

Caroline Pidgeon AM, Chair of the Transport Committee

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Dear Anna

Submission to London First's Connectivity Commission

I am writing, on behalf of the London Assembly's Transport Committee, to set out our submission to London First's Connectivity Commission. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Commission's examination of the capital's transport infrastructure links.

Our submission is based on past relevant work. Many of our investigations have considered issues relating to the capacity, quality and resilience of London's transport infrastructure. We usually explore these matters from the perspective of Londoners and passengers and focus, in particular, on the role of the Mayor and TfL in developing appropriate policies and delivering improvements.

In this submission, we highlight some of our more recent work that might be relevant to the Commission's examination. This work might be particularly pertinent to the Commission's specific questions on: managing demand for transport (question four); the adequacy of London's rail links and the policies and priorities for future rail infrastructure (questions six to eight); and the adequacy of London's road links and the policies and priorities for future road infrastructure (questions ten to twelve). Further details of all our work, including copies of the documents mentioned in this submission, can be found online at: <http://www.london.gov.uk/who-runs-london/the-london-assembly/publications/transport>.

Managing demand for transport

In our response to the Mayor's draft Transport Strategy (January 2010), we expressed concern that his proposals would not meet the projected demand for transport in London. Despite the Mayor's plans for infrastructure projects – both funded and aspirational – and his proposals for smoothing traffic flow and encouraging walking and cycling, there could still be a 14 per cent increase in peak hour congestion by 2031. We noted that the draft Strategy did not include the potential for other initiatives which might help reduce long-term demand, such as increases in flexible working. As the Mayor had ruled out the introduction of road user charging, we urged him to set out all the alternative measures available to help meet future demand and contain congestion. We suggested that there needed to be a full and robust debate about all the options available.

In the last year, we have explored the potential for managing demand by encouraging more use of sustainable transport. In our report, *Walk this Way* (October 2010), we examined how to increase the number of journeys made by foot thereby taking people off overcrowded trains and buses and removing them from cars. We found that some public policy interventions could help increase walking. We, therefore, made a number of recommendations to the Mayor and TfL for actions to take in the short and long-term including as part of the Mayor's proposal to make 2011 the "year of walking." These actions included: support at least one large-scale infrastructure project which

benefits pedestrians; expand the key walking routes initiative; introduce an incentive scheme possibly linked to the Oystercard system; and modify TfL's online journey planner so it provides more walking options. The initial reaction to our report and recommendations was disappointing; it became apparent that the Mayor had abandoned his proposal to make 2011 the "year of walking." However, recent correspondence from the Mayor about our report has been more positive and we continue to pursue our recommendations to encourage more trips by foot.

In our report *Pedal Power* (November 2010), we expressed support for the cycle hire scheme and cycle superhighways as initiatives to increase the number of journeys made by bike. However, we found some issues that needed to be addressed as these schemes were developed to ensure they realised their full potential. For example, our survey of users of the schemes revealed great enthusiasm for the cycle hire scheme but problems with a lack of bikes and available docking points in certain areas, especially at peak periods. We found far less enthusiasm for the cycle superhighways with users raising concerns about safety and a lack of respect from other road users. We identified that lessons could be learned from the two pilot superhighways to help make the future superhighways safer. We also found that more people might be encouraged to use the superhighways if there was more cycle parking in central London where the superhighways terminate. This echoed findings from our earlier report *Stand and Deliver: Cycle Parking in London* (June 2009). This report identified that an insufficient amount of secure cycle parking across the capital could deter Londoners from undertaking more journeys by bike.

Rail links

We have frequently explored the extent to which London's rail services are meeting demand and made suggestions for improvements. In our report *Track to the Future* (February 2007), we supported the idea of concentrating on developing the current rail network's capacity rather than extensive new infrastructure construction. However, this depended on the work being carried out in full and on time, in order to unlock the full potential of the current rail network. In our report *The Big Squeeze: Rail Overcrowding in London* (February 2009), we examined the severity of overcrowding on London's main rail routes during the morning rush hour. We identified 15 stations as 'pinch points' on the 20 busiest routes into the capital. We suggested these stations, which already experienced significant platform overcrowding, needed investment if they were going to cope with extra passengers in future. More recently, we have expressed our support for the development of London Overground and the building of Crossrail to help meet future demand. In our report *Light at the end of the tunnel: the construction of Crossrail* (February 2010), we highlighted Crossrail's many benefits including that it could deliver an extra ten per cent capacity to the capital's rail and Tube network.

Recently we reiterated many of our views on London's rail links in our response to Network Rail's draft Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for London and the South East (March 2011). We welcomed the draft RUS' strategic approach to meeting demand for rail services in the next two decades. Broadly we found that Network Rail had provided a more realistic view than in previous individual RUSs of the challenges faced in delivering capacity upgrades. We also expressed support for: the more detailed plans for Thameslink which should deliver significant extra capacity; the continued electrification of rail lines, such as the Gospel Oak to Barking Line, to improve rail services; and the re-integration of the former Eurostar platforms at Waterloo to help increase capacity.

We also highlighted to Network Rail some issues that we wanted to see addressed in the final RUS. These are summarised below.

- There should be more information in the final RUS about the impact on capacity predictions if the future proposed work to improve rail capacity has to be scaled back. Such information could help build the case for maintaining the committed investment levels.

- There is potential for higher levels of passenger overcrowding than those set out in the draft RUS due to greater than forecast levels of demand and difficulty implementing the proposed improvements. We urged the adoption of a different measure for overcrowding, TfL's persons-per-square metre, to provide a more accurate measurement of overcrowding on rail services that could also be compared to levels of overcrowding on other transport modes.
- There should be greater examination of the case for station upgrades. We were disappointed that the draft RUS did not set out plans for works to Surbiton, Putney, Streatham Hill and Sydenham stations which were amongst the 15 stations we had previously identified as 'pinch points'. Network Rail has subsequently told us that some works are now taking place at these stations and we have sought details of how this might address future projections of overcrowding. We were also concerned that increasing numbers of passengers may be funnelled into interchanges which would be unable to absorb any extra demand.
- Network Rail's plans for London's rail network need to be better incorporated with TfL's plans. We highlighted that London's transport network is uniquely integrated and ensuring that any upgrades and improvements are done in partnership with other transport providers is vital. In the spirit of this partnership working, we repeated our call for the Mayor to have greater powers over awarding suburban rail franchise agreements. We believe that if the Mayor and TfL have a formal role in awarding and monitoring future rail franchises, this could improve the quality of London's suburban rail services and ensure they are better integrated with other transport.
- There should be adequate replacements for any rail services removed or changed as a result of new infrastructure work. For example, the South London Line, whose twice hourly loop service is likely to be withdrawn following the redevelopment of London Bridge station.

We continue to explore the development of London's rail services. Over the next few months, we are investigating the Government's proposals for high speed rail (HS2). At our meeting on 14 July 2011 we will be discussing the arguments for and against this new rail link and the potential effects on the capital's transport network should HS2 go ahead.

The Tube

Alongside rail services, we have frequently explored the high levels of demand for the Tube and progress in upgrading the London Underground to increase its capacity. In our report *Too close for comfort: passengers' experience of the London Underground* (November 2009), we documented the stress and frustrations experienced by many passengers due to overcrowding and frequent line closures. In the morning peak hour, some Tube trains carry more than four people per square metre. Many of these passengers have now endured years of weekend line closures for the upgrade work. We found that there were lessons to be learned from abroad: Metro de Madrid had undertaken upgrade work with much less disruption since it had assumed no line closures from the outset. In light of our findings, we made various recommendations to the Mayor and TfL. These included that, in some instances and with the right complementary measures, block closures could be used to carry out upgrade work as these could be less disruptive to passengers and cheaper than weekend closures.

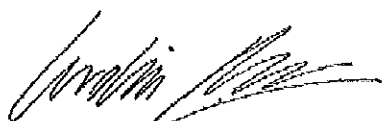
Since our report on Tube passengers' experiences, TfL has taken on board some of our recommendations. Recently, it announced that it was learning lessons from Metro de Madrid. It has also started to use block closures for some line upgrades. We are now exploring TfL's management of the Tube in more detail through our current investigation into the state of the London Underground. This is an in-depth exploration of the performance of the Tube and progress with each line upgrade since the end of the PPP in June 2010. At our meeting on 17 May, we heard from the PPP Arbiter and representatives of yourself and the unions to inform this work. We will now follow up the issues that they raised with representatives of the Mayor and TfL at our next meeting on 14 June. We will then produce a report setting out our findings and recommendations, which you may find of interest and will ensure you receive.

Road links

We have recently been exploring the projections for future growth in road traffic in London and the Mayor's plans for managing it. At our meeting in March 2011, we heard from a range of experts about current initiatives to tackle road congestion and any further measures that might be needed. In advance of our meeting we published a briefing paper which set out some key facts and figures about traffic levels in London, for example, that London is now the most congested city in Europe and that over 30 per cent of traffic is confined to just 5 per cent of the capital's road network. This briefing paper also gave an overview of the Mayor's current policies for managing road congestion including: altering traffic control systems; addressing planned and unplanned road works; and managing demand by encouraging people to use other modes of transport. We will be publishing a report setting out our findings on road congestion shortly.

We trust this submission will inform the Commission's examination into the capital's transport infrastructure links. We look forward to seeing its findings in due course. In the mean time, should you have any queries about this submission or require any further information about our work, please contact Laura Warren (email: laura.warren@london.gov.uk; telephone: 020 7983 6545).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Pidgeon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Caroline Pidgeon AM

Chair of the Transport Committee