

## **London Forum evidence to the transport committee on rail infrastructure**

**The London Forum of Amenity & Civic Societies is an umbrella organisation for over a hundred community groups across London. Many of our member societies advocate the provision of new infrastructure, or occasionally register opposition to proposals of government. We seek to establish broad principles which can inform the way priorities for infrastructure are determined.**

**We have two concerns where we believe future planning would benefit from the establishment of clear principles.**

### **1. Private sector funding and its influence on the design of infrastructure proposals**

Governments are always attracted to the notion of private sector funding to defray costs. Unfortunately, there is an increasing tendency to redesign the scheme in order to attract the interest of the private sector.

Advocates of more new infrastructure point to the loss of expertise if a project such as Crossrail is not immediately followed by another major scheme utilising the engineering and delivery expertise gained by work on Crossrail. There is another expertise which has been lost. In the 1960s it was established that new tube lines would be more efficient operating with relatively long runs between stops and providing those stops at points of interchange. Public transport efficiency could then be further improved by relating bus routes to those tube services, rather than seen as in competition with them. The Victoria line was planned on this basis. Unfortunately, cost cutting limited its effectiveness. Second entrances at several stations were cut from the scheme, with the result that some links were lost and the southern end of the trains is overloaded relative to the northern end.

This principle was to be followed by Crossrail and the Hackney-Chelsea line, later Wimbledon-Hainault and now called Crossrail2. Crossrail has largely remained true to the principle, fending off several attempts from the bean counters to cut out stations in the course of its 25 year gestation. Crossrail2 has been less fortunate.

The original plan was for a north-east to south-west line stopping wherever it crossed another tube or railway line. The Crossrail2 team continue to justify its proposal by the obvious and undisputed need to address this north-east to south-west corridor. The *Evening Standard* however refers to it as a north-south line and looking at the revised map it is easy to see why. The route has been distorted by the need to disperse more people from Euston if HS2 is built there, and by objectives to the north of London where there is scope for development and hence private sector contribution to the cost of Crossrail2. But this ignores the severe overcrowding that already exists in the north-east of London. It also places emphasis on extending commuter distances further to achieve the same end, when the focus should be on densification of places closer to London as the crow flies. The Mayor has identified swathes of zone 3 that could and should be densified. Many of these sites are close to tube or rail stations, but congestion is already dangerously high and it would be impossible to transport additional numbers without additional capacity.

It is difficult to understate the advantages of interchange. A full train arriving at a busy station needs a degree of egress to provide access for intending passengers. This is why the Barking/Gospel Oak line is so overcrowded (and will remain so even with longer electric trains) that people travel in the opposite direction to reach a station from which they can squeeze on to their train. The line crosses eight other lines without any interchange facility.

The Wimbledon-Hainault scheme had interchange stations at Hainault, Leytonstone Hackney Central and Essex Road providing relief to the Central, Great Northern and Victoria line stations which are already congested and which are needed to support densification in zone 3. A station at Leytonstone on the Crossrail2 line, with interchange to both the Central line and the Barking/Gospel Oak overground line, would provide space for passengers to board at Leyton, Leyton Midland Road, Wanstead Park and Woodgrange Park.

### **2. Changing the pattern of service to facilitate greater capacity**

A political nettle arises when it is proposed to reduce the range of through destinations on commuter services in order to enable a higher frequency of trains to be run on existing rail infrastructure. There was an outcry when this was proposed for the Thameslink service, and the government backed down. There are now proposals for similar changes on South-eastern trains, removing the choice of either Charing Cross or Cannon Street, and on the Northern line, so that all Bank branch trains would take the High Barnet branch and all Charing Cross trains would continue towards Edgware.

In this case we believe the less popular choice should be made, and that through services should be sacrificed to permit higher frequency, provided that there is good (ideally cross platform) interchange. There are so many people trying to travel on London's commuter lines disadvantaged passengers would grumble but accept it.

For it to be successful in the case of the Northern line, we recognise that circulation space at Camden Town would have to be increased.