

Response to the National Infrastructure Commission call for evidence

1. What are the major economic and social challenges facing London and its commuter hinterland over the next two to three decades?

The challenges facing London over the next two to three decades are well documented and are wholly related to population growth. It is recognised that the greater part of this growth is going to take place in East and South-East London. The challenge is to provide the necessary housing mix and social and transport infrastructure to support and facilitate that growth in a timely way.

In recent polling commissioned by London Councils, Londoners named housing, health and schools as their top three infrastructure priorities, as well as strong support for investment in the 'unseen' infrastructure that is vital to the city's functioning – waste, energy, digital and flood defences.

London Councils' polling indicates that 88% of Londoners believe there is a housing crisis. The challenge is to increase the supply of new housing, and particularly affordable housing, at the same time as increasing (primarily public) transport infrastructure and services so that existing and new populations have good access to employment opportunities and other facilities.

The additional challenge in south and south east London relates to convergence. It is clear that, overall, residents have lagged behind the London average in terms of educational attainment, wealth, health and life chances. The challenge is to ensure that growth takes place in a way that supports convergence.

2. What are the strategic options for future investment in large-scale transport infrastructure improvements in London - on road, rail and underground - including, but not limited to Crossrail 2?

- How should they be prioritised, taking account of their response to London's strategic transport challenges, including their impact on capacity, reliability, journey times and connectivity to jobs?
- What might their potential impact be on employment, productivity and housing supply in London and the southeast?

The Royal Borough believes that there a number of strategic transport infrastructure schemes and initiatives that London needs..

We believe that transport schemes that will unlock housing numbers and growth in jobs and businesses and facilitate convergence should be prioritised. Transport schemes are not ends in themselves, but are a vital part of the wider infrastructure the city needs to provide for its residents and businesses.

The Commission will recognise that schemes such as the Jubilee line and Docklands Light Rail extensions have unlocked areas of London for growth and regeneration and that Crossrail is already having a positive impact. However it is clear that further investment in infrastructure is needed.

East River Crossings

The completion of a package of additional vehicular and public transport River Crossings, in east and South-East London, needs to be prioritised in order to support growth and development in East London.

A package of crossings, constructed from west to east to match the direction of growth, would link new areas of population growth, such as Kidbrooke, with areas of employment opportunity and would support the sustainable development of areas such as Thamesmead where poor accessibility has hampered growth.

The proposed Silvertown tunnel will support growth and employment and improve resilience but needs to incorporate a DLR extension between the residential areas of Eltham and Kidbrooke and emerging employment opportunities north of the river if benefits are to be maximised.

Additional river crossings, including schemes such as the Gallions Reach crossing and extensions of the DLR and London Overground to Abbey Wood and Thamesmead, would provide access to London's wider transport network and support growth and development in those areas at a fraction of the cost of schemes such as Crossrail 2 and add further benefit to those that will be secured through Crossrail 1.

Additional local vehicular crossings are needed to support business growth but must be built with integrated public transport and be supported by walking and cycling routes so as to ensure that the use of more sustainable transport modes is encouraged in order that air quality is improved and local amenity sustained.

Change of responsibility for Rail

A change in the governance arrangements around Rail in London needs to be a strategy priority. The responsibility for managing rail services in London needs to be delegated to the Mayor for London at the earliest opportunity. The current franchise system simply does not support the growth and development of London and has not provided the services that Londoners deserve.

The transformation of the North London Line when it became part of the London Overground service shows what can be done with Mayoral control, focus and investment. The London Overground handled over 143m journeys last year, an increase of 7% over the previous year - demonstrating that Londoners need excellent "turn up and go" rail services.

A rail service managed by the Mayor would see joined-up London rail network with more frequent services and increased capacity, improve customer service with joined up travel information, more integrated fares and a more accessible network. It would enable local communities to have a greater local input into train services.

All this would support the economic and social vitality of London, particularly areas such as South- East London that are not part of the London Underground network .

However, a change in governance will not on its own result in a step change in rail performance, services and facilities. Further investment is required and needs to be prioritised in areas where existing operators have underperformed and have failed to invest. The London Overground is evidence that focussed investment in local rail services increases ridership and supports the more intensive growth and development that London needs.

Improve orbital routes in outer London

At present London rail and road infrastructure is too focused on getting people into central London and out again. The London Overground and the DLR extensions from Lewisham and Woolwich have, to an extent, supported growth in East London. Crossrail and the Silvertown Tunnel will provide further support.

However in the outer London boroughs a reasonable proportion of residents commute orbitally to work in another town centre or outer borough. Town centres in outer London such as Woolwich, Eltham, Kingston, Sutton, Croydon and Bromley would benefit from improved public transport and light rail links between these areas.

Investment in efficient orbital public transport needs to be prioritised to support the growth and vitality of outer London town centres and to free up capacity on radial services which are too often used by passengers seeking to make orbital journeys.

The success of the Croydon tram-links is evidence that investment in light rail can support orbital movements between outer London town centres, encouraging growth and development and reducing car dependency.

Crossrail

It is clear that the opening of Crossrail will represent a step-change in London's transport arrangements particular in the northern part of the Royal Borough where access to emerging employment areas has been constrained.

However priority needs to be given to opportunities to extend Crossrail so as to improve access to emerging growth areas. In the south-east priority needs to be given to an evaluation of the benefits of extending Crossrail to Ebbsfleet.

Crossrail 2

Crossrail 2 is needed to address severe capacity constraints that will exist on the London Underground and mainline Network Rail services such as those into London

Waterloo. When High Speed 1 is complete, Crossrail 2 is needed to provide capacity to allow those passengers to transit easily through London Euston. Crossrail 2 will support significant numbers of jobs and housing along the line and provides general regional connectivity, which at present is only offered by the Thameslink line. Crossrail will improve this but more rail lines which negate the need to use the tube will have wide benefits for the rail and tube network in London as a whole.

An improved bus network

Whereas investment in major transport infrastructure projects such as Crossrail is critical for the economic prosperity of London and the UK priority needs to be given to enhancing and improving the bus network.

Bus infrastructure and services can be more responsive to local needs and developments and should be prioritised for continued investment. There are countless examples in the Royal Borough where new bus services have proved to be oversubscribed shortly after opening and have needed to be enhanced.

Investment needs to be prioritised in a mechanism, particularly in outer London, which is more responsive to changing local circumstances.

Cycling and walking

Although the Commission is focussed on large – scale infrastructure projects there is evidence that investment in cycling and walking is also essential to support the growth and economic vitality of London in a sustainable way. Any major infrastructure scheme must be fully integrated into the local bus, walking and cycling network. Moreover, away from the major transport hubs, continued investment in walking and cycling networks is required to reduce car dependence, improve air quality and encourage healthy lifestyles.

3. What opportunities are there to increase the benefits and reduce the costs of the proposed Crossrail 2 scheme?

Crossrail 2 would assuredly support the necessary growth and development of London and produce a step-change in transport capacity it would not directly impact on the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

Accordingly the Royal Borough has insufficient understanding of the Crossrail 2 business case to respond to this question and would refer the Commission to the response submitted by London Councils.

4. What are the options for the funding, financing and delivery of large-scale transport infrastructure improvements in London, including Crossrail 2?

- What is an appropriate local and regional contribution - given the potential distribution of benefits to business, residents, transport users and the wider economy - and how could this be achieved?

- What innovative funding mechanisms could be considered to support delivery of key schemes?

The funding mechanism for Crossrail is unique and has ensured delivery of a scheme that might otherwise not have happened. It should not however be considered the default solution for Crossrail 2 or other similar infrastructure schemes.

The Royal Borough would expect the Commission to make recommendations to Government that (i) recognises that every transport infrastructure scheme will have a different distribution of benefits and (ii) based on an analysis of funding mechanisms utilised elsewhere in Europe and beyond.

Submission of the Royal Borough of Greenwich

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