



ASLEF Response to the All-Party Group for High Speed Rail Inquiry

1. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK's largest train driver's union representing approximately 18,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and light rail systems.
2. The unions believes that investment in rail is key for the UK's future transport capacity given that expanded aviation and road infrastructure is likely to be limited. ASLEF therefore strongly supports enhancing the capacity of Britain's inter-city rail network.
3. The British rail network is running at capacity. Over the past few years rail use has been at record highs with more distance being travelled by rail than in any other era in peacetime. We are travelling 10 billion miles a year more than we did just one decade ago.
4. The growth on the main two north to south routes in the UK is also extraordinary. Between 2008/09 and 2009/10 the West Coast Mainline increased the number of passenger journeys it took by 15.8% and passenger kilometres by 18%.
5. The East Coast Mainline is one of the busiest lines on the rail network and there is insufficient capacity on parts of the line to deal with all the requirements of passenger and freight services currently, without considering growth.
6. Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategy explains that "the West Coast Main Line is nearly full to capacity. The market for travel between London and Manchester is expected to grow at the fastest rate, with passenger demand expected to increase by as much as 61 per cent." It also states that "This RUS therefore supports the development and implementation of a high speed network initially between London and the West Midlands, but also to Manchester and beyond. We believe that this is the best way to free up capacity on the West Coast Main Line and are delighted the Government is committed to the project."
7. This Government has sought to become the greenest Britain has seen. Therefore not only must this been seen in the context of improving inter-urban connectivity, but within the scope of carbon reduction through reduced car journeys and domestic aviation. The Government has a legal commitment to reduce CO2 emissions by 34% by 2020 and 80% by 2050

8. Transport is the fastest growing polluter in the UK. However rail emits just 2% of these emissions whilst road is responsible for 19% of all emissions and 55% of transport emissions.
9. On the issue of the designated route ASLEF has many concerns. The Union believes that it makes no sense to have a high speed network in the United Kingdom that does not go to Edinburgh or Glasgow. These are two major cities in the UK and the benefit of high speed travel and the shortening of journey times would be enormous. This is especially true when you consider that rail only enjoys a 15% market share in journeys between London and Scotland whereas another high speed route, the Eurostar, now has about an 80% share of London to Paris travelers.
10. In Spain, since the opening of the new high speed service between Madrid and Barcelona, 50% of passengers now use the train between the cities. Madrid to Seville used to leave people with very little choice other than a plane journey. Now due to a rail line, only 1 in 10 fly.
11. The EU is currently exploring proposals to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from transport by 60% over the next 40 years by replacing short haul flights with high speed rail.
12. According to the EU, Heathrow's congestion problems could be eased by cutting domestic and European flights, while demand for new runways could be suppressed by building new rail networks. The EU transport commissioner, Siim Kallas, has announced a series of green transport goals. He explains "If we are successful in creating new railways they can take over short-haul airline connections. It makes it easier for the runway issue."
13. By linking to Heathrow airport, domestic connecting flights which use Heathrow as a main hub for international journeys will be reduced. It is important to remember that travel by HSR produces one-quarter the emissions of an equivalent trip by air, taking into account the average loadings typically achieved on each mode.
14. A new high speed line could have a significantly positive effect for Rail Freight by relieving capacity on the East Coast and West Coast Mainlines for the use of Freight services.
15. ASLEF believes that it is essential that any funds spent on a high speed network are ring fenced and are not taken to the detriment of other parts of the rail network. It is essential that the High Speed rail builds capacity along with other areas of the Network rather than simply moving it.
16. ASLEF feels that it is essential that the High Speed infrastructure is fully integrated into the current network and becomes a network itself rather than simply a line. This requires it to have good connections with current hubs.

17. One of ASLEF's concerns is around the high speed connection in Birmingham. Whilst the Union understands the short term costs in connecting Birmingham New Street to the network, the long term benefits of such a connection to Birmingham's largest and busiest station would undoubtedly have been significant. Building infrastructure requires long term strategic thinking. Short of connecting New Street Station to HS2, it is essential that local infrastructure is improved in order to enable mass, fast transport between the new station and the existing stations in the Birmingham such as Snow Hill.
18. The Union would also expect major upgrade work in relation to capacity at Euston Station for both existing rail use and London Underground. ASLEF strongly agrees with the connection of HS1 and HS2 which enables Birmingham to be a little over three hours from Paris, and Manchester and Leeds around 3 hours 40 minutes.
19. However it is still likely that the increase in passenger numbers to Euston will increase the amount connecting through Kings Cross and St Pancras. It is therefore unfortunate that a new connection between both terminals for other passengers is not considered.
20. ASLEF believes that HS2 will require capacity upgrades to connecting system such as London Underground. The Department for Transport acknowledges that by 2043, as a result of the proposed line, the number of passengers per day using Euston Mainline Station is estimated to increase by 31,700. Surveys of current passengers suggest around 50 per cent of passengers would arrive or depart by London Underground which, in the three hour morning peak, would mean 5,500 additional passengers using Euston Underground Station.
21. All transport works must be considered in the context economic development. Figures quoted by Credo Group for Invensys Rail which showed that every £1 invested in rail by the government generates an additional £1.30 from the private sector – in other words investment in transport has a stronger multiplier effect than other sectors of the economy.
22. Research already carried out by ARUP (A global firm of consulting engineers) and Volterra (Economic Consultants) had shown that a 'Y-shaped' network travelling from London to Birmingham, where it would split with one arm of the 'Y' heading to Yorkshire, could provide between £1.5bn and £3bn of productivity benefits to the economy, in addition to transport benefits of around £29bn.
23. Their research estimates that linking the Sheffield City Region the Leeds City Region, and the "Three Cities" of Derby, Nottingham and Leicester as part of a national high speed rail network would connect an area of 6.7 million people and 3 million jobs. Existing connections to the Tees Valley and Tyne and Wear City Regions would provide access to a further 2.2 million people and 0.9 million jobs.

24. The union believes that the scheme's creation of 40,000 jobs and potential economic benefits of £43 billion are of huge significance given the wider economic and employment situation in the country.
25. In conclusion ASLEF reiterates its support for the creation of a High Speed network in the UK. It is essential however that long term benefit of a network is considered rather than simply the short term cost of a line is considered. The line must go to Edinburgh and Glasgow and must be interoperable with the current rail network. Other infrastructure must receive investment to support the increase in passenger numbers. ASLEF whilst being supportive would there express some concerns over the current plans and the lack of foresight regarding much of the peripheral but essential work that is needed.

Mick Whelan
General Secretary