
Mayor Proposes New Transport Plans

Ken Livingstone has unveiled proposals for spending £10 billion on London's transport infrastructure. The definite items included in the plan are:

- Construction of the Thames Gateway bridge.
- More reliable and increased capacity tube services with some "air-cooled" trains.
- Schemes to relieve traffic congestion at Coulsdon, Bounds Green and Bexley including widening of the North Circular.
- Extending the East London Line to Dalston, Croydon and Crystal Palace.
- New DLR links to Woolwich, Stratford and Barking Reach.
- Extending the Metropolitan line to Watford Junc. and Croydon Tramlink to Crystal Palace.
- A high quality bus transit system linking Greenwich to Abbey Wood,, and Ilford to Dagenham.
- More CCTV and other improvements to many stations, trains and bus services.
- A "Low Emission Zone" by 2007, including quieter and cleaner buses.

Possible Projects?

Other proposals which are described as "possible" or subject to funding being obtained are as follows, although as pointed out in our previous newsletters all of these projects are controversial and probably uneconomic:

- A Western extension of the Congestion Charge zone.
- West London and Cross River Tram projects.
- The Crossrail project.

How They are Going to be Paid For

The committed projects will be funded by £3 billion in new borrowing, £4 billion from Public Private Partnership contracts and £3 billion in government grants and fare rises. But the latter means that tube and bus fares will rise even more than previously indicated with bus fares to go up by 10% more than inflation for the next three years and 2% above inflation for a further 2 years. The London Congestion Charge will also rise. But at least it is clear that he is trying to minimise further rises in local council taxes to fund these plans.

Greens Object As Usual

The proposals were immediately criticised by Darren Johnson, GLA Green Party member, on the basis that the fare rises were being used to fund road construction such as the Thames Gateway bridge, and effectively meant motorists were being subsidised by public transport users.

(Editor's Comments: This is clearly a distorted view as almost all the expenditure is going on public transport systems and the Thames Gateway Bridge got widespread support on many grounds. In reality the proposals make a lot of sense, and getting public transport users to contribute to the improvements is also sensible (after all they are the major beneficiaries). Perhaps the Mayor is finally being influenced by wiser heads in the Greater London Assembly and the Government so that practical projects are going ahead, and uneconomic, grandiose and poorly supported schemes are being put on the back-burner).