



ASLEF Political Update April 2008

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Public Transport

Tory Michael Ancram asked what estimate the DfT had made of the proportion of people who travel by public transport in rural and urban areas. Rosie Winterton said that the following table gave details of the proportion of trips by people living in urban and rural areas which are by public transport.

<i>Proportion of trips by main mode by residents of urban and rural areas, Great Britain, 2006</i>	
	<i>Public transport</i>
Urban	11
London	26
Other urban	9
Rural	4
Total	10
<i>Source:</i> DfT: National Travel Survey 2006	

Public Transport: Tickets

Norman Baker asked what steps the DfT was taking to encourage the deployment of train-bus Oystercard-type arrangements in major conurbations other than London to which Tom Harris replied that the smartcard and integrated ticketing programmes are being rolled out progressively. He said Plus Bus (add-on bus travel to a rail ticket) is growing and passenger transport executives already have integrated bus and train tickets, safeguarded through rail franchise agreements and added that the key to more integrated smart ticketing is to establish ITSO on rail in London and elsewhere while ITSO smartcards are being rolled out through new rail franchise agreements and train operators are encouraged to engage with local authorities on ticketing schemes.

Railways: Buckinghamshire

Mark Lancaster asked about the passenger capacity of commuter trains serving Wolverton, Central Milton Keynes and Bletchley train stations per day; and the capacity of peak time services and an average train serving each. Tom Harris said that commuter trains to London that serve the three stations in the Milton Keynes area have the capacity to transport over 50,000 passengers in each direction each day. Trains calling for London arrivals between 7 am and 10 am have almost 8,000 seats with an absolute capacity of 13,000. He added that a typical peak time train serving the Milton Keynes area would have 412 seats and an absolute capacity of 720

Lancaster also asked how many people used Wolverton, Central Milton Keynes and Bletchley train stations per day for peak and non-peak journey times in the latest period for which figures are available; and what projection has been made of the likely numbers in each year until 2031. Harris replied that between 15,000 and 20,000 rail passengers use the three stations within the Milton Keynes region every weekday. The morning peak period carries between 5,000 and 8,000 of the daily passengers, the evening peak is almost as popular, and the remainder travel outside of these times. The DfT expects numbers to continue to grow significantly over the next few years as a result of the projected population growth in the Milton Keynes region and is providing for the growth by lengthening most peak time trains to 12 cars during 2009. The Department is currently engaged with Milton Keynes council in assessing the projected passenger numbers in the region as far ahead as 2031 as part of the Intercity Express project.

Railways: Freight

Norman Baker asked what assessment the DfT had made of the steps that need to be taken to facilitate rail freight movements from Felixstowe via Ipswich and Huntingdon to the midlands. Tom Harris responded by saying that the Network Rail Freight Route Utilisation Study, published March 2007, identified the Felixstowe, Ipswich and Peterborough to Nuneaton route as requiring gauge and capacity enhancement to meet growth in demand. He said Hutchison Ports (UK) Ltd. (HPUK)—the owner of the Port of Felixstowe—is funding the cost of upgrading the gauge capability and capacity of the route between Felixstowe, Ipswich, Peterborough and the east coast main line and South Yorkshire. In addition the funding commitment from HPUK was made through a Section 106 agreement relating to the planning approval for Port of Felixstowe south quay reconfiguration. Moreover the Peterborough to Nuneaton route has received £80 million in funding support through the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) for gauge and capacity enhancements to complement the work east of Peterborough. This work will start in April 2008.

Norman Baker asked what assessment the DfT had made of the potential for the diversion of freight traffic from the A14 to the rail network in the absence of improvements to the rail network and following improvement of the rail path from Felixstowe to the midlands. Tom Harris replied that the business case supporting the Peterborough to Nuneaton gauge and capacity enhancement scheme, for which Productivity Transport Innovation Fund funding was announced in October 2007 and estimated that these improvements have the potential to remove 65,000 lorry journeys per annum from a number of roads including the A14 when completed.

Railways: Greater London

Norman Baker asked what assessment the DfT had made of the implications for longer-distance commuters of the proposals of the Mayor of London in relation to Southern Metro services including their transfer to his responsibility to which Rosie Winterton said the DfT had received a proposal from the Mayor of London regarding his involvement in

the South Central franchising process and that it continues to consider the proposal and its implications on all users of the railway.

Southern: Trains

Malcolm Rifkind asked if the DfT had made an estimate of the number of dual-voltage trains that would be needed to operate both the Watford to Brighton service and the Thameslink service to which Tom Harris replied that 109 dual-voltage trains will be required to operate the Thameslink service from March 2009 and that if the Watford-Brighton service were to be retained in its present form, and if the resources were to be set aside for that service, the requirement would be eight trains.

Rifkind also asked what the DfT's policy was on the proposal to transfer trains from the West London Line to Thameslink since the order of 11 new trains for Thameslink. Tom Harris replied that there would now be no need to transfer class 377 (Electrostar) trains from the West London Line to Thameslink although Southern had now lost the opportunity to use class 465 (Networker) trains, which were to have been transferred from Southeastern, because of gauge clearance problems on Southern routes. In the light of this information, Southern is now having to re-assess its rolling stock allocations.

Railways: Yorkshire and the Humber

Graham Stuart asked how many train journeys originating in Yorkshire and the Humber in the last 12 months had been made in trains with no more than one carriage and what percentage of the total number of rail journeys in the region this represents to which Tom Harris replied that the three franchised train operators running services that originate in Yorkshire and the Humber are Northern Rail, TransPennine Express and National Express East Coast. He added that an estimate of the number of journeys made on different types of rolling stock would be a matter for the operators involved and said that Northern Rail is the only train operator that runs a one carriage service in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Woodhead Tunnel and Cross-Pennine Rail Link

Tony Lloyd asked what assessment the DfT had made of the feasibility of maintaining the Woodhead tunnel fit for future rail operations should the National Grid lay electricity cables along it and what assessment it had made of the most viable option for a new cross-Pennine rail link. Rosie Winterton replied that the need for additional passenger capacity could best be met through the provision of longer carriages and faster journey times on the Manchester to Leeds via Huddersfield route. She indicated that should additional capacity be required across the Pennines at some future date, capacity enhancements on the three existing Victorian tunnels on the Woodhead route would be considered first, because they are more likely to offer value for money than the re-opening of a fourth route.

She confirmed that she would be meeting with National Grid to confirm that we would wish to explore the option of continued inspection and maintenance of the Woodhead tunnels once National Grid have vacated them. In addition she intends to meet key stakeholders for their views on transport challenges across the Pennines and how this might tie in with the development of a longer term strategy.

Angela Smith said the case for the reopening of the Woodhead line across the Pennines has been made many times in this Chamber, as it would enhance the north’s economic development. She asked if the Minister would update the House on the discussions between the Government and representatives of the National Grid and Network Rail about the preservation of the third Woodhead tunnel—called the “53 tunnel” because it was built in 1953—for future use? Rosie Winterton said she recently met representatives of both Network Rail and National Grid and they discussed the issues arising from the Adjournment debate. Both companies agreed to study the feasibility of ensuring, when the Woodhead tunnels are sealed, that access for the purposes of ongoing inspection is retained. In addition, I discussed Network Rail’s utilisation strategy for the future use of the rail network by both freight and passenger services. The company agreed to take into account any representations about the future use of the Woodhead tunnel for freight.

Railway Stations

Norman Baker asked which local authority areas and constituencies do not have a railway station operating passenger services. Tom Harris replied that the following council areas in England and Wales do not have a railway station on the national rail network operating passenger services: Wansbeck; North Tyneside; South Tyneside; Derwentside; Teesdale; Richmondshire; Rossendale; Bury; North West Leicestershire; East Northamptonshire; Corby; Gosport; East Dorset; West Somerset; Torridge; North Cornwall.

Railway Stations: Construction

Jarrow MP Stephen Hepburn asked how many new railway stations had been built with public funding in South Tyneside, Tyne and Wear, the North East and the UK in each year since 1997. Tom Harris replied that there had been no new railway stations opened in South Tyneside, Tyne and Wear or the North East since 1997 although 20 stations had been opened in England since 1997 with some public funding. These are listed as follows. In addition new stations that have been opened in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland with public funding are a matter for the devolved Administrations.

<i>Station</i>	<i>Opened</i>
Euxton Balshaw Lane	15 December 1997
Brunswick	9 March 1998
Whitwell	24 May 1998
Creswell	24 May 1998
Langwith—Whaley Thorns	24 May 1998

Shirebrook	24 May 1998
Conway Park	22 June 1998
Canning Town	14 May 1999
West Brompton	30 May 1999
West Ham	30 May 1999
Horwich Parkway	30 May 1999
Luton Airport Parkway	21 November 1999
Brighthouse	29 May 2000
Wavertree Technology Park	13 August 2000
Lea Green	17 September 2000
Braintree Freeport	10 December 2003
Glasshoughton	12 December 2004
Chandlers Ford	12 December 2004
Liverpool South Parkway	11 June 2006
St Pancras International	14 November 2007

Railways: Overcrowding

Helen Southworth asked if the DfT would hold discussions with East Midlands Trains on overcrowding at peak times on train services from Warrington station. Tom Harris said he was aware that East Midlands Trains had problems at the start of the franchise with rolling stock availability for the Liverpool-Norwich route and said EMT had put in place measures to ensure that as much rolling stock as possible is now available for use on the route. He added that East Midlands Trains was carrying out passenger counts to evaluate the overcrowding and to formulate plans to improve capacity and that the refurbishment programme for Class 158 vehicles would commence this summer and will provide a 13% increase in seating capacity.

Stephen Hesford asked what steps the DfT had taken to minimise overcrowding on trains to which Tom Harris replied that the rail White Paper, published in July 2007, committed £15 billion in total Government support to the railway over the period from 2009 to 2014. £10 billion of that will be devoted specifically to increasing capacity. Among a range of measures, he said, there will be an extra 1,300 new carriages which will be targeted at the most congested routes on the network.

Roads (Permitted Vehicles)

Bill Wiggin asked Ruth Kelly if she planned to permit longer heavier vehicles on some roads; and if she will make a statement to which she replied that was yet to receive the research report on this subject but that she had no plans to allow so-called super-lorries on UK roads. Bill Wiggin added that rail freight groups estimate that every tonne of

freight carried by rail saves about 80% of the carbon emissions that that freight would have generated if it had been transported by road. He asked why the Government had abandoned its target to increase rail freight by 80% by 2010? Kelly said that the DfT invested £17 million in removing 1 million lorry journeys from UK roads in 2008 and had announced the single biggest package of investment in rail freight infrastructure for decades - £150 million - as a result of which rail freight had already gone up by 50%.

Rail Services (Edinburgh to North-West England)

Mark Lazarowicz asked if the DfT would take steps to encourage the train operating companies to improve the journey times and frequency of rail services from Edinburgh to north-west England. Tom Harris replied that journey times would be accelerated on most trains between Edinburgh and Manchester, Warrington and Preston from December 2008 timetable. Lazarowicz continued: 'It takes almost as long to go by train from Edinburgh to Manchester as it does to go from Edinburgh to London, even though the latter journey is twice the distance. Some welcome improvements have been made, but there is a real opportunity, even with existing rolling stock—and certainly with the new rolling stock that is coming in—substantially to improve journey times between Edinburgh and north-west England, which would benefit business and leisure passengers and help to shift air and road passengers on to the railways.' Harris repeated that journey times would improve from the end of this year. John Reid asked Harris if he would agree that most passengers actually want a more regular pattern of service and trains that are punctual and reliable? The Minister replied saying that under the Government, performance has improved by 10% over the past five years and that the DfT was committed to improving rolling stock, with the introduction of 1,300 brand new carriages over the next five years. He said the UK had the youngest rolling stock of any European country.

Rail Services: Chelmsford to Liverpool Street Line

Simon Burns asked what assessment the DfT had made of the quality of service on the Chelmsford to Liverpool Street railway line to which Tom Harris Passenger Focus's analysis showed an overall satisfaction of 75% for National Express East Anglia passengers. This compares with a national overall satisfaction of 81%.

Trains: Intercity Express

Norman Baker asked what specific ways the DfT plans to be involved in the specification process for the intercity express programme train and what specific advantages it expects this involvement to bring. Tom Harris said the DfT had developed the business case, led engagement with the industry, prepared rolling stock and service specifications, developed tender documents and are leading the procurement process. He added the involvement ensured the Intercity Express Programme (IEP) provides best whole-life value for money; optimising across train, maintenance and infrastructure; deals with long-term capacity requirements including best use of existing rolling stock; and secures the all-industry collaboration needed to deliver the right result for passengers. He said there was a good business case for the Intercity Express Programme, delivering better

value for money and more benefits than would be the case if the Department for Transport left this to the industry alone to pursue.

Railways

John Spellar asked what assessment the DfT had made of the feasibility and cost of a maglev rail system. Tom Harris replied that in the preparation of the 2007 rail White Paper, “Delivering a Sustainable Railway”, the DfT commissioned a report into maglev systems which reviewed a number of features of maglev systems including safety, environmental, and engineering feasibility. A copy of this report is available on the Department’s website at: www.dft.gov.uk. He added that the only operational maglev in the world had costs three times higher than equivalent high speed lines.

Norman Baker asked what the division of responsibilities is between the DfT and Network Rail on the safeguarding of lines for possible future expansion of the network, the building of new lines, the collection of data relating to passenger numbers before and after new lines have been opened and decisions relating to the electrification of existing lines; and if she will make a statement.

Tom Harris replied that regional and local planning authorities are responsible for the safeguarding of alignments via spatial plans. He said that the Secretary of State for Transport may issue safeguarding Directions under the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 while the Office of Rail Regulation regulates the disposal of land owned by Network Rail.

He added that the White Paper Towards a Sustainable Transport System describes a new, multi-modal approach to transport planning in which Network Rail, working with the rail industry, would provide a view on the ways in which the railways can contribute most effectively to the Secretary of State’s wider transport objectives for the period from 2014 which may include new lines and electrification proposals. He also indicated that passenger demand was forecast by the sponsor of a scheme and train operators collect data on subsequent patronage.

Railways: Death

Norman Baker asked the DfT how many deaths of railway workers and others occurred as a result of electrocution by the third rail in each year since 1997. Tom Harris replied that the number of railway fatalities caused as a result of electrocution by the third rail in each year since 1997 are provided in the following table.

	<i>(a) Railway employees</i>	<i>(b) Others (members of the public)</i>
1997	0	9
1998	0	8
1999	0	13

2000	0	16
2001	0	6
2002	1	9
2003	1	12
2004	0	5
2005	0	6
2006	1	12
2007 ⁽¹⁾	0	4
⁽¹⁾ The data for 2007 is provisional. <i>Source:</i> Data provided by the Office of Rail Regulation		

He added that most fatalities result from members of the public trespassing on railway infrastructure.

Train Operating Companies: Rolling Stock

Norman Baker asked what requests have been received from train operating companies for extra rolling stock which have been agreed to and rejected since 1 January 2005 to which Tom Harris replied there were a number of discussions which have taken place since 2005 resulting in contract orders on a number of train operating companies.

<i>Contract date</i>	<i>TOC</i>	<i>Number of vehicles</i>	<i>Type</i>
May 2005	Chiltern	6	Diesel
June 2005	Southeastern	174	Electric
February 2006	SWT	68	Electric
May 2007	Southern	48	Electric
August 2007	London Midland	148	Electric
December 2007	London Midland	69	Diesel
January 2008	Chiltern	8	Diesel

Rolling Stock: Northampton

Sally Keeble asked what plans the DfT had for the improvement of the rolling stock on the London to Northampton train service to which Tom Harris replied London Midland was committed to replacing the class 321 electric multiple units with brand new Siemens Desiro class 350 electric multiple units, on services between London and Northampton as part of its franchise.

Rolling Stock: Standards

Mike Gapes asked what steps the DfT was taking to ensure that passengers' seating comfort is taken into account in train design. Tom Harris replied that the DfT was working with the industry to develop a whole life cost model for evaluating the design of rail vehicles. He added that passenger seating comfort was one of the many factors within the model which recognises the significance of comfortable seating in encouraging the use of rail services and moreover that the model also balances the desire for spacious seating against the requirement to provide a sufficient number of seats. He added that during the procurement of the Intercity Express trains the DfT would be working with passenger groups to assess the relative comfort of the various proposals for passenger seating.

Rolling Stock: Thameslink

Stephen Hammond asked whether the new carriages for Thameslink announced on 9th April 2008 were in addition to the new carriages announced in July in the White Paper, Delivering a Sustainable Railway. Tom Harris replied that some of the new vehicles for Thameslink are a component of the 1,300 new vehicles announced in July 2007 in the White Paper 'Delivering a Sustainable Railway' which committed a high level output statement (HLOS) for the railways. However, he said, Thameslink and the HLOS have overlapping timescales and the HLOS vehicles would be required to be delivered by March 2014 with the final complete fleet of new Thameslink vehicles due to be in service by December 2015.

He added that by December 2015, the full 1,100 vehicles will be in use on Thameslink routes representing a net increase in the number of vehicles on the network, over and above HLOS commitments. He indicated that the precise number of net, additional vehicles resulting from the Thameslink programme will depend on the contracted delivery profile of the new Thameslink vehicles.

Railways: Crossrail

Lord Berkeley whether W10 gauge will be created under any newly electrified sections of the Great Western Main Line to be used by Crossrail trains to which Lord Bassam replied that the only clearance work needed in addition to Crossrail works to achieve W10 gauge throughout the newly electrified sections of the Great Western Main Line would be in relation to a small number of existing arched bridges and the matter of whether to undertake additional works to these bridges for non-Crossrail purposes is for Network Rail to review as usual for any gauge clearance investment.

Railways: Carriages

On April 1st Lord Bradshaw asked how many of the 1,300 extra railway carriages promised in the high-level output statement published in 2007 have been ordered from

manufacturers to which Lord Bassam responded that three hundred and seventeen of the vehicles had been ordered.

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