digital Railway is a rail industry-wide programme designed to benefit Great Britain's economy by accelerating the digital enablement of the railway. The scope of the programme covers several key areas of the railway, including train

operations, capacity allocation, passenger journey improvements and infrastructure management. It also looks at the benefits that could be brought to passengers by real time, end to end journey information. Where opportunities exist, we would welcome working with our transport partners and other stakeholders in delivering this vision.

The industry's Long Term Planning Process and the component geographical Route Studies facilitate the strategic planning of the rail network. The Route Studies provide demand forecasts agreed with industry stakeholders and appraise options to make best use of the existing network to 2043 to inform investment choices in the future. The Route Study outputs are not London-specific, and acknowledge that capacity pressures exist outside the capital as well. The options appraised will range from short term incremental capacity enhancements, to major capital programmes. The Route Study programme is due to be completed by the end of 2016, with consultation drafts of Sussex, Western, Anglia and Wessex Route Studies due for publication this autumn. We recommend continued engagement in this process, by Transport for London on behalf of the Greater London Authority, in order to develop the infrastructure requirements to 2050 and beyond.

Enquiries

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