

Birmingham City Council Evidence All-Party Parliamentary Group for High Speed Rail

March 2012

How do you view the current capacity situation on Britain's railways?

1. Birmingham City Council is concerned that overcrowding on Britain's railways will hinder the growth and development of our regional and national economy. It has the potential to harm our reputation and ability as a place to do business and attract visitors.
2. We believe large scale investment is needed in UK railways or we risk losing our local and regional services as they become crowded out by more lucrative, long-distance services. If we are not able to provide adequate local and regional services passengers will switch to other alternatives. This could lead to road congestion both locally and along inter-urban corridors such as the M5/M6.
3. If passengers are dissuaded from travelling by rail or frustrated by congestion and overcrowding this has the potential to harm Birmingham's retail and leisure sector.
4. Evidence is readily available to back up the growing demand for rail in Birmingham and the wider West Midlands region. Passenger journeys have increased every year for the past decade in the West Midlands. In 2000/01 22.8 million passenger journeys were made. This had risen to 32.8 million journeys by 2006/07 and reached 42.8 million passenger journeys in 2010/11.
5. Rail is extremely important to Birmingham and increasingly so. Rail now accounts for 27% of the peak modal share in Birmingham, up from 17% in 2001.
6. There was an increase of 4.5% in passenger numbers in the West Midlands in 2010/11. In 2012 we are already seeing an increase in excess of 6%.
7. So, to summarise, we believe the UK's railways are running out of capacity and this will be harmful to our ability to do business and attract visitors.

What capacity do you believe Britain's railways will require in the future?

We have to take a number of important factors into consideration:

8. We have to take into account population growth in the UK. The UK's population is increasing by 400,000 per annum and will reach 70m+ by 2030. Additional people will generate additional travel demands including rail, while increased levels of personal affluence will underpin leisure trips, especially if the long term price of oil continues upwards which would impact on people's use of aviation and private car.
9. We believe the modern economy will continue to require a highly-skilled, flexible adaptive workforce which means that people will need to travel further to access the jobs they require. People on average will have more jobs during their working career than previous generations. People are less likely to move house as often as previously.
10. Electronic media is very important and will go hand in hand with transport developments. The digital age economy will generate more trips as opposed to reducing them - rail demand increased significantly during the 1990s and 2000s concurrent with a significant increase in the use of electronic media. Although HS2 opponents have claimed internet technology will reduce the need to travel, we believe the evidence suggests this will not

be the case. Indeed, it may be that remote working allows for greater freedom and people travel in larger numbers.

11. Birmingham is a business city that must be served by first class transport links if it is to deliver the jobs its economy is demanding. International investors are underlining the importance for their business of operating in a country with a 21st century rail network. The West Midlands can be a beneficiary as the UK economy becomes more balanced and less London-centric.
12. Between now and 2025 we must focus on making best use of existing assets by maximising train lengths and maximising network capability. However, there is evidence that in a growing demand/fixed capacity scenario rail costs are increasing and some service types are being diluted in favour of higher revenue services. There is also evidence that rail connectivity gaps are appearing on the network. This has happened along the West Coast Main Line, including station closures. We are opposed to losing local and regional services or enduring poorer connectivity as this will create problems for employers, our workforce and our visitors.
13. Post-2025 incremental enhancements cannot continue indefinitely. Huge capacity release is required and HS2 will provide that. We need to undertake some key elements of Rail Package Two to keep up with demand before 2025. Therefore RP2 is not a replacement for the need for HS2.
14. To summarise we believe a serious step-change is needed in our regional and national rail capacity to allow our economy to grow.

What is the best way of providing capacity and future-proofing Britain's rail network?

15. In the short-term there will be a continuing need to increase capacity through provision of longer trains and incremental improvements to the existing rail network infrastructure. However Birmingham City Council believes that in the long-term, HS2 is essential to provide the step increase in rail capacity needed to cater for demand growth.
16. We believe that because a new rail line has to be built, it would be short-sighted not to spend a relatively small amount of additional funding and make that line high speed thereby unlocking all the extra economic benefits such a railway brings. Extending HS2 to the North of England and particularly to Scotland would increase its potential to realise carbon benefits.
17. From the outset HS2 provides the capacity for an extra three trains per hour between Birmingham and London which could be up to 400m long and carry up to 1100 passengers. This potentially provides more than 3,000 additional seats per hour, just on the London - Birmingham HS2 services and delivers the huge step change in capacity required by our region.
18. As an additional benefit, transferring the faster services to HS2 will allow the existing capacity on the West Coast Main Line to be used more effectively which would provide more paths for freight and allow us to not only safeguard, but enhance local and regional rail services.
19. Birmingham City Council supports HS2 as it provides fast, direct links between our major cities and Europe.

20. HS2 will reduce the journey time from Birmingham to London to just 45 minutes.
21. Birmingham also benefits from halving journey times to Leeds and Manchester. Leeds journey time from Birmingham is cut from two hours to 57 minutes, while Manchester is halved from 90 minutes to 41 minutes.
22. In summary Birmingham City Council believes additions are already being made and this will continue to be the case as rail demand continues to grow. But in the long term we need to build HS2 to meet growth and boost our regional economy.

What will the effects of providing extra capacity be, beyond addressing journey supply? What would be risked by failing to provide that capacity?

23. HS2 would bring tremendous economic benefits to Birmingham and the West Midlands. The significantly reduced journey times combined with new national and international connectivity delivered by HS2 along with an enhanced local/ regional rail network would bring 10,000 jobs and £600m per year to the West Midlands economy (KPMG report, 2010).
24. However, our Go-HS2 partner Centro has also drawn up plans to increase local and regional services (from the Black Country to Birmingham Airport, for example) using capacity released by HS2 on existing lines. KPMG reports that bringing HS2 to the West Midlands, along with these rail enhancements, will deliver 22,000 jobs and generate £1.5 billion per year for the regional economy.
25. We fully support this enhancement of local and regional rail which will help people to do business in Birmingham and enjoy leisure travel with greater convenience and reduce or eliminate crowding concerns.
26. We can also increase capacity for freight by releasing pathways on existing rail lines and reducing road traffic.
27. Increased investment allows Birmingham to improve access to its major transport hubs – Birmingham Airport, Birmingham New Street and Moor Street/proposed HS2 station.
28. HS2 affords Birmingham a great opportunity to tap into investment already taking place such as the redevelopment of Birmingham Gateway and the Metro tram extension linking New Street to Snow Hill. HS2 will greatly assist in maximising economic benefits from land use developments next to the Birmingham City Centre station, for example in Eastside, and at the Birmingham Interchange station.
29. We are concerned that alternatives to HS2 simply do not deliver what we require and jeopardise local and regional services, whilst causing widespread disruption to the railway's customers. Network Rail's report into the 51M Group alternative to HS2 concluded that stations in Staffordshire and Warwickshire would risk losing London services (effectively closing Stone and Atherstone, and removing all Trent Valley connectivity for customers along the Rugeley-Birmingham line).
30. We are worried that Network Rail concluded there was no allowance for growth in services between Coventry and Birmingham in the 51M alternative.
31. Having considered the evidence in Network Rail's report (January 2012) we are concerned that alternative schemes such as 51M would freeze rail services at current

levels between Birmingham and Coventry and threaten local services elsewhere in our region. This would be bad news for businesses and communities in the West Midlands and force rail travellers to use other modes of transport which are likely to be less environmentally friendly.

32. To conclude, we strongly support HS2 and believe it will bring jobs and opportunities for generations to come in Birmingham. The development of Eastside is already well underway and HS2 will be right at the heart of this exciting new chapter for our city.