



Caroline Russell AM
Chair of the Transport Committee

The Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP
Secretary of State for Transport
(Sent by email)

28 August 2026

Dear Heidi,

Draft Heathrow Airport Expansion National Policy Statement: consultation on proposed amendments

I am writing to submit the London Assembly Transport Committee's views to the Department for Transport's (DfT) consultation on proposed amendments to the draft Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement (HENPS).¹ The London Assembly has long opposed a third runway at Heathrow and in February 2025 the Assembly reaffirmed this position.² Given the Committee's remit, our comments principally address the issue of surface access transport and draw on evidence we heard in March 2025 from Heathrow Airport, the Heathrow Area Transport Forum, Transport for London (TfL) and Network Rail.³

The Committee is supportive of the broad intent of the surface access strategy and the three guiding principles to make public transport the first choice, minimise impact on the road network, and prioritise environmental sustainability.⁴ The Committee is concerned, however, that the strategy does not go far enough in detailing how these principles will be achieved and the extent to which Heathrow will play an active role in their fulfillment, with particular reference to provision and funding of additional public transport capacity.

¹ Department for Transport, [Draft Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement: consultation on proposed amendments](#), June 2026

² London Assembly, [Third runway at Heathrow Airport](#), July 2018, see also London Assembly, [Heathrow Expansion](#), February 2025

³ London Assembly Transport Committee, [Agenda and minutes Transport Committee – Thursday 27 March 2025 10.00am](#)

⁴ DfT, [A Strategic Vision for Transport to an Expanded Heathrow Airport](#), June 2026

Minimising Impacts on the Road Network

Simply minimising impact on the road network will be insufficient. As we heard from Anthony Smith, Chair of the Heathrow Area Transport Forum, in March 2025:

“the fact is that one in two passengers arrive in a vehicle of some sort, either a taxi or their own car. In the long term, of course, this is completely unsustainable. It is unsustainable for the local communities around the Airport because some of those issues spill into the local communities in terms of taxis and rogue meet-and-greet parkers, and there are some big issues about the amount of traffic and the amount of pollution that is caused by that traffic movement.”⁵

The Committee is concerned, therefore, that without the correct mitigations in place, expansion risks exacerbating existing pressures on the road network, worsening the experience of local communities, and undermining efforts to encourage modal shift to sustainable transport modes. The draft HENPS must therefore include measures to ensure there is no net increase in traffic as a result of expansion and set ambitious targets for reducing traffic in the area ahead of the expansion itself, and that expansion not go ahead until these reductions have been achieved.⁶

Making Public Transport the First Choice

To achieve a reduction in traffic will demand significant investment in public transport infrastructure. As Christina Calderato, Director of Transport Strategy and Policy at TfL, put it last year “[there is a need to ensure] any growth that is driven by the Airport is sufficiently catered for in terms of new investment in new capacity”.⁷ This is particularly true in terms of rail connectivity. TfL’s response to the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS) consultation, published in May 2017, also stated that an estimated £10-15 billion of investment in surface access would be required to enable a third runway at Heathrow.⁸

The Committee heard from Sophie Chapman, Surface Access Director at Heathrow Airport, that Heathrow is “really well served out to the east” with rail links, including the Elizabeth Line, Piccadilly line and Heathrow express, but that it “is a big challenge that the rest of the clockface to the west and south is not covered by rail”.⁹ This is also acknowledged in *A Strategic Vision for Transport to an Expanded Heathrow Airport* which states that enhanced connectivity from the west and/or south of the airport is likely to be required.¹⁰ More importantly, however, Heathrow expansion is likely to place additional pressures on all routes, including those which are currently “well served”, and the Committee is therefore keen to understand how these pressures will be met and how both enhanced connectivity and adaptation for increased usage will be funded.

⁵ London Assembly Transport Committee, [Heathrow Airport Surface Access – Panel 1](#), March 2027, p.4

⁶ Keith Prince AM does not support the Committee’s ask for there to be a commitment to no net increase to road traffic after Heathrow Expansion in the HENPS, as he views this to be unachievable.

⁷ London Assembly Transport Committee, [Heathrow Airport Surface Access – Panel 2](#), March 2025, p.8

⁸ TfL, [NPS Consultation Response: Thematic Paper Surface Access](#), May 2017, p.11

⁹ London Assembly Transport Committee, [Heathrow Airport Surface Access – Panel 1](#), March 2025, p.3

¹⁰ DfT, [A Strategic Vision for Transport to an Expanded Heathrow Airport](#), June 2026, p.16

In the past there have been proposals for separate Western and Southern rail links connecting Heathrow.¹¹ We heard from Marcus Jones, Route Director, Western at Network Rail, that the proposals for a Western Rail Link are more developed.¹² He said that the business case for the Western Rail Link is “positive” but that funding needs to be made available for Network Rail to develop a more detailed design.¹³ Christina Calderato told the Committee that TfL would expect to see plans for Western and Southern rail links included in Heathrow’s expansion proposals.¹⁴

In January 2025, when announcing the Government’s support for Heathrow expansion, the Chancellor stated “our clear expectation is that any associated surface transport costs will be financed through private funding.”¹⁵ As mentioned above, TfL previously estimated that up to £10-15 billion in new investment would be required to enable a third runway at Heathrow,¹⁶ with these costings likely to have increased since 2017. The DfT’s *Strategic Vision for Transport to an Expanded Heathrow Airport* stated: “Our approach provides flexibility to allow promoters to identify and bring forward strategies that demonstrate credible promotor-led or promotor-financed rail enhancements”,¹⁷ however the Committee remains concerned about the lack of clarity regarding the sources and uses of investment required to achieve the three guiding principles.

It is currently estimated that roughly 42 per cent of passengers travel to Heathrow using public transport.¹⁸ In order to achieve the goal of making public transport the first choice, millions more public transport journeys would be required than take place today. While the Committee welcomes this guiding principle and supports this target, it is clear that without the accompanying investment this will simply place unacceptable and insurmountable pressure on the existing system. Specifically, the Committee is concerned about increased crowding and reduced reliability on the Piccadilly line and the creation of substantial new demand on the Elizabeth line.

It is therefore crucial that expansion proposals include clearer requirements for private investment in the public transport network and, where possible, commitments from Heathrow. The draft HENPS should therefore specify the level of investment in public transport infrastructure mandated as part of an expanded Heathrow.

In addition to investment required for existing routes and services, we welcome the Government’s statement in the *Proposed draft revision to the Airports National Policy Statement* that “enhanced rail connectivity is necessary for supporting expansion at Heathrow”.¹⁹ Regardless of any decision to build a third runway at Heathrow, communities in the south and west of London must be protected from congestion with new rail links to the airport, and these should be included in Heathrow’s proposals for expansion.

¹¹ BBC, [Heathrow rail link ‘would stop ridiculous routes’](#), November 2025, see also Heathrow Southern Rail, [Transforming Rail Access to Heathrow Airport](#)

¹² London Assembly Transport Committee, [Heathrow Airport Surface Access – Panel 2](#), March 2025, p.7

¹³ London Assembly Transport Committee, [Heathrow Airport Surface Access – Panel 2](#), March 2025, p.5

¹⁴ London Assembly Transport Committee, [Heathrow Airport Surface Access – Panel 2](#), March 2025, p.5

¹⁵ DfT, [Speech Chancellor vows to go further and faster to kickstart economic growth](#), January 2025

¹⁶ TfL, [NPS Consultation Response: Thematic Paper Surface Access](#), May 2017, p.11

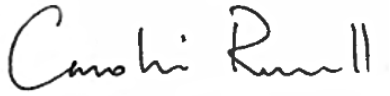
¹⁷ DfT, [A Strategic Vision for Transport to an Expanded Heathrow Airport](#), June 2026, p.16

¹⁸ DfT, [A Strategic Vision for Transport to an Expanded Heathrow Airport](#), June 2026, p.15

¹⁹ DfT, [Proposed draft revision to the Airports National Policy Statement](#), June 2026, p.86

I would be grateful if you could respond to this letter by 9 October 2026. Please send your response by e-mail to Hannah Barlow, Principal Committee Manager and Eleanor Haigh, Senior Policy Adviser at assemblytransport@london.gov.uk.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Russell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Caroline Russell AM
Chair of the Transport Committee