



The Railway Forum

Press Release

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For immediate use

RAILWAY FORUM WELCOMES GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO THAMESLINK PROJECT BUT URGES DECISION ON FUNDING

The Railway Forum welcomes today's decision by the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to grant planning consents and legal powers to Network Rail for the £3.5 billion Thameslink Programme.

The Railway Forum has long supported the need for the Thameslink Programme as it will deliver much needed extra capacity on what is currently one of the most congested routes across central London. We therefore welcome today's announcement as confirmation that Britain's railways must develop to meet rapidly rising customer demand.

However the question of project funding remains. If a solution can be found quickly many of the project's benefits can be delivered in time for the 2012 Olympics, helping to make it an almost uniquely rail-served event. It is therefore vital that Government comes to a decision on funding as soon as possible to enable the railway industry to move forward on this important project.

Adrian Lyons, Director General of The Railway Forum said: 'We welcome today's announcement granting planning consents for the Thameslink Programme. However given the time required to deliver a project like Thameslink we would urge Government to develop a funding solution quickly. If we are serious about improving London's economic prospects, relieving congestion and supporting a successful Olympics we need to get started now.'

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Notes to Editors:

1. The Railway Forum is an industry-wide body sponsored by the majority of the train operating companies, Network Rail, all three major rolling stock leasing companies, the Passenger Transport Executives, London Underground, most of the infrastructure maintenance companies and many manufacturing and other businesses serving the UK rail industry. In all we have over 50 members. Our key role is to act as a think tank, information exchange and point of contact for those committed to and interested in the rail industry.
2. Today's Written Statement containing the decision to grant planning consents and legal powers can be found at:
http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_railways/documents/page/dft_railways_613242.hcsp.
3. The Thameslink Programme will deliver significant benefits to passengers including:

Increased capacity: more trains and more carriages. Up to 24 trains per hour through the core route (presently eight) during the peak period with the added benefit of delivering 12 carriage services rather than the present eight

Less overcrowding: easing passenger congestion across the Thameslink route and reducing congestion on the tube (particularly the Northern and Victoria lines) with much improved tube access at the new Farringdon, Blackfriars and London Bridge stations

More routes and stations: more routes, more journey possibilities and more stations. The new Thameslink route would serve 172 stations (presently 51) enabling passengers to travel from north to south without the inconvenience of changing trains, or from train to tube (e.g. passengers would be able to travel from Cambridge to Gatwick Airport without changing).

Simplifying track and modernising signals: reducing bottlenecks and logjams on a busy network that is 150 years old and not designed to cope with modern demands

Better stations: major investment at London Bridge, Blackfriars, Farringdon and platform extensions at 50 outlying stations to accommodate longer trains. Blackfriars would become the first London station to span the river Thames, Farringdon would become an interchange with Crossrail, while London Bridge would be completely rebuilt and modernised with capacity for an extra 60,000 people during the peak

Better Olympic journeys: connecting more people directly to the special 'Olympic Javelin' service from King's Cross St Pancras to Stratford

A direct interchange with Crossrail: The scheme offers major improvements on North to South rail services across London and the South East, complementing the proposed East to West London Crossrail service

For further details on the Thameslink Programme visit:
<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/asp/1326.aspx>.

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