

Valerie Shawcross AM, Chair of the Transport Committee

London Assembly  
City Hall  
The Queen's Walk  
London, SE1 2AA

London and South East RUS  
RUS Programme Manager  
Network Rail  
Kings Place  
90 York Way  
London N1 9AG

**Date: 09 March 2011**

Dear Colleagues

### **Response to consultation on London and South East Route Utilisation Strategy**

I am writing, on behalf of the London Assembly's cross-party Transport Committee, to set out our response to Network Rail's draft Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for London and the South East. This response is based on our previous work on rail services in London which is relevant to the consultation. Further details of all our work can be found at:  
<http://www.london.gov.uk/who-runs-london/the-london-assembly/publications/transport>

The Committee welcomes the RUS, and its strategic view of how rail transport in London will attempt to meet the expected rise in demand in the next two decades. Rail is a vital part of London's transport network, with over 500,000 people using the service every day. In order to ensure that this level of service is maintained and developed, and to assist in the continued economic regeneration of the city, long-term planning, based on reliable demand forecasting and realistic projections on future available funding, is essential.

Broadly, the Committee is supportive of the corridor view provided by the RUS, which gives a more realistic view than previous individual RUSs of the challenges facing Network Rail in delivering capacity upgrades. We also welcome the more detailed plans for Thameslink which will deliver significant extra capacity, in conjunction with Crossrail. The Committee would also support the continued electrification of lines, such as the Gospel Oak to Barking Line, as both a necessary improvement to service and a way to improve air quality in the surrounding areas. Finally, the Committee also supports the re-integration of the former Eurostar platforms at Waterloo as a necessary increase in capacity for one of the country's most crowded lines. We would welcome further details, including a timetable for this work, in the final RUS.

However, the Committee does have some specific concerns that we would like to see addressed in the final RUS, due this summer. We believe that this will help to ensure a more integrated approach to London's rail services, as well as a better deal for passengers.

#### Future Investment

The Committee has concerns about the ability of Network Rail to deliver the RUS in full. It is clear that the current plan is the minimum required to ensure that rail transport supports London, and thus the UK's, future growth. Unfortunately, we have seen the effect of the recession on the current High Level Output Specification (HLOS) programme, where vital investment schemes such as 900 extra carriages to ease over-crowding, were modified or cancelled. In November 2010, the Commons Public Accounts Committee found that Network

Rail would miss its target in London of increasing capacity to maintain crowding at 2006 levels by 15 per cent. Figures given to the Committee by TfL indicate that the vital regeneration area of the Lea Valley will receive just 25 per cent of the originally promised new carriage stock, while others would see reductions of between 25 and 50 per cent. This is very disappointing in light of the huge importance of rail in helping London continue its recovery after the recession.

In our report *Track to the Future* (February 2007), the Committee supported the idea of concentrating on developing the network's capacity, rather than extensive new infrastructure construction. However, this is dependent on the work being carried out in full and on time, in order to unlock the full potential of our current rail network. The experience of the previous HLOS programme, outlined above, shows the difficulty in guaranteeing that work will take place in full. We are mindful of the difficult economic conditions, and that any investment must be targeted to ensure maximum impact. During the course of its work on the draft RUS, the Committee heard about a small number of schemes which would have a disproportionately large effect on capacity and should be prioritised in any future London investment programme:

- Platform work at Clapham Junction platform 16/17, Imperial Wharf, West Brompton and Shepherd's Bush to provide for a West London line 8-car Southern service
- Platform extensions at Hornsey, Harringey, and platform 1 of Hadley Wood for future 8-car Thameslink services to Welwyn.
- Platform lengthening and/or Selective Door Opening at New Cross, Surrey Quays, Canada Water, Rotherhithe, Wapping, and Whitechapel to allow a 5-car East London Line service.
- Some Southern suburban stations (Brockley, Honor Oak Park, Forest Hill, Sydenham) could be lengthened from 10-car to 12-car to maximise benefits from future Thameslink services.
- Services from Uckfield and Reigate could also be lengthened, allowing full-length trains to run in stations with severe over-crowding such as East Croydon.

Due to the difficulties in delivering the current investment programme in full, the Committee would like to see more information in the final RUS about what the impact of scaling back future work might have on capacity predictions. This would help build the case for maintaining committed investment levels and ensuring that Londoners receive a better service which helps to encourage employment and growth.

### The Passenger Experience

The draft RUS forecasts that rail demand in London will grow by approximately 34 per cent in the next two decades. However, this growth masks both large regional differences in the level of growth and more importantly, how this growth is realised during the morning peak time. A submission from TfL to the Committee highlighted that demand in the morning peak would actually grow by about 50 per cent in the next two decades. Demand on rail is already exceeding DfT forecasts as passenger numbers have bounced back quickly after the effects of the recession.

Factors such as greater than anticipated demand, and the difficulties in fully implementing capacity upgrades from the current investment programme highlighted in the previous section, indicate that passenger overcrowding could be worse than anticipated in the draft RUS. In *The Big Squeeze: Rail Overcrowding in London (February 2009)* the Transport Committee examined the severity of overcrowding on London's main routes during the morning rush hour. We are disappointed that the RUS continues to use the Persons in Excess of Capacity (PiXC)

measure, which we found was an imprecise measure of the real conditions faced by commuters every day. We believe a more accurate measure, using TfL's persons-per-square-metre would give a much more accurate measurement of overcrowding, as well as allowing the rail network to be benchmarked against other transport modes in London. This would help to increase transparency for passengers and give stakeholders an opportunity to fairly judge the performance of the network from the passenger perspective.

### Station Upgrades

Stations play a vital role in supporting the rail network. In *The Big Squeeze: Rail Overcrowding in London (February 2009)*, the Committee identified 15 stations as 'pinch points' on the twenty busiest train routes into London. These stations experienced significant platform overcrowding and needed investment to ensure they could cope with the large rise in numbers expected in the next two decades. Though some of these stations have improvement schemes highlighted within the RUS (such as Bromley South, Balham and Tottenham Hale) and others have benefited from new infrastructure projects, such as the East London Line at Brockley and Forest Hill, the RUS acknowledges that some scheduled works will still not be enough to keep up with passenger growth (for example, at Clapham Junction). The Committee is disappointed that, of the 15 stations listed in our report, no works to improve Surbiton, Putney, Streatham Hill or Sydenham are listed, despite demonstrating clear need for investment to ease overcrowding.

We are also concerned that increasing numbers of rail passengers may be funnelled into interchanges which will not be able to absorb the extra capacity. An example raised during a Network Rail/Passenger Focus briefing was Marylebone station, where more frequent services from Chiltern Railways will require complex planning and crowd management to handle the increasing number of commuters.

As well as the issue of overcrowding, accessibility is also key to ensuring that growth and investment in the rail network benefits all Londoners. In *Accessibility of the Transport Network* (December 2010), the Committee found that just one-third of London's 300 rail stations has step-free access, while the numbers of people with reduced mobility in the capital is expected to rise by nearly 150,000 over the life of the RUS. It is vital that Network Rail focus investment in accessibility on key multi-modal interchanges.

In light of the importance of these issues, we believe that station upgrades should be examined in greater detail in the final draft RUS, including providing more information on how Network Rail is targeting strategic interchanges for upgrade work, how it is ensuring accessibility on its network and aiding modal shift from motor vehicles by increasing the provision of secure cycle parking at stations.

### Integration with Transport for London and Mayoral Policies

The Committee believes that more could be done within the RUS to incorporate Network Rail's plans with those of TfL. London's transport network is uniquely integrated and ensuring that upgrades and improvements are done in partnership with other transport providers is vital. 43 per cent of all journeys in the capital are completed, in part, using the rail network, making it central to people's everyday lives in a way unique to the rest of the country. The needs of suburban rail passengers should not be ignored in favour of inter-city or long-distance travellers. A current example of this tension can be seen in proposed changes to the West Anglia timetable which would see a reduction in suburban services along the Seven Sisters to Liverpool Street route, to ensure faster services for the Stanstead Express and between

Cambridge and London. These service reductions could have the potential to negatively affect those who live and work in Hackney.

The Committee welcomes TfL's role in helping to develop the RUS and we hope that its success in developing the London Overground orbital rail network will lead to continued close partnership. This will become particularly important as TfL has indicated that it has arrived at different demand forecasts than Network Rail in some areas, such as the Essex Thames side corridor.

In the spirit of this partnership working, the Committee would reiterate also its call for the Mayor to have greater powers over awarding suburban rail franchise agreements. This would help to ensure that appropriate emphasis is given to the needs of suburban passengers. It would also help to deliver a more integrated approach to transport planning, such as developing policies which help to encourage modal shift from cars to cycling and public transport. For example, our report *Stand and Deliver: Cycle Parking in London* (June 2009) highlighted that TfL's involvement in developing the specifications for the new South Central franchise had helped to deliver an additional 1,500 cycle parking spaces over the five-year term. Greater Mayoral involvement could also help to ensure the continued development of the Barclay's Cycle Hire Scheme by examining land-use around stations for docking stations as well as other cycle parking.

### Replacement Services

Where services are removed or changed due to new infrastructure work, every effort should be made to ensure an equivalent service is brought in. For example, in a letter sent by the Committee to the Mayor of London in July 2010, , we highlighted the case of the South London Line, whose twice hourly loop service is to be withdrawn once the second phase of the extension of the East London Line has been implemented in 2012. While the RUS outlines a possible solution to be implemented after Thameslink's construction, which could see a four train per hour, all day service to/from London Victoria via Denmark Hill and Peckham Rye, this would not fully replace the loss of service that people in areas of inner London will face. The Committee would like to see further details on plans to mitigate the effects of losing the current South London Line in the final RUS, as well as in any future franchise agreement for this service.

Finally, there are some issues included in the RUS that the Committee has yet to agree a formal position, but which recognise the future importance in developing the rail network's capacity. These include;

- The future development of High Speed Rail 1 and 2, and particularly how it might have an impact on London's orbital network. The Committee recognises that HS2 is seen by Network Rail as a necessary addition to London's infrastructure to relieve over-crowding at several key points. We would like to see greater detail from Network Rail about how these proposed changes would affect the capital's developing orbital rail network, particularly around the Old Oak Common/West London Line area. The Committee may return to this issue as part of its future work programme, where issues such as the potential cost and environmental effects of HS2 would be examined.
- The removal of all non-London bound freight from the capital's rail network.
- The further expansion of Crossrail outside of its current delivery programme. This includes the development of 'Crossrail 2' (the Hackney – Chelsea line) and the

extension of Heathrow Express into the Crossrail system. The Transport Committee has strongly supported Crossrail during the Comprehensive Spending Review. While further development may be of benefit, it should not in any way delay the current delivery programme which would see this vital infrastructure programme fully operational by 2019.

We trust this response will inform the consultation and look forward to receiving the final draft RUS from Network Rail in Summer 2011. The Committee will also look forward to the consultation on the next HLOS investment programme which will hopefully show in detail how Network Rail will help to ensure the continued growth of London's economy and deliver a better service for rail passengers.

Yours sincerely

**Valerie Shawcross AM**  
Chair of the Transport Committee