

# Conservative Transport News



**Conservative Transport Group**

**A Special Interest Group of the Conservative Party**

**Newsletter: September 2009**



**Transport: where the Conservatives have the better moves**

[www.c-t-g.org.uk](http://www.c-t-g.org.uk)

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The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the article authors and not necessarily those of the Conservative Party or the Conservative Transport Group

# Chairman's Chat

## Fuel Duty Rise

A new September and another fuel duty rise! “Environmentally good”, some would say – hitting the private motorist where it hurts and making them think of alternative modes of transport. Until they realise that the other modes of transport are not always as attractive in time and cost!

Our Haulage industry suffers as well with the fuel duty rise – hitting an army of self-employed and small companies as well as the larger companies. It is difficult to pass the costs on, so the costs are absorbed. Yet the Haulage industry supplies the lion's share of our retailers, the 'just-in-time' deliveries – sometimes same day, sometimes next day.

This industry is vital to our manufacturers who, without the supply chain, cannot survive. Yet this government makes it harder and harder for industry to compete and prosper, loading more taxation and paperwork on any company that will work hard enough to pay their dues in taxation to a Government which, in turn, spends it on our Client State and on creating new jobs in the public sector (with good pensions and other benefits), as well a host of other questionable causes.

The Labour Government has, and is, spent, it did not save in the years of plenty, and it still encourages profligate spending in the years of famine. It needs to wake up, control, rather than disrupt, the public sector and stop interfering so much in business.

The Haulage industry is vital to the Country – the railways, water and air can simply not shift anywhere near the volume. This increased duty is potentially crippling for Haulage.

## Conference

To be held in Manchester this year and starting on Monday Oct 05, finishing on Thursday morning Oct 08. The CTG has an exciting programme this year with 'Transport-Related Fringes'. Fringes held outside the secure area include Monday's – 'All-Party Light Rail' at lunch, then 'Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority' at tea time. Well worth a day's visit without the cost of a Conference Pass. For Tuesday lunch we are in the secure area with PTEG and then Tuesday teatime with Passenger Focus. On Wednesday we finish in the evening with a flourish in the Town Hall (again outside the secure area). You will find enclosed invitations to some of these events and the full programme in this newsletter. Please try and come to Manchester and take part in the fringes outside the main Conference. We would like to see you.

# Summer Committee Meeting

The Committee met on Saturday 04 July 2009 by kind permission of Patricia Steel who provided a glorious day and an outside lunch.

The future of the Transport Group was discussed and our interaction with the Shadow Transport Team and the message from them was that they want us heavily involved in 'Fringe events' at the Conference and at other Conservative events. They also expressed a desire to pick up from our 'discussion groups' and hear what real members of the Conservative party feel about transport issues – local and national.

It was recommended to maintain the subscriptions at the same rate for next year.

## What we stand for

A Conservative Government will improve Britain's transport system to strengthen our economic competitiveness, reduce congestion, provide better services for travellers and help fight climate change.

### The High Speed Rail Revolution

We plan to build a high-speed rail line connecting London, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds with the Continent through the Channel Tunnel. This will:

- Create jobs across the country with a major boost for the economies of the West Midlands and the north
- Provide a greener alternative for thousands of car and lorry journeys clogging up some of the busiest motorways in the country

### No Third Runway at Heathrow

A Conservative Government will cancel all moves for a third runway at Heathrow. Labour's reckless plans for a new runway would inflict major damage on the environment and the quality of life of millions of people. Our goal will be to make Heathrow airport more efficient, not bigger. This will include breaking up BAA's monopoly over so much air capacity in the south east, allowing passengers to vote with their feet if they receive poor service and choose an airport run by a different operator. We will look at ensuring flights operate at full (or close to full) capacity to maximise use of takeoff slots. We intend to provide a high speed rail alternative to thousands of short-haul flights at Heathrow, which would free up landing slots at the airport and reduce problems of overcrowding at airport terminals and road congestion.

## Improving Britain's Railways

To tackle overcrowding, improve services and ensure the rail industry puts passengers first, we will reform the rail industry to make it accountable to passengers and transform the Rail Regulator into a powerful passenger champion with authority to block the bonuses of Network Rail senior executives.

## Cutting Congestion

We will focus on tackling the worst bottlenecks on Britain's roads. In some cases this will mean making better use of the capacity we have; in others, it will mean building new roads. Providing an improved public transport system will also be an important element of our strategy to tackle congestion.

We will put in place measures to deliver a national recharging network to boost greener driving choices and the switch to electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles.

Most importantly, we will ensure that overseas trucks who use our roads contribute towards the cost of their maintenance, tackling a long-standing competitive disadvantage for domestic haulage companies.

## Making Local Transport Greener

We will scrap Labour's attempts to bully local councils into introducing local road-pricing in return for vital transport funding. We will liberate this money, turning it into a Transport Carbon Reduction Fund, allowing local councils and voluntary groups to apply for funding for the green travel initiatives that will work best for their communities, including projects to encourage cycling and improve real-time information and priority measures for bus services.

**Source:** Theresa Villiers: Conservative Shadow Transport Team



# Transport News

## Theresa Villiers welcomes High Speed Rail Report



Network Rail has today published research that shows the massive potential benefits that high speed rail could deliver.

"As the Party that has championed high speed rail", Theresa Villiers, Shadow Secretary of State for Transport, said, "we welcome Network Rail's report".

She added that it "provides further evidence that we need to take high speed rail to the north. Unlike Labour, our high speed rail ambitions go north of Birmingham and we call on the Government to match our commitment."

Villiers said the report also highlighted the potential high speed rail has for picking up some of the journeys that would otherwise be taken by air. She stressed the "importance of linking up Heathrow to the new network, if we are to encourage people to make greener transport choices."

Source: [www.conservatives.com](http://www.conservatives.com)

## £15m wasted by decision to scrap M4 relief road

More than £15m was spent on the planned M4 relief road before the project was scrapped, Welsh Conservatives have learned. Figures obtained by South Wales East AM William Graham reveal that between 1998 and 2008 some £15.57m was spent on the design development of the route between Magor and Castleton near Newport. Of that figure some £13.5m was paid to technical advisors, a letter from Transport Minister Ieuan Wyn Jones says. The project, which business groups identify as critical to the South Wales economy, was ditched by the Labour-Plaid Cymru Assembly Government last month.

At the time, Welsh Conservatives described the decision to abandon the M4 Relief Road project as limiting the prospects for economic growth in the region. The figures obtained by William Graham AM reveal that in the last two years alone more than £8.4m was spent on the scheme, including nearly £700,000 on surveys and £7.1m to technical advisors. Around half of the £15m spent on the scheme was spent in the last two years.

William Graham AM said, "The proposed M4 relief road was one of two major strategic requirements for the transport network in south east Wales. It is clear that, even as recently as last year, the Assembly Government was committed to its development and was spending millions on turning it into a reality. While we accept that major projects such as this inevitably require careful planning over a number of years £15m has effectively been wasted by the Assembly Government's decision to abandon it. We continue to share the business community's fears that prospects for economic growth will be limited by this strategic bottleneck. Plaid Cymru's transport minister needs to explain at what point he decided to pull the plug on the M4 relief road. Was this decision taken in the last few weeks or months? Or was he being advised to scrap it last year at the same time that spending on its development was higher than all but one of the previous 10 years?"

Shadow Transport Minister David Melding AM said, "Such considerable expenditure on feasibility planning for this scheme demonstrates that the road was accepted by the Assembly Government and its technical advisers as a crucial project. The decision not to proceed represents a major U-turn by the government and means millions of pounds have been lost and taxpayers will have nothing to show."

Source: [www.conservatives.com](http://www.conservatives.com)

## FG Strengthening VOSA is good for rail freight

RFG today (Thursday 27 August) welcomed the recommendations of the Transport Select Committee's Inquiry into the work of the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA). The report recommends a strengthening of VOSA's powers to enable greater enforcement of road safety regulations in the UK.

Non-compliance with safety regulations is not only a problem for all road users, but also enables some unscrupulous hauliers to offer rock-bottom prices, which rail freight is unable to match. Ensuring high levels of compliance, as on the rail network, will create a level playing field between modes and ensure that rail freight can compete fairly for traffic.

RFG's Chairman, Tony Berkeley commented, "Compliance with rules and regulations is an imperative for safe operations, but does not come for free. Government must ensure that road as well as rail is paying the full cost of safe operations. Whilst most road hauliers are meeting the requirements, a strengthened VOSA must target those who operate in a dangerous manner."

Source: <http://www.rfg.org.uk>

## FTA Chancellor for eleventh-hour fuel duty reprieve

FTA urged the Chancellor for an eleventh-hour fuel duty reprieve before the implementation. **(The Chancellor did not listen)**

Leading trade body the Freight Transport Association (FTA) urged the Chancellor of the Exchequer to give the UK logistics sector an eleventh-hour reprieve and abandon tomorrow's two pence per litre fuel duty increase. Without it, the logistics sector will be shouldering an £810m burden, thanks to three hikes in less than a year.

Jo Tanner of the FTA said:

*"Many companies in the logistics sector are at breaking point, but the Chancellor can provide a real lifeline if he stops this rise – the third since last December – from going ahead. With oil prices already rising and many businesses on their knees as a result of the recession, is this really the best time to be increasing fuel duty, again?"*

The number of HGV drivers claiming for Jobseekers' Allowance has risen by an eye watering 258% between July 2008 and July 2009, with many other jobs in the logistics sector also in jeopardy. There is continued concern within the sector that we have yet to see the worst of the recession's impact and, while some commentators may be talking the economy up, the reality for the logistics sector is very different. FTA is also angered by the Government's reliance on 'greenwash' as a reason to increase the tax burden on the sector.

Tanner concluded:

*"For an industry with little in the way of green shoots to shout about the last thing we need is 'greenwash'. While higher fuel costs may force private motorists onto public transport, logistics doesn't have that luxury. We're already at the forefront of reducing emissions, both through more fuel-efficient driving and by using newer, greener vehicles. The irony is that, if the Government keeps increasing fuel duty, our members will be less able to invest either in the training of their drivers or in their fleet. We're always going to be caught in a Catch-22 situation, and we'll continue to be the Government's cash cow."*

FTA is calling on the Government – and its political opponents – to be more radical and adopt a lower rate of duty for commercial vehicles than that levied on private motorists. This would not only allow the UK to compete more effectively in European road transport markets and allow companies to invest further in their fleets, it might also mean the difference between employment and unemployment for thousands of workers.

## Notes

Fuel duty rose by 2 pence per litre on 1 December 2008 and by a further 1.84 pence, to 54.19 pence per litre, from 1 April 2009. The Chancellor also announced that the main fuel duty rates would increase by inflation plus one penny per litre from 2010 to 2013.

Earlier this month the Transport Select Committee called on the Government to be more honest about the rationale behind transport taxes and avoid environmental reasoning to justify this revenue raising mechanism. Indeed, if there were an environmental element to fuel duty, the UK logistics sector would be well within its rights to look for a rebate: it already makes great efforts to keep its emissions as low as possible, and is actually far greener than the Government had itself projected.

Source: [www.fta.co.uk](http://www.fta.co.uk)

## Government sets right course on carbon reduction

The Chamber of Shipping welcomed the Low Carbon Transport strategy launched by the Transport Secretary, Lord Adonis. The strategy sets out actions for reducing transport emissions through to 2020, “I am delighted that the strategy recognises that it is vital that action to reduce emissions from shipping should be taken on a global level and sets out the Government’s commitment to achieve those reductions through an international emissions trading mechanism”, said Mark Brownrigg, director-general of the Chamber of Shipping.

The Chamber took a lead position in the international shipping industry’s response to climate change in December 2008 by advocating a global and open emissions trading scheme and, together with WWF UK, has submitted a joint paper to the Committee on Climate Change offering suggestions on the most appropriate methodology of assessing shipping emissions in the UK. “The Government has now pledged to work with international bodies, including the relevant UN body, the International Maritime Organization, to develop a convention to deal with ship’s emissions. We look forward to working with Lord Adonis and his team on this strategy,” continued Brownrigg.

Source: [www.british-shipping.org](http://www.british-shipping.org)

## Villiers announces 'dial-a-taxi' plans for rural areas



Theresa Villiers has set out plans to provide millions of rural dwellers left stranded by cuts to bus services with a subsidised 'dial-a-taxi' scheme. The taxis will operate in a 'round-robin' system, picking up people who are all heading roughly in the same direction – and the service will cost users no more than the price of a bus or local train ticket. Theresa, the Shadow Transport Secretary, pledged £7million of funding - £1million a year for seven years - to run a pilot scheme. It will be funded using the Department of Transport's Transport Innovation Fund and by scrapping Labour's controversial emphasis on congestion-charging schemes. Theresa stressed, "People living in the countryside deserve more reliable, affordable, and convenient public transport. Labour has been too quick to ignore the needs of rural areas but Conservatives realise that, with the decline of shops, post offices, and services in small villages, this issue has never been more important."

Source: [www.conservatives.com](http://www.conservatives.com)

## Better Bus information on the way for London

Transport for London (TfL) announced that, within the next two years, Londoners will be able to find out exactly when their next bus is due by using their mobile phone or the internet. They will be able to find out exactly when their bus is due to arrive at their stop before they have even stepped outside their front door. Brand new Countdown signs will also provide bus arrival time predictions at 2,500 key stops across the Capital.

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said, "This terrific technology means anyone with a mobile or internet connection will be able to get up to the minute information about London's buses as they work their way around the Capital. Londoners will be able to find out exactly when their bus is due to arrive at their stop before they have even stepped outside their front door."

Three contracts to develop and deliver these improvements have been awarded to telent, ACIS and Trueform. Mobile and web information should be available by the beginning of 2011, and the roll-out of new Countdown signs will begin a few months later.

Clare Kavanagh, London Buses' Director of Performance, said, "These improvements will mean you'll never have to run for a bus again - with accurate, reliable information on bus services at your fingertips, you'll be able to find out exactly when the next bus is due to arrive at your stop. This builds on the success of iBus, which already provides on-board journey information on every bus in the fleet, and it demonstrates our commitment to using the latest technology to make the bus service even easier to use."

Source: [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk)

## CTC want to halve the risk of cycling by doubling the numbers

The Government has already adopted a target to halve the risks of cycling in its draft Road Safety Strategy, *A Safer Way*. This is exactly what CTC proposed in our "New Vision for Cycling".

- However, apart from some welcome proposals to introduce more 20mph zones and limits, the draft Strategy says little about how they will achieve this target. We believe the best way is to double the levels of cycling. This will benefit our streets, our health, our communities and the environment, as well as improving safety for all road users.

How do we do this?

**By tackling the fears which prevent people from cycling more:**

Improve driver and cyclist behaviour

Make the road environment more welcoming for cyclists

Fund schemes that promote cycling positively and improve confidence.



Source: [www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk)

## Rail is a safer way of distributing freight

Road accidents cost the UK £19Billion in 2007.

The European Commission's own research in Jan 2009 stated that mega trucks are individually more dangerous than standard HGVs. On motorways, HGVs are over three times as likely as cars to be involved in fatalities from road accidents over an equal distance.

## Transport spend must be made more efficient

Welsh Conservatives have called on the Assembly Government to review its scheme providing free bus travel for pensioners in Wales. Commenting on news that expert advisers have told ministers to scrap the scheme for all pensioners because of the cost, Shadow Transport Minister, David Melding AM said spending on public transport in Wales must be made more efficient. The independent ministerial advisory group on transport wants the Assembly Government to begin an urgent review, arguing it is becoming unaffordable. Instead, it suggests a more targeted approach for certain areas or social groups to save £25 million a year.

David said, "We've been advising the Assembly Government for some time to review this scheme. The best way of making public transport spending more efficient would be to make the pensioner bus travel scheme apply at off peak times only. The danger of the current policy is that it is eating up far too much of the transport budget and not allowing us to develop other public transport networks." He added, "We have not been able to make progress on developing pedestrian and cycle routes, and plans for the Cardiff Sustainable Towns initiative lack funds to succeed fully. However, we welcome the fact this scheme has significantly altered public behaviour and that many people are now taking the bus instead of driving."

Source: [www.conservatives.com](http://www.conservatives.com)

## White elephant projects and lack of cash creating UK transport crisis

Ministers must allow all forms of transport to flourish – and users must pay. Lack of coordination between different modes of transport and Ministers' focus on big, flagship projects is jeopardising the UK's transport capacity, according to a new paper published today. The short paper, published by the independent think tank 'Reform', argues that a new joined-up, value-for-money approach is needed to safeguard transport infrastructure. Reform's paper, "Any time, any place, any way", follows two seminars held in conjunction with BA and BAA, with Lord Adonis, Transport Secretary, and Robert Goodwill MP, Shadow Transport Minister, as well as with numerous leading transport academics. It finds that the crisis in the public finances is already affecting transport spending – but investment in infrastructure is essential for future economic growth. As a capacity crisis approaches, policy-makers need to focus on practical, value-for-money solutions instead of big white elephant projects to deliver improvements today.

Shoring up the future of transport will mean radical funding ideas, including more user-charging. Ring-fencing this money for transport improvements and abolishing fixed charges like car tax could help secure public support. Other types of funding should be explored – such as businesses which benefit from new transport links contributing to the costs, as is happening with Crossrail.

An “any time, any place, any way” transport policy would not favour one particular way of travelling over another, but would judge each mode on their economic viability. Specific concerns such as carbon emissions should be dealt with in a uniform way, irrespective of the mode of transport being discussed. A target should be set for the whole transport network and carbon emissions should be priced into project plans, with developer or user charges as appropriate.

Merging the plethora of existing transport agencies and regulators into one overall regulator for all transport modes would help achieve this and could save money at the same time. Only by stepping back and allowing investment decisions to be made on an informed, neutral basis can policymakers prevent the UK’s transport infrastructure from falling into a state of decline and jeopardising our economic future.

The paper’s key findings include:

- a variety of quick, low-cost solutions to temporarily ease the capacity crisis. This will mean longer trains instead of high-speed rail, and using the hard shoulder instead of building new roads.
- British drivers currently pay over £45 billion a year in motoring taxes but less than a fifth of this is invested back in the road network. The transport debate wrongly focuses on what is “good” or “bad” instead of setting the framework for businesses and passengers to create infrastructure based on demand. This results in irrational investment decisions.
- Road travel constitutes over 90% of all journeys compared to less than 7% for rail. Yet they received similar levels of funding – around £5 billion each – in 2006-07.

Elizabeth Truss, Deputy Director of ‘Reform’, said, “Politicians have got their priorities topsy-turvy. Infrastructure spending generates long-term economic growth. Spending on health and benefits does not – but Ministers prefer the easy target of transport.”

Source: [www.aoa.org.uk](http://www.aoa.org.uk)

## Wanstead station re-opens following major works

London Underground's (LU) Wanstead station re-opened on Bank Holiday Monday 31 August, following major structural works as part of its ongoing modernisation. When all station works are complete, customers will get a completely modernised station

Wanstead station, which is on the Central line, will close early on a daily basis and trains will not stop after 21:00 for seven weeks until Monday 12 October while works continue. It is being modernised as part of the London Underground Investment Programme. When complete, customers will benefit from improved security and customer service information including a new state-of-the-art station control room, upgrading of the existing CCTV system, an improved PA system, Help Points and electronic information boards.

While the station was completely closed, major structural works, including the demolition of a large concrete slab which overhung the top of the station escalators, was undertaken. Peter Tollington, Central line General Manager, said: "When all station works are complete, customers will get a completely modernised station with improved security and communication facilities. We had to close Wanstead station completely for the safety of our customers and staff while we demolished the ceiling which is above the station escalators and carry out structural alterations in the ticket hall area to create the new station control point.

Source: [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk)

# Readers' Contributions

## Eros sees changes

Piccadilly Circus could see two-way traffic re-introduced for the first time in over 40 years. Westminster City Council has come up with a £10m design which it says will help to reduce delays for motorists on roads approaching Eros. The current one-way system was introduced in the 1960's in an effort to deal with a rise in congestion. Today heavy traffic often builds up on Lower Regent Street, Piccadilly and Haymarket and diversions onto narrow roads are causing difficulties.

## New use for GPS technology

The A14 Haughley New Street-to-Stowmarket improvement scheme has opened ahead of schedule. Connecting the east coast ports of Felixstowe and Harwich with the Midlands and the north of England the scheme has straightened out a notorious 'bends' section of the road and has greatly improved safety.

The superior quality of the ride of the A14 has not come about by chance. The contractor, Birse, used dozer systems which employed on-site use of GPS technology to accurately position their blades in real time. Transmitted corrections came from a Trimble Base Station established by Lancaster Earthmoving on the works cabin roof. Positioning sensors were used to compute the exact position of the blade many times a second. An on-board computer uses this position information and compares it to the design elevation to compute cut or fill to grade and this information is displayed on a screen in the cab. In the site office, information provided by the designers, Mouchel, was converted to the correct format and loaded onto a memory card for transfer to the cab-based control box.

An example of value engineering at its best.

(Submitted by Patricia Steel)

## Expensive Bus Lanes

A 700-yard bus lane cost almost £1m!

Last Updated: Tuesday, 09 June 2009, 12:59 GMT



A bus lane that cost £1,300-a-yard to install has sparked criticism. The 700-yard bus lane at Odd Down in Bath has now been opened, costing £916,000, or £1,300 a yard, to complete. The lane on the A367 is supposed to ease congestion into the city during peak traffic times.

(Submitted by Lyndon Elias)

## Railways and Town Centres

The restoration of St Pancras Station, retaining the original Barlow shed, has been widely acclaimed, as has the modernisation of Manchester Piccadilly, which has retained the grandeur of the original station. Smaller cities have, however, not fared as well. The policy of the old British Rail; Railtrack, and now Network Rail has, in many cases, been to sell off the old Victorian town centre stations and their often extensive surrounding land for redevelopment. These stations have then been replaced with more basic facilities further out of town. This has happened to Bradford Forster Square, now ignominiously sited in a cutting, and Morecambe, which now hides behind a Blockbuster Video store, both some hundreds of yards from their old central locations and with much reduced facilities.

Many other examples could be quoted and this policy still seems to be current Network Rail thinking with similar proposals for Skegness now under consideration. This policy of regression started when it was anticipated that demand for rail travel was shrinking. Now, with more passengers using the railways than at any time in the last 50 years and demand still strongly growing, the question needs to be asked – is this policy any longer sensible?

The advantage of the old rail terminals was that they were usually situated in the town or city centre. For example, one emerges from the distressed remains of Llandudno station straight in to the old main shopping centre. The same is true of many other cities where regression has not so far taken place, although the state of the historic buildings is, in most cases, abominable. Even stations in many city centres, for example Manchester Victoria, are little more than derelict buildings with trains running through them.

Whilst the rail facilities are being allowed to decline in this manner, for the sake of the short-term gain of the land sale income, most local authorities are struggling to minimise the use of private cars in city centres. If we are to increase pedestrianisation of our city and town centres, improve the environment, and minimise the use of valuable central land for car parking, it would make sense to encourage people to travel there by rail. This is unlikely to happen if they find themselves dumped on some basic platform in some half-developed area on the town outskirts with no major shops in sight.

It is time to stop treating rail travellers as second-class citizens. I would like to see the Conservative Party opposing further regression in the rail industry and encouraging the restoration and retention of our remaining central stations. Most of these stations are not only central but are surrounded by the semi-derelict land of former sidings, goods yards etc. As St Pancras has shown the possibility remains both to restore the old main station, and develop the area around it. The value of the surrounding land could finance the redevelopment but retain the railway at its heart, with the ability to bring in customers to the new businesses and the town centre and at the same time play its part in reducing town centre vehicular traffic.

(Written by R.W.Rollins {May 2008})

## **How Crossrail aggravates road congestion or joined-up thinking for beginners**

It was Oscar Wilde who observed that actors and prostitutes have something in common, both professions are being ruined by amateurs. He might well have mentioned that unpaid car drivers with no alternatives are spoiling things for road hauliers.

In 2007 road congestion costs *increased* by £550M.

Crossrail is wrong for quite basic reasons, price, route and size of loading gauge. It illustrates how far out of kilter Britain's railway system and economists' methodologies are with the needs of travellers. The £16 billion for 16 miles exceeds the Channel Tunnel's cost.

In terms of scale, £16bn will buy a BMW Mini for each of a million people, keep an Oxford factory in work for over five years and not supply any product

for export meanwhile. That another million cars on the road will crank up congestion is another matter!

The assertion that the Crossrail spend is of economic benefit to the regions is emphatically specious; an economic benefit is not a form of transport. There are some 54 counties including Rutland in England and Wales. Crossrail is depriving each county of £310m worth of railway re-opening funds, e.g. a rolling road between Manchester, Woodhead and Sheffield. M5 road congestion over the Avon is aggravated by the failure to install a Bristol tramway. Why, because the local councils of North Somerset, Bristol, Bath, South Gloucester have nobody to bang heads together.

When a DfT Minister said that railways are a fog he was confusing it with that other sort of grey matter.

Funds diverted to Crossrail from the Cambridge-Oxford East-West route for example denies people in the regions a choice and cannot reduce company-car driver hours. With over 300 people dying a year in solo driver accidents, fatigue is a serious issue.

Elsewhere, except Swindon there are no stations in the area bounded by Kemble (11 miles away), Chippenham (17) Didcot (24), Stoke Gifford (33) and Shipton-under-Wychwood. Road congestion is inevitable and unacceptable. On a Saturday it takes 45 minutes to drive the two miles to Oxford town centre.

Crossrail cannot take double-deck stock, diesel traction or freight. As such it cannot be used an alternative for Eurostars or take any of the existing train fleet. Quite why 20th century engineers cannot design tunnels and bridges that don't collapse during construction and can carry diesel and steam traction is others to explain.

The route is wrong. There are already five operational east-west-routes, via either Gospel Oak, Chalk Farm, Euston Square, Sloane Square or Brixton. It suffices that they be connected end-on to NR. An open operational railway route adjacent to the Dartford road crossing exists: Gravesend-Ebbsfleet-Dagenham-Barking. Best not to mention it has no trains. Meanwhile LT is taking delivery of a 1,000 strong fleet of coaches incompatible with BRB/NR/HS1 specifications!

The recent Budget reported that Income Tax will generate £160 billion. Cancelling Crossrail at one tenth of this sum is the equivalent of taking ten pence off Income Tax

Can Crossrail make things worse? Is the Pope a Catholic?

(Written by Cllr Lyndon Elias  
EngTech MIIIE)

# Editor's Comment

With reference to “what we stand for” in the section headed “Cutting Congestion”, it is stated that new road-building is a key part of the Conservative party’s envisioned solution to ease current and future congestion on British roads. Is this wise? Does it show true foresight? Is there a danger of ‘Concrete Britain’

In the not-too-distant past, this same ‘sticking-plaster’ strategy was employed to ease congestion on the A25 and north- and south-circular roads around London. Its name is “The M25”. Has this great new road eased congestion in and around London? Have road traffic accidents fallen as a result of its inception?

What can we learn from such examples as this looming large in our transport history? Or does ‘King Car’ rule relentlessly and inexorably over all our lives?

Would it not be, quite simply, sensible, to consider ways in which we might reduce such heavy reliance on our cars? Perhaps give due consideration to alternatives where they are feasible? Surely this adjustment in mindset can only be healthy. It may also be necessary if, at some point in the future, it becomes preclusively expensive to run cars in the way we do now, due to perhaps to rising fuel costs and fuel shortages or unacceptable levels of pollution and CO2 emissions.

If, for example, we walked, or cycled, for short journeys, pollution would be reduced, we would be fitter and obesity would be reduced. Councils could make better use of mini-buses to provide more flexible, lower cost, bus routes. Schools could be justified in selecting pupils who live closest to the school, thus minimising school run traffic and parents would, in turn, be justified in demanding consistently high standards as a basis for their compliance.

Where possible, working-from-home should be encouraged as an alternative to driving (or indeed travelling by public transport, which is, in London particularly, over-crowded) to and from work, again to minimise the need for current regular, polluting, high-volume traffic. Video-conferencing should also be regarded as preferential to driving and flying between sites for meetings.

Let’s hope that other, greener, healthier, conservation-friendly alternatives are given preference to simply building new roads for King Car without thought or number.

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Membership of the Conservative Transport Group is £15 per annum and is open to any fully paid up Conservative Party members.

Please contact Graham Fenton for details or join on-line at:

[www.c-t-g.org.uk](http://www.c-t-g.org.uk)