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London's transport infrastructure: Big Picture Stuff

A personal view

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I am pleased to provide this brief submission to the Commission's call for evidence.

As a Director of Ove Arup and Partners I led the team responsible for persuading the Government to abandon British Rail's proposed alignment for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, and which subsequently designed and constructed what is now HS1. This has in large part been responsible for the success of the Olympics, the regeneration of Stratford and King's Cross and the transformational effect of the Javelin high speed domestic services.

As a Director of Heathrow Hub Ltd and Runway Innovations Ltd, the companies responsible for promoting the extended runway at Heathrow, one of three viable options shortlisted by the Airports Commission and now under consideration by Government, I believe there is a compelling case for a similarly integrated approach to airport expansion and surface access. For me, this is a critical element in the Commission's consideration of strategic options for future investment in large scale transport infrastructure improvements in London.

I understand the political challenges but believe the omission of HS2 and airport capacity from the Commission's consideration is unfortunate to say the least.

For example our privately promoted integrated proposals allow;

- phased delivery of additional airport expansion aligned with demand, air quality and noise targets and surface access capacity,
- lower capital cost allowing all necessary and airport related surface access infrastructure enhancements to be privately funded,
- Crossrail Express services to relieve capacity constrained Great Western Main Line long distance services, increasing commuter capacity in the western corridor and maximising Crossrail's operational efficiency to the west of London,
- New cross-regional through rail services between Basingstoke, Guildford, Woking and Paddington, (via Heathrow), relieving capacity constrained South West Main Line services and congested LUL services from Waterloo and providing passengers from the South West with a direct connection to Crossrail.
- Extending Piccadilly Line services to connect to the Great Western Main Line and Crossrail at Heathrow Hub

This integrated approach is capital effective and revenue positive, providing benefits to both airport and non-airport passengers. It also provides the significant impacts on air quality and carbon emissions that is secured by modal shift from car to rail, not only in the event Heathrow is expanded but also as it continues to grow incrementally as a result of increasingly large aircraft and load factors

In contrast, current plans require significant public monies to deliver sub-optimal results. HS2 intends to fund a replacement depot for Heathrow Express, maintaining this premium service which uses 20% of Great Western Main Line capacity whilst achieving maximum load factor of 30% in the three hour am peak.

The proposed Western Rail Access to Heathrow scheme will, on the Airports Commission's analysis, achieve even lower load factors and will require continual revenue support whilst occupying increasingly scarce and valuable line capacity.

My plea is twofold. Firstly that the Commission brings creative thinking to explore potentially viable strategic options for future private investment in large scale transport improvements in the west of London which would make significant contributions to both the capital and the wider SE region. Secondly that specific attention be given to developing a scenario for sorting out the apparent problems and issues at Euston and Old Oak Common by seriously considering the benefits of the innovative Cross City Connect proposals developed by BuroHappold for a new rail tunnel linking west London with HS1 via a new underground South Bank Central Station between Waterloo and Southwark, with a potential future station in the Barking area before connecting with HS1 north of Ebbsfleet.

Integrated strategic leadership in all these issues is what many of us hope will emerge from the Commission's work! Obviously I would be happy to discuss this further with the Commission.

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The views expressed by me in this very brief submission are personal and do not necessarily reflect the position of either Heathrow Hub Ltd or Runway Innovations Ltd