

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.

12.07.19 CITY A.M. – Crossrail is looking to renegotiate the pay and incentives of Bechtel, its delivery partner, amid concerns they are not offering “value for money”. Crossrail is angling to restructure the pay of Bechtel to “support the delivery of the revised schedule”, TfL board papers released earlier this week revealed. The £17.6B Elizabeth Line was due to open last December but has been pushed back to a six-month window between October 2020 and March 2021. Crossrail hired Bechtel as its project delivery partner in 2009 to act as the project’s lead contractor, co-ordinating the activities of other contractors in the central section of the line. The paper reads: “The recent changes to the project delivery schedule have caused Crossrail to consider if the existing delivery incentive remains effective. The Crossrail board has concluded that a revision would be value for money and authorised its executive to enter into negotiation with Bechtel”.

12.07.19 EVENING STANDARD – Crossrail is at major risk of its opening being delayed again and requiring even more public money, it emerged today. The cost of the crisis-hit line has already soared £2.8B to £17.6B. It is due to open between October 2020 and March 2021, the original December 2018 date having been abandoned a year ago. A series of high-level warnings by Crossrail’s independent watchdog, the engineering firm Jacobs, were due to be made public by TfL. It is understood that these will reveal that the project faces additional “cost pressures and scheduling pressures” that make opening it within the promised six-month window and expanded budget even more challenging. A source said: “This report is being published as part of the Mayor’s commitment to transparency. It’s expected to show that there are still considerable challenges to overcome”.

12.07.19 EVENING STANDARD – Signal failures caused delays and disruption totalling almost 11 weeks across the Underground network in 2018. There were more than 1,800 such incidents causing disruption of more than 110,000 minutes, on average of about an hour each. The District Line saw the most incidents with 438 – totalling 28,749 minutes, the equivalent of almost 20 days. The Waterloo & City Line had the fewest failures, with just 25. The longest outage was on the District Line at Plaistow in March, when a power supply issue disrupted service for more than six days. The highest number of failures was at Acton Town, with 80 incidents. Causes include power and air supply problems, while 30 were listed as “staff error”. The majority of the Jubilee Line signal failures were related to “platform edge doors”, which use more electronics.

12.07.19 EVENING STANDARD – London MP Theresa Villiers today called on the Government to prevent plans by Sadiq Khan to build hundreds of homes on Underground station car parks because they are key facilities for commuters. The MP said the plan to remove parking facilities at High Barnet, Cockfosters and Finchley Central and build blocks of flats “show the Mayor does not care about the needs of the suburbs”. She has appealed directly to the Prime Minister to intervene, asking her to “urge the Mayor to drop these plans which would make life harder for commuters”. The Prime Minister said the Government wants to build 300,000 homes a year from the mid-2020s but added “it is vital that the impact on the local community is properly assessed”.

18.07.19 HARROW TIMES – Plans to build hundreds of new homes on three Underground station car parks need to be “seriously thought through”, according to several councillors. Harrow Council’s major development panel expressed concerns about the loss of commuter parking spaces if the schemes are given the green light. TfL hopes to build more than 500 new affordable homes on Rayners Lane, Stanmore and Canons Park station car parks. Working alongside housing association Catalyst, it gave a presentation outlining the initial proposals for the programme. All three developments are set to be car free – to promote sustainable transport and improve air quality – and provide affordable housing in well located areas. But councillors are worried that certain aspects, particularly the loss of parking spaces, will have a negative effect on Harrow.

19.07.19 WATFORD OBSERVER – Police have released CCTV images after a fight broke out following the FA Cup Final between Watford and Manchester City. It happened at Wembley Park station on 18 May at around 21.27. A Watford fan had been passing through the station when a fight began. He was knocked to the floor and kicked. He suffered a fractured eye socket and hand

as a result. A second man, reported to have attempted to break up the fight, was also punched. A third man passing through with his children was also punched. The suspects boarded a northbound Metropolitan Line train after the fight ended.

20.07.19 THE TIMES – Crossrail managers continued to receive huge bonuses, even though the £17.6B railway project was not “delivered successfully”, according to a report by MPs on the cross party Public Accounts Committee. The former chief executive of the east-west line through London was paid almost £1.6M in salary on bonuses over two years.

21.07.19 SUNDAY TELEGRAPH – BT Police are hunting for two men after gas was released on an Underground train in central London yesterday. Passengers were treated for coughing and shortness of breath by paramedics at Oxford Circus station. There are no further concerns for their health but BTP said their symptoms “would suggest the gas is CS gas”. Officers hunting for the perpetrators have released CCTV images of two young white men they want to trace after the incident which was reported at 0913.

22.07.19 METRO – Following the successful replacements of the westbound platform lift this month, work will start today to replace the lift serving the eastbound platform at East Ham station. For step-free access to eastbound services from East Ham, passengers are advised to take a westbound train to West Ham and change there for an eastbound train. To exit step-free from an eastbound train, change at Upney; anyone needing step-free access should speak to a member of station staff before travelling so a boarding ramp can be put in position for when they arrive.

23.07.19 METRO – (see 21.07.19 above) A suspect has been arrested over a fight that led to CS gas being released on the Underground. Paramedics treated a number of people who inhaled the gas, also known as tear gas, after a fight broke out between a group on a train at Oxford Circus station on Saturday. The 24-year-old suspect was arrested on suspicion of affray and administering poison with intent to injure or annoy. He has been released while police carry out further enquiries.

24.07.19 METRO – As part of measures announced by Mayor Sadiq Khan to boost digital reception across the capital, TfL has been working to bring 4G mobile connectivity to below ground sections of the Underground. The trial section, which will cover the Jubilee Line platforms between Westminster and Canning Town, will enable passengers to check for the latest travel information, catch up on social media and read their emails or the latest news uninterrupted as part of their journey. It will build on the existing free Wi-Fi service that TfL offers in more than 260 network stations and TfL Rail services. The service will also cover ticket halls and corridors within stations along this section of the Jubilee Line, with the exception of London Bridge and Waterloo which, subject to final approvals, will be added in 2020. Following the launch of a formal procurement process last summer, TfL has shortlisted four bidders who will be invited to tender for the concession, the next stage of which will begin shortly. TfL has also begun discussions with mobile network operators to ensure they can access the infrastructure so customers can benefit when the technology goes live. The Mayor said: “I’m delighted that we will be introducing mobile connectivity to the Underground from next March. This is a really important step for the millions of people who use the Underground each year. Introducing 4G and, in the future, 5G will help Londoners and visitors keep in touch and get the latest travel information while on the go. London is the best place to live, visit and work – and projects like this will make it even better”. The system will also host the Home Office’s new Emergency Services Network, which will replace the system currently used by the police, fire and emergency response teams across Britain.

25.07.19 EVENING STANDARD – Rush-hour commuters demanded air conditioning across the entire Underground network as they battled “sauna-like” conditions. Passengers said the infrastructure need to be improved as temperatures on the Central Line smashed the 30°C legal limit for transporting livestock. One commuter said: “Given how much money they spend on trains you would have thought they could have got some air conditioning. It’s like a sweatbox on there”. The Standard recorded temperatures of 36.6°C on the Central Line during last night’s rush – with forecasters warning of even hotter weather to come. Air-conditioned trains run on the Circle, District, Hammersmith & City, and Metropolitan lines, which cover 40% of the network. TfL said there were also “enhanced tunnel ventilation systems” on both the Victoria and Jubilee lines. However, it admitted it may need to introduce speed restrictions on the Underground as a precaution to cope with today’s extreme heat. TfL advised customers to ensure they have water with them when they

travel in order to stay hydrated, offer a seat to those who may need it, and, if they feel ill, to contact a member of staff at the next station.

26.07.19 EVENING STANDARD – Plans for a ballot of Underground workers for industrial action over pay are going ahead, after talks failed to achieve an agreement. The RMT said a ninth round of talks resulted in a “derisory improvement” of 0.1% and accused LU of “playing for time”. RMT’s Mick Cash said: “RMT is angry and frustrated at what we can only describe as a shambolic approach to these crucial pay talks. We have no idea who is pulling the strings but if those directing operations think they can kick the can down the road on Underground workers’ pay then they should think again”. A TfL spokesman said: “Following discussions at ACAS, we have made an improved offer that guarantees an above-inflation pay rise for two years. We look forward to continuing to work with the unions to reach an agreement”.

26.07.19 METRO – If you have tried to send a time-sensitive E-Mail only to end up in a tunnel before being able to send, news of total 4G coverage on the Underground will be great news. It’s being trialled on the Jubilee Line, with connectivity available on the platform and in tunnels from March. TfL promises complete coverage by mid-2020.

29.07.19 EVENING STANDARD – Hundreds of trains (sic) on the Piccadilly Night Tube are being delayed from entering service because no driver is available. When a train is left without a driver it frequently takes two or more hours to find a replacement and get it back into passenger service. Staff claim the issue has serious effect on Night Tube services. This newspaper has seen LU documents covering the past three months, which detail the number of train delays with the stated cause “ONA” – operator not available. The documents, which list more than 200 trains delayed from entering service, cover only a sample of dates, and the overall number of delayed trains is believed to be far higher when every day and Night Tube shift is counted. The issue is caused when drivers fail to turn up for work because of illness – though unions claim there are not enough drivers to operate the services. The documents relate only to the Piccadilly Line but sources say other Night Tube lines, including the Central Line, are also affected. During the day, with trains running every two or three minutes, passengers will not notice much difference in service, but on the Night Tube, with fewer trains running, a missing service can result in much longer waiting times. A staff member claimed: “The Night Tube is what really worries us. Staff are confronted with irate, often drunk members of the public late at night waiting for a train with big gaps in the service”.

31.07.19 THE TIMES – The Berlin Transport Authority (BVG) is warning teenagers not to make ‘suicidal’ jumps from the roofs of moving U-Bahn trains into a canal below. The article is accompanied by three photographs, the area being used is on a viaduct between Gleisdreieck and Möckernbrücke on lines U1 and U3. It is believed to be the work of a group called Berlin Kidz who are a group of graffiti vandals with a long history of undertaking ‘risky’ exploits. These dangerous acts have not been without tragedy, with two people already killed, one hitting his head on a steel bridge girder and another killed as the train entered a tunnel while surfing. *(Editor’s note – the article attributes the actions as “S-Bahn surfing” with trains travelling “at speeds of up to 85mph”. There may indeed be ‘surfing’ on the Berlin S-Bahn but this report is relevant to the U-Bahn, whose trains on that section do not travel at 85mph!).*

31.07.19 THE TIMES – By columnist Matthew Parris – “From Tower Hill station comes a useful lesson in public confidence. Some trains start from there, others, a few yards across the platform, stop in passing. Passengers need to know which of the two waiting trains will leave first, and a “NEXT TRAIN” board indicates it. We have always been able to trust it. But a while ago it malfunctioned and trains we’d shunned left before trains we’d been advised to join. This seems to have been fixed but I notice that nobody trusts the indicator any longer. Passengers stand in one train with a leg out, ready to run across to the other. Confidence built slowly, has been shattered by just a few rogue indications. It will take a very long time for me to believe that board again. Tory ministers spraying out promises take note. Our political affections may fluctuate, but trust in administrative competence is different. Decades in the building, it can break in months”.

01.08.19 THE TIMES – *Extract from column by Hattie Garlick* – “Having picked up a poetry book and read Wordsworth sonnet in the bathroom when my phone died, the lines coloured the rest of my day, returning to me as I worked, making me smile and look up at the trees as I did the mind-numbingly familiar school run. I started leaving slim volumes in my handbag so that I could reach

for them instead of my phone while in the bus or in queues. On the Underground I felt a new-found gratitude for *Poems on the Underground*, the scheme that places posters of poetry before the tired eyes of commuters, like little oases between adverts selling holiday insurance and men's hair-loss treatments".

06.08.19 EVENING STANDARD – The leader of Southwark council has called on the Prime Minister to “keep your promise” over the proposed £3B Bakerloo Line extension. He asked Boris Johnson to remember the commitments he made to the extension during his time as Mayor of London and make it a “top priority”. Under the plans, the Bakerloo Line would run to Lewisham via two new stations on Old Kent Road and through New Cross Gate. While current Mayor Sadiq Khan and TfL remain committed to the project, campaigners warn that unless Treasury funding is secured the project is at risk. In December 2015, Mr Johnson called it a “vital” transport link for people in south London that would spur jobs, homes and regeneration. Southwark and Lewisham Councils have so far gained the support of almost 18,000 people with their “Back the Bakerloo” campaign. TfL will next year seek permission from the Government to launch the project. If granted, construction could start in 2023 and be completed by 2029.

12.08.19 EVENING STANDARD – A row broke out today as figures showed a big increase in overcrowding at Underground stations. City Hall figures revealed that passengers were stopped from accessing platforms due to overcrowding 559 times in 2018/19, up 48% from 378 the previous year. London Assembly members claimed Sadiq Khan's four-year partial fares freeze and alleged mismanagement of TfL's finances had starved the Underground of investment. Capacity upgrades of Camden Town and Holborn stations have been delayed indefinitely, but Victoria has been expanded and Bank is midway through a major upgrade. Highbury & Islington was the worst affected station, with 104 incidents last year, compared with 39 in 2017-18. Finsbury Park was second worst with 49 incidents. The Mayor's spokesperson said: “The Mayor and TfL are investing record amounts in modernising and increasing capacity”.

20.08.19 METRO – Baby changing rooms, pedestrian crossings and Underground stations have become “reservoirs” for antibiotic-resistant bacteria, say researchers. “Worrisome” levels of *staphylococci* which causes infections, were found in 600 public areas in the capital by a University of East London team.