

Caroline Pidgeon AM, Chair of the Transport Committee

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Dear Richard

Response to the Initial Industry Plan

I am writing, on behalf of the London Assembly's Transport Committee, to set out a response to the rail industry's Initial Industry Plan (IIP) for England and Wales (September 2011).

This response draws on our previous relevant work on rail services in London including our response to Network Rail's draft London and South East Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS). Further details of all our work can be found at: <http://www.london.gov.uk/who-runs-london/the-london-assembly/publications/transport>

The importance of investing in London's rail network

We welcome the proposed investment in London's rail network as set out in the IIP. In our response to the draft RUS, we highlighted that rail is key to the capital's transport system. Over 500,000 people use rail services every day. Some 43 per cent of all journeys in the capital are completed, in part, using the rail network, which makes it central to people's everyday lives in a way unique to the rest of the country. Since many of these journeys are made for work purposes, the rail network is also vital to London's economy and its economic development. In turn, given the importance of the capital's productivity to the wider UK economy, any investment in London's rail network has the potential to deliver much greater benefits for the entire country.

It is clear that more investment in London's rail network is needed if it is to cope with future demand. The GLA has forecast an increase in the capital's population of 1.25 million between 2007 and 2031 with 750,000 additional jobs due to be created. There will, in future, be many more people wanting to travel by train in the capital. TfL has told us that it expects rail passenger numbers in the morning peak period to grow by 50 per cent in the next two decades. This extra demand will have to be accommodated on a rail network that is already over-stretched on a daily basis. In our report, *The Big Squeeze: Rail Overcrowding in London (February 2009)*, we highlighted high levels of congestion on many existing rail services.

The IIP itself sets out a strong case for investing in London's rail network. It shows that the London & South East rail sector is expected to generate greater returns on current investment than elsewhere. By 2013 this sector is forecast to have covered 87 per cent of its costs compared to 78 per cent for the long distance sector and 36 per cent for the regional sector. The IIP also shows there is excellent value for money when investing in London's rail network. The package of proposed schemes to increase capacity for the London commuter market is forecast to deliver a benefit to cost ratio of 11:1.

Investing to increase capacity on London's rail network

In light of the importance of investing in London's rail network, we welcome the proposals in the IIP that will enhance the capital's rail capacity. We want to see these schemes progressed so that London's rail services are improved. In the past, we have expressed support for many of these schemes including the electrification of the Gospel Oak to Barking line. This scheme has been sought for many years and we are very pleased to see that it has been included in the IIP.

We also want to see further investment to increase the capacity of London's rail services. TfL has told us that its demand forecasting and modelling work supports the proposals in the IIP but has also shown a need for additional work to improve capacity. TfL have suggested further investment in various areas including: lengthening services on the London Overground network to five cars; an enhanced scheme on the West Anglia Main Line to provide a better service between the Upper Lea Valley and Stratford; and ensuring a more substantial increase in the capacity of suburban services on the Sydenham corridor and on the South West main line. All TfL's proposals for further capacity improvements should now be considered in detail.

Investing to improve London's rail stations

We support the proposals in the IIP that will improve London's rail stations. In our response to the draft RUS, we highlighted the importance of updating the capital's stations so they could cope with the forecast growth in the numbers of passengers over the next two decades. The plans for specific congestion relief schemes at Charing Cross, Victoria, Fenchurch Street, Clapham Junction and Wimbledon stations are, therefore, welcome. We also want to see the continuation of 'Access for All' funding to deliver more accessibility improvements at stations. In our report *Accessibility of the Transport Network* (November 2010), we highlighted that just one-third of London's 300 rail stations have step-free access yet the number of people with reduced mobility in the capital is set to rise. More step-free access is needed at rail stations across London.

This response to the IIP shows that investing in London's rail network is vital. There is a clear need for the IIP's proposals, and additional schemes, that will increase rail capacity and improve stations across the capital. Such developments will help to satisfy the high levels of demand for rail in London. In turn, they have a key role to play in supporting the capital's economy and its economic development.

We trust this response will inform the ongoing discussions about future investment in the railways. We look forward to receiving more information about the outcomes of these discussions in due course, including the publication of the High Level Output Specification (HLOS2) next summer.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Pidgeon AM
Chair of the Transport Committee