

FROM THE PAPERS

Items for “From the Papers” should be sent to John Wilson at 44 Pleydell Crescent, Sturrey, Canterbury, CT2 0LQ (or E-Mail wilsonja1954@gmail.com), and not to the Editor of this journal. Please ensure that contributions are identified by date and source publication.

25.05.22 CITYAM – More than 100,000 Londoners travelled on the Elizabeth Line within four hours of its opening yesterday as a combination of novelty and necessity saw trains fill up. Some 65,000 journeys were completed in the new central section alone, between Paddington and Abbey Wood, by 10.00. Hundreds of Londoners were seen queuing at Paddington early yesterday morning as they wanted to be the first to board the services. “It was fantastic to see thousands of excited customers waiting for the Elizabeth Line to open this morning and board the first trains from Paddington and Abbey Wood,” commented TfL’s commissioner Andy Byford. “This stunning addition to the transport network will transform life and travel in London and the South East by dramatically improving transport links, cutting journey times, adding capacity, transforming accessibility and supporting the economic recovery and growth throughout the country for years to come”.

02.06.22 BLOOMBERG UK – On Tuesday 24 May, London launched the long-awaited Crossrail, or Elizabeth Line, which crosses the capital from Shenfield in the East to Reading in the West (sic). The new line, which cost £18.9 billion, will slash travel times for many Londoners and should help alleviate crowding on the Underground network. However, one thing that hasn’t been met with enthusiasm is the new release of the “Tube map”, revamped for the occasion with the new line and its additional stops. The update adds more information to a cacophony of colours, grey zebra-like fare zone representation, and awkward interchange stations. It also added IKEA logos, as the Swedish retailer sponsored TfL to have the location of its stores on the official map for a year and paid £800,000 for it. A new line could have meant it was time to rethink the map, but a complete design overhaul was not part of the plan. Maxwell J. Roberts, lecturer in psychology at the University of Essex and transit map designer said, “Let’s just be blunt here. The current basemap is a piece of design garbage. I’m wondering if TfL is trolling us and is trying to see how bad it can make the map before people get really upset about it”.

09.06.22 EVENING STANDARD – It has been confirmed that a fault has been discovered on some Elizabeth Line trains but it is reported that there is “no risk presented to customers or workers”. Reports began to circulate on Wednesday that a fault had been identified on as many as 70 trains in the Elizabeth Line fleet that a whistleblower claimed could “wipe someone out”. The whistleblower revealed that the door of a metal box fitted on the underside of an Elizabeth Line train near the passenger doors had blown off its hinges during testing, leading to fears that injury could occur if it was repeated. TfL Commissioner Andy Byford confirmed that the fault had been identified but said that the risk of injury to passengers is “practically zero”. He said: “Under very unusual circumstances – rare circumstances – this door can become detached but it is held under the train so the potential for injury to customers is practically zero because the trains run ... through the central section with platform screen doors and the platform would protect customers. The whole fleet has been checked, there are no other deficiencies found. We are fitting secondary bolts to those doors to stop that happening again”. Mr Byford said there is a “planned fix” which should be completed “by the end of this month”. The issue is said to be caused when a build-up of gas causes the bolts holding an equipment cover in place under the train to “explode”, blowing open the small metal door.

10.06.22 CITYAM – London mayor Sadiq Khan called for further talks over London’s transport funding in a letter to central government sent yesterday. The latest funding round, needed due to the hit Covid-19 has delivered to Transport for London’s (TfL) finances, amounted to £200m and is set to expire on 24 June. The mayor argued that TfL has kept its part of the bargain and planned to cut or alter 78 of the current 620 bus routes to meet the government’s requirement and achieve £400m in savings. Without a long-term capital deal in two weeks’ time, TfL will be forced to start work on enacting its managed decline scenario. Under the plan, the public body would be forced to cut a further 80 routes while reducing Underground services by nine per cent. TfL bosses are finding it increasingly difficult to conjure up the savings demanded of it by government as part of conditions attached to bailouts, of which the last is the fourth since the onset of the pandemic.

13.06.22 EVENING STANDARD – Rebel Tory MPs were today urged to come to the aid of Transport for London as efforts to secure a final £900 million in government funding down to the wire. Mayor Sadiq Khan wrote to four London MPs, who were thought to have voted against Boris Johnson in last week’s confidence vote, urging them to now speak out on “government attacks on London”. TfL is seeking

about £900 million in revenue support to replace the anticipated fares shortfall for the remainder of the current financial year, plus a long-term deal on capital investment to repair and modernise the network.

16.06.22 NEW CIVIL ENGINEER – Transport for London is fighting to keep its South Kensington regeneration plans alive. TfL and development partner Native Land have lodged an appeal after the council rejected plans for a mixed-used scheme above and beside South Kensington Underground station. The proposal for shops, offices and 50 homes around the west London Underground station was thrown out by Kensington and Chelsea Council’s planning committee in November 2021 despite planners recommending its approval. The decision came after the plans were amended three times and put through six rounds of consultation by the client, a joint venture between TfL and Native Land. The plans also faced fierce local opposition, with 22 local groups, five councillors and the local MP opposing them. TfL and Native Land have now appealed against the decision, asking the Planning Inspectorate for a six-day public inquiry. The date of the inquiry has not yet been decided. The development will complete the delivery of much-needed step-free access to the ticket hall, and District and Circle Line platforms, together with 50 new homes with 35 per cent affordable housing, offices for small and medium-sized enterprises, and shops for small and independent retailers.

22.06.22 MYLONDON – An Underground driver says staff shortages not only puts drivers at risk but also the safety of travelling passengers. “If more jobs, such as detrainment staff, are axed then it puts the safety of both the rail workers and passengers at risk. When a train reaches the end of the line, detrainment staff carry out physical checks of every carriage before the drivers take trains into depots and sidings. This not only ensures the driver has on-hand assistance but it also speeds up the process. Without them, Underground drivers have to resort to the infamous ‘flash and dash’ method. This means flashing the (car) lights on and off, make two or three announcements then shut the doors and go. But the problem with this method is that passengers often do not realise they have reached the last stop and find themselves trapped in the carriages.