

FROM THE PAPERS

Items for “From the Papers” should be sent to Ian McKenzie at 24 Thamespoint, Fairways, Teddington, TW11 9PP (or E-Mail secretary@lurs.org.uk), and not to the Editor of this journal. Please ensure that contributions are identified by date and source publication.

15.12.19 THE SCOTSMAN – Introduction of the UK’s first trains with no staff on board faces an 18-month hold-up because of the Glasgow Subway’s Victorian tunnels. The new fleet may not enter passenger service until 2021, operator Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) admitted. Contractors have hit problems installing new signalling equipment in the 123-year-old underground system – the world’s third oldest. This has been compounded by the need to retain existing equipment so the Subway can continue to operate throughout the overhaul. An SPT report stated: “Development of the migration installation and strategies for the various control systems is under way but has experienced significant delays. The inherent complexity of installation in 19th century tunnels and the associated required detailed management to ensure limited impacts to the operational and passenger environments has presented challenges to the completion of installation designs”. SPT said it had expressed “significant and on-going concern” to the contractors’ consortium of Italian firm Ansaldo – now Hitachi – which is responsible for the signalling, and Swiss company Stadler, which is building the 17 new trains. SPT said that had prompted the companies to replace several key staff, including the project director, “with more experienced individuals” who had “intimated their current programme is no longer achievable”. A proposed revised timescale is due to be submitted early next year, which SPT expects will “move some key dates significantly”. SPT announced when the £200 million contract was agreed three years ago: “The public should start to see the first new trains introduced to the system in 2020”. The first three trains are being prepared on a test track near Ibrox and are expected to undergo overnight trials in the Subway next year. Once in service, they are expected to initially operate with drivers before switching to “unattended train operation” like some underground lines in Paris, Barcelona and Copenhagen. The trains will increase the peak four-minute frequency to two to three minutes.

17.12.19 EVENING STANDARD – *Letter by Judy Woodward* – “In this season of bleak midwinter, I would like to thank a group of young men and women who helped two American strangers in London. In an unwise move, my husband and I took the Underground from the airport to our hotel near St. Paul’s with all our suitcases during the rush hour. Befuddled by jetlag, we planted ourselves and our luggage on the wrong side of the flow of foot traffic, like a block of US granite poking from the UK raging stream. Of course, the worst happened. As my husband got on the escalator, case in each hand, he lost his footing and fell back. Cases flew away and panic would have ensued but for a kind and quick-thinking group. One woman pressed the emergency stop button. Several men gathered our cases and my fallen husband and took us to our train. Human kindness is universal, so it is perhaps unfortunate we still live in a world where it worth pointing out we are elderly Minnesotans and our saviours were all young Britons. If they read this letter, I want them to know their kindness is one of my best memories of this country”.

18.12.19 EVENING STANDARD – Crossrail bosses have promised there will be no further delays nor any further need for a taxpayer funded bailout. The cross-London line is £3.4B over budget – taking the cost to £18.25B – and is not expected to open until 2021. The original December 2018 opening by the Queen had to be abandoned when massive delays to stations such as Bond Street emerged alongside the failure to get the £1B fleet of new trains running. But Crossrail chiefs sounded a lot of optimism when they updated the London Assembly on progress yesterday. They even suggested the central section of the 73-mile line, under the West End, could still open by March 2021, which would be within the six-month “window” first proposed a year ago. A revised opening window has been given to the Crossrail board but will not be made public until the new year, once it is satisfied that it can be achieved. Crossrail Chairman, Tony Meggs, said: “I really do believe we have got to the bottom of what remains to be done. We are going to produce a forecast we can really rely on. As and when we revise this window, which will be wholly within 2021, we will ensure that we don’t ever have to do it again. We don’t plan to revise this cost estimate again. We are not looking to ask for any more money”.

18.12.19 – 01.01.20 RAIL #894 – Completion of the delayed Crossrail project should include reinstatement of an early plan to run its south-eastern portion as far as Ebbsfleet. That is the message the leader of the London Borough of Bexley, Teresa O’Neill. She says it would be “a no-brainer” to extend the route eastwards from its current terminus at Abbey Wood, in order to provide an interchange with High Speed 1 at Ebbsfleet adding that it would also stimulate economic growth in the Thames Estuary region. When the earliest plans were drawn up in the 1990s, Crossrail was originally intended

to run as far as Gravesend. This part of the route was then cut back to Abbey Wood following a review in 2004. However, as recently as March 2019, the Government indicated that it was open to the idea of reversing this decision. It committed £5M to help fund feasibility studies and other preliminary work for a prospective new route, as part of the 2050 vision for the Thames Estuary that could support up to 50,000 new jobs and 55,000 new homes. The route to Ebbsfleet remains protected from development, and the cost of the overruns on Crossrail would have more than paid for it.

19.12.19 METRO – A new entrance complete with ticket hall and gate-line, is now open at Finsbury Park station. The entrance, which can be accessed via Goodwin Street and Fonthill Road, provides an alternative step-free route to Underground services and will help to ease congestion within the station. TfL is working with the developer to link the new entrance with the development being built on Wells Terrace. This route will be available once the developer has completed the necessary road work. TfL will continue to work with them to bring this route in to use as soon as possible to ensure passengers can experience the full benefits of these improvements.

19.12.19 EVENING STANDARD - Suburban Londoners are getting back in their cars as demand for public transport suffers an “unprecedented slowdown” The annual *Travel in London* report says that in an increase in flexible working, with people swapping the office for the home, and the slow economy have left passenger numbers on the Underground, trains and buses static over the last three years. TfL chiefs fear the impact this will have on already-tight revenues, with the “softening” of demand for Underground journeys and a greater decline in bus use, which is down 1.7% year-on-year. Despite this, the Underground did record its busiest day ever on 29 November, with 5.054M journeys. The following week was its busiest on record, with 30.1M journeys. This report, which covers 2018, warns that traffic levels in outer London are up 0.5% year-on-year, but down 1.1% in Inner London and an additional 1.6% in central London.

19.12.19 EVENING STANDARD – The TSSA union has declared war on government plans to prevent strikers bringing the capital to a standstill. New laws will make rail strikes unlawful unless unions agree and abide by a Minimum Service Agreement which includes a skeleton staff staying at work to deliver a cut-down service. The Government says it would be done in “a proportionate way” and any sanctions would apply to unions rather than individuals. The TSSA General Secretary said: “This is straightforward union bashing from an anti-worker Tory government which will always back the bosses over the workers”. He said strikes were “always a last resort” and claimed commuters would be better served by bigger investment in services. “We will fight this anti-worker and anti-democratic attack on British workers’ human rights all the way”. Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, said the laws would uphold the “basic right” of commuters to get to work and earn money, saying militant unions “hold to ransom” millions of passengers to benefit a few strikers.

06.01.20 CITY AM – Transport for London’s commissioner has confirmed that the central portion of Crossrail will not be open before the end of 2021. Speaking to the London Assembly’s budget and performance committee today, commissioner Mike Brown said TfL was working to a timetable of between September and December to be the opening date. Crossrail has faced severe delays and budget blowouts over the past decade. The line – which will connect Reading and Heathrow in the west to Shenfield and Abbey Wood in the east – was supposed to be open in December 2018 and a cost of £14.9bn. However, Crossrail’s latest estimates show the cost has ballooned out to £18.25bn. Brown said today that the new Crossrail bosses, who joined in December 2018, underestimated how far away the project was from being completed. He said that the project was in “great disarray” and that individual stations were further away from completion than thought. “The sense was that the major challenges ahead was the commissioning of the railway system – the signalling and the rolling stock,” he said. “What wasn’t envisaged was the scale of unfinished and uncompleted work on the stations and the station systems. If you wandered around the stations, as I did at this time last year, these stations looked as though they were complete. I went back a few months later and tiles had to be taken away, platforms had to be re-opened up because of some of the wiring of the system, some of the processes and equipment that should have been applied and installed weren’t there”.

07.01.20 – 13.01.20 TIME OUT – From James Manning: What’s your favourite Underground line? The space-age Jubilee? The super-speedy Victoria? The grand old Piccadilly? I bet it’s not the District Line. In fact, in a 2013 YouGov survey, poor little greenie was rated London’s second least favourite line – beaten only by the undeniably s**t Northern.

Now I’m not here to defend the Northern Line (how could I?). But I am going to stick up for the District – not just because someone’s got to.

The facts are these: The District Line is slow. The District Line is complicated; just take a look at the bonkers departure boards at Earl's Court. The District Line is super-unreliable, it has way too many stations and you get stuck in tunnels ALL THE TIME. So why do I love it so much? Because it's so damn *civilised*.

I love its sense of space. Thanks to its origins as a "cut and cover" line built just below street level, its stations are breezy, open-plan and mercifully shallow, and its carriages are broad and high-ceilinged. Compare that to the deep-level lines with their stale air, crushy corridors and tiny trains that squeeze through narrow tunnels like grimy toothpaste. I'll take air-conditioning, wide platforms and a short walk to ground level any day, thanks very much.

Also: "old"? More like "iconic"! Along with the Metropolitan, the District Line is one of the two sub-surface lines. Oscar Wilde and Jack the Ripper were probably among the early passengers. And the places it serves: South Kensington, Westminster, the Tower, the City! This is the line for Proper Actual London, where basically every Zone 1 stop is a short stroll from some gobsmacking site or other.

And there's no other line that you can ride to nearly all the most bucolic bits of suburbia: Kew Gardens, Richmond Park, Wimbledon Common, even Wanstead Flats. Stuck in an urban rut? Hop on the green line and suck down some of that delicious country air!

I'll come clean: I grew up on the District Line and used it daily until pretty recently, but I'm no longer a regular passenger. These days I commute on the Victoria, and yes (since you ask), it is much, much quicker. But if the low-key-but-lively District Line has a lesson for us, it's this: life isn't about getting places on time – it's about the journey. Especially when that journey has air-conditioning. Take that Piccadilly!

08.01.20 METRO – TfL is reducing the hours after some ticket offices, including Carpenders Park, Dalston Junction and Hackney Downs. At peak times (07.30-10.00), these offices will continue to be staffed, and the new hours reflect a station-by-station review of the network. This is due to the majority of passengers now favouring contactless payments and mobile devices to travel, with fewer than 2% of Overground journeys involving a paper ticket sale from a ticket office. Full details of ticket office hours will be publicised locally at the station and on the TfL website. There will be no change to the opening hours at the busiest ticket offices, including West Croydon, Walthamstow Central, Willesden Junction and Chingford.

10.01.20 METRO – *Email by R.* – "This is to the people waiting for the Jubilee Line train at Waterloo during yesterday's morning rush hour who watched a man accuse a lady of judging him because he was wearing a baseball cap. This man then threatened another commuter. I'm sick of seeing this type of behaviour and asked the gentleman who was being shouted at to get on the train before me to avoid further confrontation. Thanks, everyone, for looking away!"

10.01.20 EVENING STANDARD – Crossrail will open in "summer 2021", according to the latest forecast from the company today. Trains will run first between Paddington and Abbey Wood about two-and-a-half years later than originally hoped. Services linking Reading and Heathrow with Shenfield and Abbey Wood without needing to change trains will be running by May 2022.

13.01.20 DAILY TELEGRAPH – (*See 17.01.20 below*) - Surging costs and repeated delays to the Crossrail project have set back prospects for its even more vital successor, Deputy Mayor Heidi Alexander has warned. The capital's east-west rail link was originally due to be completed in 2018 on a budget of £15.9B. Costs have now swollen to £19B and the scheme will open "as soon as practically possible" in 2021. A string of high-profile problems has made it more difficult to go ahead with the proposed north-south rail link, Crossrail 2. The project is seen as crucial for relieving overcrowded blackspots on the Underground network. Ms Alexander said: "Crossrail 2 is the Rolls-Royce, which is why we want to have discussions with Government about how to fund it. The challenges around Crossrail 1 make it difficult to see Crossrail 2 being built quickly, but that doesn't mean I am not making a case for it". Crossrail 2 would run from Surrey to Hertfordshire and cost as much as £45B. The GLA is fighting to secure funding for the scheme from the new Conservative government determined to invest in infrastructure among its swarms of new voters in the North and "level up" the rest of the country compared with the capital. A report released by the GLA earlier this month argued that, as an urban area, London was much more reliant on public transport than the rest of the UK. It also argued that investment in the capital does not come at the expense of other regions it is a net tax contributor to the British economy.

13.01.20 EVENING STANDARD – *Comment by Emily Bryce-Perkins* – "They say that before you judge a man. you must walk a mile in his shoes. Well, I've waddled in a pregnant woman's shoes for eight

months now and I can say with full authority, if a pregnant woman enters a train, bar, or frankly anywhere that has seating – offer her your seat. But it shouldn't end there. Many commuters all over London might need a seat for myriad reasons. If you're one of the Londoners who spins around in an ergonomically designed office chair all day, do you really need to sit down for your entire journey home? As an able-bodied pregnant woman, trying to navigate a busy commute has felt really disabling at times, particularly when I've had to beg for a seat. And as a long-serving martyr of the Central Line, I get the books, podcasts, this newspaper. We welcome distractions to make our commute more palatable and they can make us less aware of the people around us. But to deny somebody a seat despite being perfectly able to stand? No. That's not OK. A couple of years ago, pregnancy skincare brand Mama Mio conducted a survey revealing how difficult it is for a pregnant woman to use public transport. In it, only 2% of people thought you should "offer your seat up" when a woman is in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. Having lived through the first 12 weeks of pregnancy – one of the most physically demanding and vulnerable stages – I can tell you this is absurd. I spent my first trimester taking naps in various toilets across London when my body absolutely refused to stay awake. The study also revealed that 30% believe you don't need to offer a pregnant woman a seat until she is visibly showing. I didn't visibly "show" until month seven of my pregnancy (and, yes. I displayed my *Baby on Board* badge throughout). So, what no seat for me? Excuse me as I scream into this pillow. And I do understand the "not wanting to offend anybody" barrier. My husband once joked: "Unless I see the baby crowning, I don't feel comfortable asking." But surely it is better to offer your seat than risk obstructing someone in need? It should be the right of the person in need to decline a seat." Hell, I've had hangovers that deserve their own seat. We are all responsible here. We are all able to make the world a better place. Yes, even the Central Line. So use a little common sense and kindness. Look for a badge. Try to make eye contact. Smile. And if you see a baby crowning ... call an ambulance.

14.01.20 METRO – From 26 January, a new timetable will be introduced on the Central Line as work starts on the Central Line Improvement Programme (CLIP). This will bring changes to services, including the introduction of a shuttle service between Woodford and Hainault and changes to peak hour services at the eastern end of the line. The CLIP work is part of the £380M investment by TfL to replace train motors, as well as electrical and mechanical parts, meaning fewer broken down trains and a more reliable service. To improve accessibility, more space will be created for wheelchair users, with enhanced audio and visual passenger information.

15.01.20 EVENING STANDARD – A major operation was underway today, to repair damage caused when Storm Brendan lashed the South-East with 40mph winds and heavy rain overnight. Parts of the Piccadilly and District lines were suspended after a piece of the roof canopy at Ravenscourt Park station crashed down on to tracks. Engineers were dispatched to repair the roof in time for this morning's rush hour.

16.01.20 METRO – *Post by Chloe Smith* – "To those annoyed at people wearing rucksacks on the Underground, I keep mine on to reduce the chance of having a crotch or hand pressed against my rear".

16.01.20 EVENING STANDARD – Mayor Sadiq Khan was today told to be honest with Londoners about the impact on the Underground of any decision to continue freezing fares. His partial fares freeze since 2017 has deprived TfL of an estimated £640M to reinvest in the public transport network. Today, the London Assembly, analysing Mr Khan's 2020-21 budget plans, called on him to reveal how TfL would be affected if the freeze was continued, and which station and track upgrades would be postponed.

17.01.20 CITY AM – (*see 13.01.20 above*) – Crossrail 2 may have been delayed before government approval has even been given, according to Mayor Sadiq Khan. The £41.3B rail project – a new Tube (*sic!*) line running from north to south London – is in limbo as it awaits for the DfT to deliberate on its business plan. Under current funding model, TfL would be expected to pick up 50% of the £41.3B bill. Speaking at the Mayor's Question Time yesterday, the Mayor said Crossrail 2 is already facing a hurdle to opening on time, an unspecified year in the 2030s, thanks to the near three-year delay of Crossrail 1. "Funds earmarked for Crossrail 2 have been temporarily diverted to repay the central government package to complete Crossrail 1. This means that unless there are other ways of agreeing with the government on how construction will be funded, London will not be able to pay 50% without delaying Crossrail 2". He added that he would "explore options in this context for taking Crossrail 2 forward to the next stage". Some are speculating the near three-year delay and budget overruns of Crossrail 1, coupled with the government's plans to invest heavily in the north of the UK, mean Crossrail 2 will not receive the government's tick of approval.

17.01.20 METRO – Owing to track replacement work at Acton Town, there will be no Piccadilly Line service to or from Heathrow on 1/2 February. The Piccadilly Line will be closed between Hammersmith and Heathrow/Uxbridge, including during Night Tube hours. The District Line will also be closed between Earl's Court and Ealing Broadway/Richmond. Replacement buses and coaches will run between Hammersmith and Heathrow/Rayners Lane.

20.01.20 METRO – The ASLEF union has branded plans to enforce a minimum service during rail strikes “a form of slavery”. Union boss told Sky News: “I’m at war with the ethos of forced labour, any form of indenture or slavery. I think that’s what [the government are] trying to do.” Claiming: “only Lithuania has worse labour laws” than the UK, he defended the use of the term “slavery”, saying it reflected the “strength of feeling”.

20.01.20 METRO – *Post by Neil Dance* – (see 16.01.20 above) “Disturbingly, Chloe is right to say there’s a reason to keep your rucksack on while on a packed train and that’s to stop “having a crotch or hand pressed against my rear”. There’s a lot of inappropriate behaviour by men on commuter trains. Let’s make a Metro pact to call it out if we see any of it”.

20.01.20 EVENING STANDARD – More than half of women say they have suffered sexual harassment on public transport in London, a survey revealed today. The YouGov research suggests that tens of thousands of incidents on buses and the Underground go unreported. The most common offence was being deliberately pressed up against by a stranger, experienced by 37% women and 12% of men. 12% of women saw flasher expose their genitals. 8% had complete strangers request sexual favours. Only 2% of respondents had made a complaint, despite a TfL campaign encouraging passengers to report any form of unwanted sexual behaviour. TfL said the number of reported sex offences across the network was “low”, with one incident for every 2 million journeys, but it admitted this type of crime is “under-reported”. It recorded 285 sex offences on the Underground and 161 on the buses between July and September last year. The survey found 39% of Londoners were subjected to unwanted sexual behaviour on public transport – 53% of women and 21% of men. For women, the second most common incident was someone staring at their breasts, reported by 29%. About 20% said their backside had been touched or pinched. About two-thirds of incidents happened on the Underground. Crowded carriages are known to be targeted by offenders. There has been a 43% rise in the reports of sexual assault on the Underground since 2016.

21.01.20 EVENING STANDARD – A major pipe burst hit water supplies to hundreds of homes and offices, closing Southwark station. Thames Water engineers and three fire crews were called to Blackfriars Road as floodwater inundated the streets around the station. Buses were diverted as specialist engineers battled for about an hour to repair the rupture to the 36inch pipe and begin restoring mains supplies. TfL said surrounding roads would be remain closed and it was unclear when the Jubilee would re-open.