

**London Borough of Croydon**  
**Response to National Infrastructure Commission Call for Evidence**  
London's transport infrastructure

January 2016

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**Introduction**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence to the Commission on London's transport infrastructure needs.

Croydon is a member authority of the South London Partnership (SLP) and London Council's, both of which are responding to the Commission's current call for evidence. Transport for London (TfL) is the strategic transport body for the Capital, planning and managing London's, Underground / Overground, tram, bus and strategic road networks. TfL is undoubtedly (either itself or as part of a Greater London Authority (GLA) 'family' submission) providing evidence on London's transport needs.

Croydon's submission is not intended to repeat evidence provided by the above. Rather its purpose is to add emphasis and provide more detail on one element of transport infrastructure of key importance to Croydon and the wider region and one falling outside of TfL's direct remit, namely the Brighton Main Line (BML).

**Major economic and social challenges facing London and its commuter hinterland**

Within its evidence, the SLP highlighted the scale of transformation already underway, at Croydon's growth zone/Opportunity Area (focused on the Croydon Metropolitan Centre). Here, upwards of 23,500 new jobs and 8,300 new homes are to be delivered by 2031. The annual Gross Value Added equivalent of these jobs is estimated to be in order of £1.2 billion by 2031.

The SLP's evidence also highlights South London having the highest road-based mode share of any London sub-region, together with some of the slowest journey times. If the growth within Croydon and South London is to be sustainable then (as well as improvement to its strategic road connections), investment in infrastructure providing for alternatives to the car is critical.

Thirdly, the SLP's evidence highlights the scale of population growth forecast for South London with current projections at nearly 240,000 additional people by 2020 rising to over 400,000 by 2031 (equivalent to another Croydon). It contrasts this population growth with the predicted pattern of employment growth. The London Plan forecasts around 800,000 additional jobs but these are mainly located in . The GLA forecasts that South London is set to achieve only 40,000 additional jobs. The SLP emphasises the importance of creating more jobs locally in order to lessen the demands on already strained transport infrastructure.

In summary the major challenge facing London, Croydon and London's commuter hinterland is growth and maintaining or improving access whilst maintaining or improving environmental quality and quality of life.

Growth does not only pose challenges. It also offers opportunities. By providing thousands of new jobs, side by side with new homes and the range of service offered by the Croydon Opportunity Area, Croydon is providing for access with the minimum of travel.

Polycentric growth, such as that at the Croydon Opportunity Area, offers a wider range of benefits. Network Rail's London and South East Market Study

(<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/improvements/planning-policies-and-plans/long-term-planning-process/market-studies/london-and-south-east/>) predicts peak hour passenger demand on

Thameslink and other fast services from Sussex (just some of the Sussex services to Central London on the BML via East Croydon) doubling between 2011 and 2043. This growth is largely predicted to arise from growing population outside of London accessing jobs in central London

**Table 1 Peak hour passenger demand projections 2011 – 2043 taken from 'Long Term Planning Process: London and South East Market Study' Network Rail, October 2013**

Route	Service group	2011 total	Forecast passengers in 2043	Increase 2011 to 2043
London Bridge	Thameslink & Sussex fast	15,200	27,900 – 31,400	91% – 115%
	Sussex stopping services	9,300	11,700 – 12,900	26% – 39%
Victoria	Sussex routes - fast services	12,100	14,700 – 16,200	22% – 34%
	Sussex routes - stopping services	12,900	16,500 – 18,600	27% – 44%

Network Rail's Sussex Route Study ( [www.networkrail.co.uk/long-term-planning-process/south-east-route-sussex-area-route-study/](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/long-term-planning-process/south-east-route-sussex-area-route-study/) ) highlights the busiest/most congested parts of the BML as the route from East Croydon to London Bridge and Victoria. By providing thousands of new jobs at the Croydon Opportunity Area, Croydon provides the opportunity for those living between Brighton and London to access jobs without riding on the most congested part of the BML. The growing job market in central Croydon also provides for increased 'counter commuting'. Those living in inner London are able to travel outwards to work in Croydon, greatly increasing the utilisation of the BML infrastructure. It also means that those currently traveling into the Croydon Opportunity Area by tram and bus etc. to interchange to rail for onward travel to work in central London, have the opportunity to work in Croydon and shorten their commute.

### **What are the strategic options for future investment in large scale transport infrastructure improvements in London**

The BML is Croydon's rail spine. It is also Croydon's and London's connection to Gatwick and the wider Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership zone. However, the BML is severely overcrowded, with passengers routinely standing from south of Haywards Heath in the peak. This can only be resolved through running more trains. Current passenger growth is running at least 4%

per annum. If no action is taken, crowding will increasingly extend further south, and occur across a longer part of the day, leading to more instances of passengers being physically unable to board trains.

The BML is also poorly performing, with Public Performance Measure (PPM) plateauing at around 90% for several years, before dropping off due to the London Bridge works. The core reason for the poor performance is the extensive operational interaction between the numerous different train service groups, due to the current complexity of configuration of the rail network. By means of comparison: routes from London Waterloo feature operationally simple grade separated junctions all the way out as far as Woking, whereas there are over a dozen major operational constraints in the Croydon area alone.

The current Thameslink works at London Bridge will provide more cross-London capacity, but this work does not address the key bottleneck on the BML which is in the Croydon area. Hence the full potential benefits of Thameslink are significantly constrained by capacity away from central London. Therefore, only a few additional trains will be possible from 2018 until such a time as this is addressed.

The Croydon bottleneck impacts on service performance across a wide area. From 2018 following completion of the Thameslink works, it will also impact on new routes north of London.

As well as quantifying the problem, Network Rail's Sussex Route Study also lays out the solution. Resolving the bottleneck in Croydon requires additional tracks and platforms in a relatively contained area at East Croydon and grade separation of the London Bridge and Victoria Lines just north at Windmill Bridge Junction. The benefits are very large in comparison with the geographical extent of the project.

In terms of interchanging passenger numbers, East Croydon Station is the fifth busiest in the country (behind Clapham Junction, Waterloo, Victoria, London Bridge) and busier than the recently rebuilt Birmingham New Street and Reading stations. It is also busier than Stratford (London), St. Pancras, King's Cross, Euston, Glasgow Central, Liverpool Street, Manchester Piccadilly and Leeds. In terms of total passenger entries, it is the 17<sup>th</sup> busiest station in the country. It is busier than the likes of Cannon Street, Edinburgh, Brighton, Gatwick Airport, Glasgow Queen Street, Reading, Marylebone and Liverpool Central stations (ORR Station Usage Estimates 2013/14). However, East Croydon station concourse is severely congested.

New development adjacent to East Croydon and across the Opportunity Area, mean that the station itself is now the "missing piece" in the wholesale transformation of the area. There is an opportunity for a major regenerative station rebuild scheme including railway improvements, housing, offices, retail and improved urban realm. The opportunity exists to upgrade the critical constraints on the BML. However doing this requires land outside the railway corridor in the rapidly developing central Croydon area. There is a major risk that the opportunity could be lost forever if not taken now.

The signalling equipment on the Brighton Main Line requires wholesale renewal in the early 2020s due to it reaching the end of its asset life. It will be far more efficient to upgrade the BML in combination with this signal renewal, rather than as a separate project.

Croydon and the wider SLP share a desire for a “London Overground” type transformation of train services in South London. This is not possible to achieve through management or operator changes. It requires the operationally critical infrastructure constraints in the Croydon area to be removed through a major infrastructure upgrade.

## **Conclusions**

Growth presents both transport challenges and transport opportunities. Growth within the Croydon Opportunity Area means that many of those opportunities can be realised. However for the Croydon Opportunity Area to fully achieve its potential, and for growth in London and the Coast to Capital LEP zone to be sustainable, it is critical that the major bottlenecks on the BML be addressed. In order to ensure efficiency, it is vital that the investment take place at the same time as the planned signal renewal during the next Control Period. It is similarly the right time to complete the regeneration of East Croydon with a new 21<sup>st</sup> Century station at the same time addition track and platforms are being provided.