

# PM statement on transport infrastructure: 11 February 2020

Mr Speaker, there are all sorts of reasons why the city in which we now sit is the most productive region in the whole of Europe

the time zone, the language, the agglomeration of talents

and above all we have the mass transit system

that every day conveys millions of people efficiently and affordably

with tubes and trains and 8600 buses

into the central activities zone in the morning and out in the evening

like the respiration of some vast undersea coelenterate

and as that public transport network has expanded in the last 150 years

it has brought hope and opportunity and job prospects to people growing up in every part of the city and beyond

and it is the ambition of this government to employ that same utensil – fantastic transport infrastructure – to unite and level up across the whole country

and of course there is far more to do in London – and the present mayor frankly needs to be shaken out of his complacency –

but there is even more to do across the nation as a whole

Whether you are stuck in a jam on the A303 or on the outskirts of Lincoln

whether you are trying to get from Warrington to Manchester or toiling across the Pennines by rail

you know that this country is being held back by our inadequate infrastructure and so in the next few weeks this government will be setting out more details of a transport revolution

because we all know the potential of transport to change your life and the life of your town or city

and we know that efficient transport can clean the air and cut pollution and get cars off the road

We can simultaneously reach our ambition of net zero by 2050

and we can shorten your commute and give you more time with your family and increase productivity

and bring business and investment to left behind communities

and that is why we are embarking now on a massive programme of investment in local transport

Starting with a record-breaking £5 billion of new investment in buses and bicycles.

An investment that will mean bus passengers across the country seeing a dramatic improvement in their daily journeys.

More than 4,000 brand-new buses on the roads – zero carbon British built buses – on the roads of places Ashfield, Barnstaple, Southampton, Manchester and many more towns and cities besides.

More services, including in the evenings and weekends.

Simpler, cheaper and more convenient ticketing.

Properly designed priority schemes to speed passengers past the traffic jams.

And it's an investment that will also mean cyclists enjoying hundreds of miles of brand-new separated lanes.

With "Mini-Hollands" blooming like so many tulips in towns and cities right across the country.

And that £5 billion, Mr Speaker. is just the start

My very good friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be making a full announcement on this in next month's Budget and I have no desire to steal his thunder.

but I can signal today that we are taking forward transformative investments

improvements from Cornwall, to the A1 north of Newcastle

from south Salisbury to south Ribble

from Cheadle to Chiverton

dual carriageways, roundabouts, bypasses, underpasses

And those are just the roads.

We have already set out plans to explore new investments in the rail network across the North.

Developing proposals to reopen the Fleetwood Line in Lancashire and Ashington-Blyth rail line in the North East.

Improving track and platform capacity at Middlesbrough station.

And installing new signalling at Harrogate, one of North Yorkshire's busiest

stations.

And further south, I can today announce that we will be upgrading the Bristol East junction – a major pinch point in the rail network of the South West that limits access to the Brunel-designed Victorian splendour of Bristol Temple Meads Station.

Mr Speaker the transport revolution is local because it must be local

we can unite and level up across the country with fantastic local improvements

with better rail and less congested roads

and beautiful built buses that are cleaner, greener, quieter and above all more frequent

and above all we can improve the quality of life and improve their productivity

we can make places more attractive to live in and to invest in

but we cannot make these improvements in isolation from one another

because we will only be doing half the job

we will not fix the great musculoskeletal problem of UK transport

yes we must fix the joint between the knee bone and the thigh bone

and the shin bone and the ankle bone

and yes we must fix the arthritis in the fingers and the toes

but we also have to fix the spine, Mr Speaker

and our generation faces a historic choice

We can try to get by with the existing routes from north to south

we can consign the next generation to overcrowding, standing up in the carriageways

or we can have the guts to take a decision – no matter how difficult – unlike the party opposite by the way Mr Speaker – no matter how difficult and controversial – that will deliver prosperity to every part of the country

50 minutes off the time to Glasgow

When it comes to advocating HS2 it must be said that the task is not made easier by HS2 Ltd – the company concerned

Speaking as an MP whose constituency is on the route I cannot say that HS2 Ltd has distinguished itself in the handling of local communities

As everybody knows, the cost forecasts have exploded

But poor management to date has not detracted in my view from the fundamental value of the project.

The review recently conducted by Douglas Oakervee

copies of which will be placed in the library of the House

leaves no doubt of the clinching case for high speed rail

A vast increase in capacity, with hundreds of thousands of extra seats.

making it so much easier for travellers to move up and down our long, narrow country.

That means faster journey times

Not just more capacity – it means faster journey times

extraordinarily fast journey times

Passengers arriving at Birmingham Airport will be able to get to central London by train in 38 minutes

which compares favourably with the time it takes to get from Heathrow by taxi – a point I just draw attention to the house

but this is not just about getting from London to Birmingham and back

this is about finally making – and considerably faster than the Piccadilly line – finally making a rapid connection from the west Midlands

to the northern powerhouse

to Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds

and simultaneously permitting us to go forward with Northern powerhouse rail

across the Pennines

finally giving the home of the railways the fast connections they need

and none of it makes any sense without HS2

The Infrastructure and Projects Authority considers that this first phase can be delivered for its current projected cost of £35 billion to £45 billion in today's prices.

The designs have been improved immeasurably thanks to the tireless contributions of campaigners including the Rt Hon Member for Chesham and Amersham.

And if we start now, services could be running by the end of the decade.

So today Mr Speaker, the Cabinet has given high speed rail the green signal.  
We are going to get this done.

And to ensure that we do so without further blowouts on either cost or schedule,

we are today taking decisive action to restore discipline to the programme.

I will be appointing a Minister whose full-time job will be to oversee the project.

A new Ministerial oversight group will be tasked with taking strategic decisions about it.

There will be changes to the way HS2 is managed.

We will, in line with Oakervee's recommendations, be interrogating the current costs to identify where savings can be made in phase 1 without the costs and delays that would be associated with a detailed redesign.

And, so that the company can focus solely on getting phases 1 and 2A built on something approaching on time and on budget

I will be creating new delivery arrangements for both the grossly behind-schedule Euston terminus, and phase 2B of the wider project.

But before those designs are finalised and legislation introduced, we will also present an integrated plan for rail in the north.

Informed by an assessment from the National Infrastructure Commission it will, in line with the findings of the Oakervee review, look at how we can best design and integrate rail investments across the north –

including Northern Powerhouse Rail between Leeds and Manchester, – and I have just spoken to the Mayor of Greater Manchester who has warmly welcomed this project – which I committed to supporting I remember during my first days in office.

I want the plan to identify the most effective design and sequencing of all relevant investments in the north.

For example, with many in the north crying out for better east/west links instead of improved north/south ones, which you've heard many times in this house

...some have suggested delaying or even cancelling HS2 in order to get Northern Powerhouse Rail done more quickly.

But I want to say to you Mr Speaker and to the House, this is not an either/or proposition.

Both are needed, and both will be built – as quickly and cost-effectively as possible.

To make sure that happens we will, working closely with northern leaders, explore options for creating a new delivery vehicle for Northern Powerhouse Rail.

And we will start treating HS2, north of Birmingham, Northern Powerhouse Rail and other local rail improvements as part of one integrated masterplan, High Speed North.

Because something has to change.

Those who deny this, who say we should simply build 2B and Northern Powerhouse Rail according to the plans currently on the table, are effectively condemning the North to get nothing for 20 years.

And that would be intolerable.

So as we draw up this plan we are not asking whether phase 2B is not to be.

That is not the question, Mr Speaker

The question is how we can bring a transport revolution to the north sooner.

Together, this revolution in local and national transport has the potential to be truly transformative for the entire country.

Yes, it is ambitious.

But ambition frankly is what we have lacked for too long.

Two centuries ago our ancestors could have been content with breeding faster horses.

Instead, they invented the railways.

They created the transport network on which the United Kingdom rose to economic pre-eminence.

They looked to the future of transport and they made it happen and today it is our duty to do the same.

Let us bring about a future where high-speed trains glide between our great cities.

Where electric buses convey us cleanly around our towns.

Where self-driving cars roam along roads that are free of the congestion that causes so much pollution.

And where a new generations of cyclists pedal safely and happily to school and work in tree dappled sunlight

on their own network of fully segregated cycle paths.

This government – as we did in London – will deliver a new anatomy of British

transport

A revolution in this nation's public transport provision.

And a sign to the world that in the 21st century this United Kingdom still has the vision to dream big dreams and the courage to bring those dreams about.

I commend this statement to the House.