

FROM THE PAPERS

August 2006 LONDONER – (1) *The Bill to create Crossrail is currently going to parliament. But while this will not be passed before next year, Crossrail's basic key decisions must be taken by the government now to avoid further delays. The line will provide transport links from thousands of new homes planned in the southeast London's Thames Gateway areas to jobs in the West End, the City and the Wharf. The line will boost the UK's economy by £30 billion over the next 60 years, creating up to 80,000 new jobs.*

(2) *Ken Livingstone has condemned a rail company's decision to stop passing on cheap day tickets during the evening peak hours. First Capital Connect has restricted the use of these tickets on its Thameslink and Great Northern services to before or after 19.00 on northbound trains Mondays to Fridays.*

01.08.06 EVENING STANDARD – *Transport for London has named the bus routes with the largest number of code red calls from drivers. The worst routes are dominated by bendy buses, the 18 metre articulated vehicles infamous for fare evasion. Problems range from knife or gun attacks to verbal abuse. The most dangerous routes, by number of recorded incidents last year are: route 25 Ilford to Oxford Circus (448 incidents), 61 Chislehurst to Bromley (458 incidents), 29 Wood Green to Trafalgar Square (438 incidents), 140 Harrow Weald to Heathrow (399 incidents), 207 Shepherd's Bush (376 incidents) and 18 Sudbury to Euston (369 incidents).*

METRO – *New cross-track projection technology will see moving advertisements displayed at 24 Underground stations. Oxford Circus, Bond Street, Victoria, Piccadilly Cross, Piccadilly Circus and Tottenham Court Road will be the first in the capital to use the new digital screens.*

THE TIMES – *Network Rail's plan to borrow £3 billion without a taxpayers' guarantee is offered as evidence of its rude health and operational success. The plan is a result of the lengths that taxpayers must go to satisfy Gordon Brown's vanity. To the outside the Treasury, Network Rail is part of the UK public sector. When ministers decided to pull the rug from under Railtrack, their lawyers were set to work to create an entity that would look like a state corporation, act like a state corporation but legally be one. Sadly, this creation could not raise money on reasonable terms to avoid multiplying subsidies from taxpayers to make good the gap, the Treasury has to clear it would stand by National Rail debt. Ever since, Mr. Brown has resisted, but has relied on the technicalities the lawyers drafted to keep this debt off the national balance sheet. He cannot do so indefinitely, so National Rail has to rely on its own cash flow.*

02.08.06 EVENING STANDARD – (1) The fourth span of Paddington mainline station has been saved from demolition following a campaign by heritage groups. The demolition plan had been backed by English Heritage and approved by Westminster council, even though Paddington's spans are all Grade-I listed. Span Four, which covers platforms 9 to 12, is an Edwardian addition to Brunel's structure, but has been hidden by scaffolding for 13 years.

(2) First Capital Connect sparked a row today over commuter safety after refusing to police its stations late at night, saying it would cost too much, despite spending £52 million on safety improvements. The decision means that 63 out of 78 stations on the company's network will be without staff in the late evenings. Instead most of its safety budget will be spent on CCTV.

03.08.06 THE TIMES – Jacques-Henri David, the chairman of Eurotunnel, last night expressed optimism that the group would stave off bankruptcy after a French court granted it protection from its creditors for at least six months. Bondholders, who turned down an initial rescue package last month, said they were now closer to an agreement over the company's £6.2 billion debt mountain.

07.08.06 EAST END LIFE – (1) Work has begun on the refurbishment of Bethnal Green Underground station. The heritage features of wall tiling throughout the station will be maintained. In consultation with English Heritage and LU, Metronet will replace the existing tiles with new replicas. The project also involves new lighting, help points and CCTV.

(2) Docklands Light Railway has announced a £1 million refurbishment programme, funded by Transport for London. After deep-cleaning and the removal of disused equipment, the arches will be re-modelled to provide simplified entry and exit. Signage, paving and lighting will also be improved.

EVENING STANDARD – Ken Livingstone faced a call today to review the sale of a London bus franchise that will net the current operator a £120 million profit. Opposition parties say the deal should not go ahead without some benefit for taxpayers, who subsidise the profitable routes. They want TfL to either block the sale by Stagecoach or ensure some of the profits are clawed back. The company wants to sell the franchise, which operates 1,300 buses and employs 4,300 staff, to Australia's Macquarie Bank for £263 million. The routes, mostly in east and south-east London, are worth about £18 million a year.

08.08.06 THE TIMES – An entire steelworks is being moved out of Beijing. Three new underground lines and an airport are being built. Millions of the capital's residents are being taught English, good manners and not to spit. In 2008 Beijing will open China's first Olympic games on what numerologists hold to be the most auspicious moment of the year: 8pm on the eighth day of the eighth month.

09.08.06 EVENING STANDARD – London is named today as the most expensive city in the world in which to live, according to a report from UBS. The capital has the highest living expenses and travel costs, and charges tourists more money to visit than anywhere else.

THE TIMES – Like the Victorian builders of the Underground, William Lyttle loves the soft London clay. For the past 40 years the now 75-year-old eccentric retired electrical engineer has been tunnelling under his derelict home on the Islington-Hackney border, upsetting the neighbours and their foundations. Most people expand outwards or upwards - he went downwards, through the clay and into the underlying water-bearing gravel. Concerned for years at his troglodytic activities, Hackney council has finally won a court order to evict him temporarily from his now roofless home so that it can carry out £100,000 of emergency repairs. Council engineers told Thames Magistrates' Court last week that the tunnels could extend as much as 60 feet beyond his basement. It is believed that Mr. Lyttle had inherited the four-storey, twenty-room house, which in good condition could be worth £1 million, from his parents about 40 years ago. The Council intends to bill Mr. Lyttle for the remedial work.

10.08.06 EVENING STANDARD – A plot to cause untold death and destruction by blowing up 10 passenger jets simultaneously in mid-air was foiled today, said Scotland Yard. Restrictions were imposed at airports, and security tightened on the Underground and at major rail stations.

11.08.06 STEAM RAILWAY – An instant steam railway for London could be in operation by next summer on the soon-to-be-closed two-mile stub of the North London Line between North Woolwich and Custom House. The proposal by Train of Events Ltd., best known for its humanitarian aid train from London to Kosova in 1999, envisages leasing the line, and hiring locomotives, rolling stock and maintenance staff and would operate from a much expanded North Woolwich Station Museum. Remarkably the new enterprise is destined to be a railway born to die because it has been designated as part of the proposed Crossrail scheme.

14.08.06 EVENING STANDARD – Ken Livingstone will spend more than £7.5 million a year housing Transport for London staff in the so-called Shard of Glass building, which will be the capital's tallest skyscraper, when it is completed in 2011. TfL has exchanged contracts with developer Irvine Sellar to take about 200,000 square feet of the building designed by Renzo Piano.

METRO – Two special trains will run next month to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Poet Laureate John Betjeman. The first, on 2 September, will run from Marylebone through Metroland to Quainton Road and back with a commentary and readings. For the

second, on 9 September, the steal-hauled Northern Belle will travel from Paddington to Bristol with lunch and Buck's Fizz. A coach will take passengers to St. Mary Redcliffe, whose church Sir John thought had the best peal of bells in the country, more readings, a choir, and dinner on the return journey.

15.08.06 EVENING STANDARD – (1) The RMT union warned today of a breakdown of industrial relations with LUL over several separate disputes. RMT leader Bob Crow accused LU chiefs of returning to a regime of fear. There are rows over both pay and working conditions. On pay, the union has given LUL until Wednesday next week to stop stalling and make an acceptable offer. Otherwise said Mr. Crow there would be a strike ballot among all the union's 6,500 Underground members. The union is furious that that LUL has offered pay increases which, it says, are below those being paid by private sector companies maintaining the network. There is also row with LUL wanting a four-year pay deal, to stop the 2012 Olympics being held hostage by the unions. In another dispute RMT drivers on the Jubilee Line are to be balloted over the alleged sacking of a colleague who was dismissed after passing a signal at red, his first such offence. In another incident, Mr. Crow said, a union branch secretary had been put on a gross disciplinary charge for a minor incident while driving an empty train. The third dispute involves station staff in the Canary Wharf area, where gay members were said to have been routinely discriminated against.

(2) Greenpeace, the environmental campaign organisation, has published timetables revealing when trains carrying nuclear waste are passing through London. The trains carry waste fuel from nine nuclear power stations around the country to the Sellafield storage facility in Cumbria. Ken Livingstone is so concerned about the dangers these trains may pose that the Greater London Authority is conducting a safety review.

16.08.06 EVENING STANDARD – Fare evasion on bendy buses is soaring, according to figures released by Transport for London. On route 25 between Oxford Circus and Ilford, 11.9 per cent of passengers were found to have invalid or no tickets.

METRO – Improvement works to the northern section of the Metropolitan Line will begin this weekend. Some of the oldest track on the network between Amersham and Moor Park will be replaced at 16 separate sites, resulting in faster and more reliable journeys.

17.08.06 EVENING STANDARD – Multiplex, the Australian construction and property company, reported a 157 per cent increase in annual net profit yesterday despite heavy losses on the much-delayed Wembley Stadium project. Multiplex is handing over responsibility for the completion of the White City development to fellow Australian group Westfield.

18.08.06 EVENING STANDARD – Transport for London has been criticised by Tory London Assembly members for spending £78 million of public money on advertising when

commuters are facing further rises in fares.

19.08.06 THE TIMES – (1) Metronet, the private contractor that maintains two-thirds of the LU network, is investing £80 million in track-laying equipment that will allow it to double the number of new tracks it lays. New heavy-duty engineering locomotives, which are being tested in Amersham on the Metropolitan Line, will enable Metronet to renew up to a kilometre of track each weekend.

(2) The train operator Great North Eastern Railway will not appeal against a High Court ruling that the Rail Regulator was right to allow increased competition on the East Coast route from its rival. Great Central trains with services between London and Sunderland.

21.08.06 EVENING STANDARD – Bob Kiley, who joined Transport for London on a four-year deal as transport commissioner in 2001, will tonight use an hour-long television Channel 4 Dispatches programme to lay bare his sense of frustration with Chancellor Gordon Brown. The man who was paid £2.4 million over four years to sort out the capital's system expresses disbelief at failures to tackle the country's public transport nightmare. Even the long-suffering commuter comes in for criticism. Mr. Kiley says: "What amazes me is how you British put up with this. You seem to have got used to being herded like cattle".

22.08.06 EVENING STANDARD – A BBC2 documentary, Seven Man-Made Wonders of London, to be screened next month will feature engineering landmarks, built before 1900 and voted by BBC London listeners as wondrous. First place goes to St. Paul's Cathedral, second the remains of London's Roman walls, third was Regent's Park and fourth the Metropolitan Line.

METRO – Exactly 150 years ago today, what is now a section of the Central Line between Leyton and Loughton opened in 1856. Originally part of the Eastern Counties Railway, it became part of the Central Line in 1947. Most of the stations still retain some of their original heritage features. The anniversary of Leyton, Leytonstone, Snaresbrook, South Woodford, Woodford, Buckhurst Hill and Loughton stations was marked on Saturday, with LU staff dressing in period costume to welcome passengers.

24.08.06 METRO – Musician Chris Singleton is hoping his new album, Twisted City, will be more than an underground hit. It represents a journey through London, with each song signifying a stop on the Underground. In fitting style, Dubliner Chris launched the album yesterday with performances at Leicester Square, London Bridge and Bank stations. The CD is due for release on 19 September.

THE TIMES – More than £1 billion has been spent on transport projects that have been cancelled or delayed, leaving roads and railways struggling to cope with huge growth in traffic. The most expensive single scheme on the list of stalled projects is Crossrail,

which has cost £254 million since 2001. The government has yet to commit itself to fund the £16 billion project and officials admit that, even if it goes ahead, it is unlikely to be ready before 2020. Almost £300 million has been spent preparing for tram schemes in Portsmouth, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester (Phase III) that have either been cancelled or greatly reduced in scope. The Thameslink 2000 project to upgrade the north-south rail route across the capital was due to open six years ago – more than £80 million has been spent on preparatory work at St. Pancras. Another possible white elephant is Stratford International station, which cost £210 million, but might never be used by Eurostar.

25.08.06 EVENING STANDARD – A London to Peterborough train, packed with 700 rush hour commuters split in two last night as the coupling linking the two four-car units failed. The driver used the emergency brakes to halt the front section, while the rear four cars were left stranded down the track. Although some passengers were badly shaken, no one was injured. After a delay of more than an hour the two sections were towed separately to the nearest station.

THE TIMES – John Laing, the construction group and railway operator, could be forced to wait until next year for full compensation from Tesco after the tunnel collapse on Chiltern Railways. Adrian Ewer, chief executive of John Laing, said the company was seeking a significant sum, thought to be up to £30 million, from Tesco, in arbitration.

29.08.06 EVENING STANDARD – A strike crippled all mainline services in and out of Waterloo this morning. 250 trains ran out of 1,700 and commuters were warned to expect the same this evening. ASLEF and RMT unions ordered the 24-hour stoppage in what they say is a row about safety with South West Trains.

THE TIMES – (1) Security scanners which were set up at Baker Street, Brixton and King's Cross to check for drugs and weapons helped to keep trouble at the Notting Hill carnival to a minimum yesterday. Police said the two-day event was "largely trouble-free" with 144 arrests.

(2) A plan to build a 200mph North-South rail line is expected to be abandoned because the Government's chief transport advisor has concluded it would be too expensive and deliver too few benefits. Sir Roy Eddington has spent more than a year studying the long-term needs of Britain's transport system and has decided that investment in rail should be focused on more modest schemes linking cities such as Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds. Sir Roy is a former chief executive of British Airways, and his conclusion will prompt accusations that he is favouring airlines, which would be the main losers if a new rail line halved the London to Edinburgh journey time to just over two hours.

30.08.06 EVENING STANDARD – (1) Writing in the latest issue of Metronet's staff

magazine, chief executive Andrew Lezala says he and the company have suffered flak because they are innovators of world-scale projects who are challenging the status quo. He said it reminded him of Isambard Kingdom Brunel who left his mark imprinted on our lives in numerous ways. Metronet, which is charging the taxpayer about £20 billion for its 30-year refurbishment contract, has been attacked by Ken Livingstone as “the consortium of your nightmares” after a series of major failures.

(2) Oyster Cards are to go on sale abroad in a bid to boost tourism. Visitors from overseas will be able to purchase them before setting out for the UK, initially in India, Hong Kong, Singapore, Spain, Portugal and the US.

31.08.06 CAMDEN NEW JOURNAL – Islington councillor Wally Burgess, after holidaying in Singapore where cable cars are a popular form of transport, has proposed such a system along the Holloway Road from Highbury & Islington to Archway. Possible stops could include Nags Head and Holloway Road station. If the cable cars proved successful they could be extended north to Highgate.

EPPING FOREST GUARDIAN – Railway enthusiasts are preparing for a planning battle with the owner of the Epping-Ongar Railway and its plans to build housing on part of the Ongar station site. Ongar Railway Preservation Society chairman John Glover has reiterated the society’s aim to safeguard the line’s future and, speaking at the society’s AGM, confirmed the society had objected to Epping-Ongar Railway Ltd’s planning application. The company has submitted plans to Epping Forest District Council for residential development on part of the former goods yard at Ongar. The society is opposed because of the adverse effect this would have on the line’s viability as an operational railway.

EVENING STANDARD – The showcase project to refurbish the Waterloo & City line faced fresh delays today, raising questions over Underground renewal firm Metronet. The five-month shutdown of the mile-and-a-half had been due to end tomorrow, but the company admitted it would be at least at least 10 days late.

THE TIMES – The national rail network has become a battleground for increasingly violent fights between football hooligans, according to Ian Johnston, Chief Constable of the British Transport Police, in his force’s annual report. He says that the number of incidents is not increasing but their seriousness is a concern.