

FTA Submission: National Infrastructure Commission call for evidence - London



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About FTA

The Freight Transport Association is one of the UK's largest trade associations and represents over 14,000 members relying on or providing the transport of freight both domestically and internationally, to or from the UK. Our members include hauliers, freight forwarders, rail and air freight operators, through to customers – producers, manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers. They cover all modes of transport – road, rail, air and sea. FTA members operate over 200,000 commercial goods vehicles on the roads in the UK; which is more than half of the UK fleet of goods vehicles. FTA members also consign around 90 per cent of goods moved by rail and around 70 per cent of goods moved by air and sea.

Introduction – UK infrastructure and logistics

FTA is pleased to be responding to this call for evidence. Infrastructure development in the UK has for too long been focused too much on the short term, stop start in its funding and has failed to adequately address national/regional needs in the face of local considerations. This has particular implications for freight as logistics is an inherently pan-national activity.

The efficient movement of goods is crucial to our society. Sometimes it is hard to remember the full scope of what is freight. At one end it is the heavy bulk movements like the construction material that makes our buildings and the waste that is taken away from our cities every day. At the other end, the book that is delivered to your house is also freight. Every cup of coffee you buy in a café is freight. Every piece of food on the shelves is freight. Every package of documents delivered to an office is freight. Every component or raw material used to supply a workshop is freight.

Without logistics society would grind to a halt overnight. In practical terms, everything that makes logistics less efficient adds to the cost of living and of doing business in the UK – everything that removes inefficiencies aids our development.

This is true of social objectives as it is of economic efficiency. More efficient logistics (through optimising mode used and ensuring free flowing movements) would help address emissions and safety issues – priority issues for FTA's members.

We look forward to working with the National Infrastructure Commission to help address the UK's needs as regards transport networks.

In the rest of this document, FTA will respond to the challenges identified and questions asked where they are relevant to our area of interest.

Response to Call for Evidence: London's transport infrastructure

1. What are the major economic and social challenges facing London and its commuter hinterland over the next two to three decades?

London's population is expected to reach over 10 million people by 2030. This will increase demand for both personal travel for commuting and leisure purposes and also increase demand for deliveries and servicing activity. Due to the nature of the operations (ie final delivery to the customers' door) the vast majority of urban deliveries will always be made by road – therefore meeting the freight needs of the increased number of residents and increased economic activity in London will be a major challenge. Decisions will have to be made about the most efficient use of limited road space.

Transport for London estimates that central London congestion will grow by 60% by 2031. FTA believes that action needs to be taken now to secure the long-term sustainability of London if it is to maximise its competitiveness and attractiveness as a world city.

2. What are the strategic options for future investment in large-scale transport infrastructure improvements in London - on road, rail and underground - including, but not limited to Crossrail 2?

- How should they be prioritised, taking account of their response to London's strategic transport challenges, including their impact on capacity, reliability, journey times and connectivity to jobs?
- What might their potential impact be on employment, productivity and housing supply in London and the southeast?

Future investment in large-scale infrastructure improvements should not just be aimed at solving current pinch-points, but also unlocking new areas for development. All too often, the transport infrastructure to support new development is an afterthought, and the true economic potential is not realized due to poor connectivity. East London is the prime example of a growth area with poor transport links, particularly cross-river road connectivity. However, Transport for London is now seeking to redress this with plans for a network of new road river crossings in East London – these plans must be fulfilled

Investment in public transport and alternatives to driving, to remove the reliance on private cars, is key to reducing congestion - freeing up space for essential or efficient traffic such as freight, tradespeople, pedestrians, cyclists, and disabled drivers.

However, investment in the core, motor-traffic oriented, road network should not be excluded and it is important to consider how various schemes interact with one another. It is essential that we achieve a sensible balance between the needs of different transport users so that we make best use of limited road space to benefit London overall.

For the freight industry, journey times are important, but arguably what is even more important is journey time reliability. If journey times significantly increase or there is a poor level of certainty about journey times which could result in reduced productivity per shift, due to the constraints of EU drivers hours rules, we will see transport operators having to put more HGVs on the capital's roads leading to increased transport costs, congestion and emissions.

London needs increased road capacity in key areas – river crossing in east London being the first example, but across London improved roads will be needed. There are social impacts from increased road use – ie emissions and safety. FTA believes that in the timeframes we are talking about here these should be addressed through improved vehicle technology – not through restricting the improvement of infrastructure at key pinch points and congested areas.

If the logistics industry is to successfully serve the needs of London's increased population and consequently increased business activity, it will require a more efficient road network than currently exists. In the case of freight more infrastructure will not exponentially increase traffic as our industry only moves the quantity of goods that society requires of us.

4. What are the options for the funding, financing and delivery of large-scale transport infrastructure improvements in London, including Crossrail 2?

- What is an appropriate local and regional contribution - given the potential distribution of benefits to business, residents, transport users and the wider economy - and how could this be achieved?
- What innovative funding mechanisms could be considered to support delivery of key schemes?

All funding options should be considered. However, we need to be careful of private ownership of key infrastructure – the Severn Crossing on the M4 is a prime example of where such a move can lead to high user charges long after the capital costs have been recouped. FTA accepts that user charges may need to be introduced to both fund new infrastructure and to manage demand. However, any demand management measures implemented on new schemes should be focused on those who have alternatives (such as private car drivers) rather than essential delivery vehicles which have little alternative option but to use the capital's road network. This is to ensure that there is an appropriate deterrent effect on those who in the main have an alternative choice – to use public transport – and to avoid additional cost to essential deliveries and servicing activity which has limited modal shift opportunities in the capital.

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