



Draft Mayor's Transport Strategy 2017– ASLEF's Response – September 2017

1. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK's largest train driver's union representing approximately 20,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and light rail systems. ASLEF has just under 6,000 members in London branches.
2. ASLEF takes the view that transport infrastructure is the cornerstone of any successful city. If the predictions for London's population growth are correct and we see a rise from 8.7 million today to 10.5 million in 25 years' time, this growth will obviously need to be met with the fast, reliable and sustainable movement of people and goods.
3. As train drivers, we are well aware of the reality of the existing problem of crowding on most routes into central London both on the Tube and on national rail lines: People struggle to get on board trains and experience uncomfortable journeys. Crowding currently exceeds four people standing per square metre on six out of ten Tube lines coming into central London and forecasts predict a significant growth in London's population in the years ahead. Insufficient rail and Tube services would constrain future economic growth so the provision of additional public transport capacity, building of new lines and modernisation of existing lines is essential.

4. As a union, of course, we always welcome any additional investment in rail that will add additional capacity and relieve overcrowding. We expressed our disappointment and regret, in 2010, that the previous Mayor had cancelled so many transport proposals and schemes in London such as the Cross River Tram which would have run between Euston and Waterloo, the extension of the Docklands Light Railway to Dagenham Dock, the extension of the Croydon Tramlink to Crystal Palace, the Oxford Street tram and the Thames Gateway Bridge. In the Mayor's draft Transport Strategy 2017 we are delighted to see the inclusion of Crossrail 2, the Bakerloo line extension, the Elizabeth line Extension, London Overground improvements, new river crossings such as the DLR extension to Thamesmead, and integrated rail links to HS2. These initiatives will better connect parts of outer-London to the rest of the city without the need for reliance on cars and will create more capacity on existing lines, providing more frequent, comfortable and reliable public transport services.

5. ASLEF has already welcomed many of the policies that the Mayor Sadiq Kahn has announced since 2016 – such as the policy to freeze TfL fares - and, we applaud the Mayor's plans, set out in this Transport Strategy, for getting London's entire transport system to be zero emission by 2050. The successful implementation of the Mayor's proposed strategies to reduce car dependency would not only improve London's air quality and reduce the number of road accidents but would also benefit Londoners who suffer from health problems relating to physical inactivity and the stress of commuting on overly-congested roads. The union is pleased to see commitments on the electrification of all rail lines by 2050 and the introduction of new energy-efficient trains on the Elizabeth line, Piccadilly, Waterloo & City, Bakerloo and Central lines. Investment in electrification will improve services for passengers by making trains faster, cleaner and more reliable, will reduce CO2 emissions and will also create long

term savings on maintenance. We also welcome commitments to encourage car drivers to switch to using trams which don't produce harmful emissions.

6. ASLEF would urge the Mayor to amend this draft Transport Strategy in order to facilitate a much greater growth in rail freight than is currently envisaged. While the Mayor's transport strategy includes plans to achieve fuller freight vans and a reduction in freight traffic during peak hours, we would rather see more ambitious and concerted efforts to shift to a cross modal system with more freight transported on the railways. Shifting delivery times to quieter times of the day may partially relieve congestion but will do nothing to tackle the fact that road freight vehicles consume more polluting diesel than rail freight (current electric technology is not feasible for HGVs as the batteries would weigh more than the payload of the lorry). Rail freight produces 76% less carbon dioxide emissions than the equivalent HGV journey and a gallon of diesel will carry a tonne of freight 246 miles by rail as opposed to 88 miles by road.ⁱ It is also important to remember that an average freight train can remove 60 HGVs journeys from our roads to benefit bus services. And fewer lorries in the capital means fewer deaths: TfL calculated that whilst HGVs make up only 5% of London's traffic in 2013 there were 14 cyclist deaths of which nine involved HGVs.
7. We are deeply concerned by the line about freight trains on page 163 of the draft Transport Strategy which reads: 'slow-moving, long trains limit the full potential of the network for passenger services'. Instead of focusing on rescheduling freight services for times of day that won't impact on passenger services, and running freight services around London to avoid using the London Overground network, we would like to see the Mayor develop policies for supporting rail freight and safeguarding rail freight sites. Efficient goods delivery and servicing is essential for London's businesses and we would encourage the development of cross modal consolidation and distribution centres capable of being rail served and

from where goods can then be delivered by low emissions road vehicles including electric vans and e-bikes for light loads.

8. Demand for consumer and construction rail freight services is currently constrained by the lack of space on the rail network and there are growing concerns about whether planning authorities will safeguard the rail depots used to receive construction materials and remove waste, because of other development pressures such as housing. Although we are aware of the difficulty of the lack of available land for housing in London, ASLEF would urge caution and call upon the Mayor to refrain from selling railway land which will damage the network's ability to meet growing demands on the transport infrastructure.

9. The draft Transport Strategy outlines the aim of creating a London Suburban Metro by the late 2020s which would devolve responsibility from the Department for Transport (DfT) to the Mayor. ASLEF does not oppose the devolution of power and responsibility for rail to regional representative bodies per se, but we have previously urged caution when looking at devolution. In 2011 the McNulty report explained that fragmentation is the first barrier to efficiency. In 2012 the Rebuilding Rail report, published by the rail unions, found that the key reasons for the increase in the cost of the railway arose from fragmentation of the rail system into many organisations; profit margins of complex tiers of contractors and sub-contractors; and dividend payments to private investors.

10. ASLEF believes that the complexity and importance of the British railway system means that there should be as little private sector involvement as possible in our network. ASLEF's policy is that a unified single publically owned national railway would offer the best value to passengers and the taxpayer. However, short of this, contracts overseen by the public sector allow more control than the privatised monopolies offered by franchising. The benefit of management

contracts is that TOCs have more incentive to improve performance because revenue is kept by TfL and the operators are paid according to performance targets being met. This is in contrast to franchise system specified by DfT where revenue is kept by TOCs and certain agreed payments may be paid to the Department. We do not want to see any further fragmentation of the railway system so, if plans to move responsibility for inner London suburban services from the DfT to TfL achieve what the document claims and create more integration, this would be positive.

11. We appreciate that devolution from the DfT to TfL of specifications for local train services within the South Eastern, South Western, South Central and Great Northern franchises would give the Mayor direct control over Network Rail and train operating companies and a greater influence over the planning and delivery of these services. This would allow for the modification of local train services from Moorgate, Victoria and London Bridge, improved frequencies, journey times, interchange opportunities and the ability to keep fares affordable, all of which would be beneficial to passengers. However, ASLEF would not be happy with any further transition of responsibility for the rail network to TfL taking place without a thorough review into the organisation's management and processes. Any changes must not be used to attack staff terms and conditions and any effects on staff must be negotiated from the beginning with recognised trade unions. It should be noted that in recent years industrial relations have deteriorated when actions taken by TfL have shown disregard for the recognised unions and the workforce. For example, TfL have failed to deliver on commitments to improve work-life balance for train drivers, which in turn affects the likelihood of having a more diverse workforce.

12. Another point worth making is that to encourage more people to use public transport instead of cars, services must consistently be customer focused, accessible and affordable, with support provided by highly trained staff. Many of the people passing through London's transport system are foreign tourists, parents accompanying young children, and individuals requiring assistance because of their age or a disability, but there is little mention in this Transport Strategy of provisions made for them. Specifically, we would like to see a commitment to keeping adequate numbers of highly trained staff on platforms, trains, across stations and in ticket offices, at all hours of the day and night.
13. Finally, we are of the view that it is vital that all new London Underground rolling stock have a dedicated and secure driver's cab. The underground's infrastructure makes driverless trains a threat to public safety on the Tube and we would like to see a commitment to new rolling stock having dedicated driver cabs.
14. In conclusion ASLEF congratulates the Mayor on the proposed plans which could make London a better, healthier place to live and work in for generations. The investment needed to deliver the Mayor's proposals to improve the Tube, London Overground, DLR and tram services will be significant but worthwhile, since rail is so critical to securing the capital's economic growth and future prosperity. A great deal of collaboration will be required between TfL, the government, TOCs and other stakeholders and we hope that the Mayor ensures that any concerns from trade unions are taken on board.

Mick Whelan
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ⁱ Freight on Rail: <http://freightonrail.org.uk/FactsFigures.htm>