

BEYOND THE CROSS

by Jonathan Roberts

A report of the LURS meeting at All Souls Club House on Tuesday 8 August 2017

This talk covered the 28-year history from funding for the Fleet Line stage one to Charing Cross to the final opening of the full Jubilee Line to Stratford. It was based on five articles, so far, co-authored with Mike Olivier and published at www.londonreconnections.com. It also included some conclusions and observations on tube planning and its context, with a peek into the future.

Baker Street became a problem once the Metropolitan Line was effectively four-tracked south of Finchley Road in 1939, and given a route to the West End by linking the Stanmore branch into the original Bakerloo Line. This was exacerbated from 1969 through cross-platform interchange with the Victoria Line at Oxford Circus. There was a strong case for a relief line, at least through the West End. At the time, trust in LT planning was high with Victoria Line demand exceeding estimates.

An unpublished 1965 joint BR/LT Railway Plan for London foresaw reduced inner-suburban demand and increased outer demand, with a reallocation of train paths. Plans for inner South London tube extensions were envisaged to cover some of the reduced inner London services – destinations included Brixton, Peckham and Lewisham, and beyond to Hayes or Bexleyheath. Joined with the need for a Bakerloo relief line, the result was the proposed Fleet Line.

At the time, the Labour Government had political troubles, and was concentrating on projects outside London, whilst the new Greater London Council (GLC) was focused on developing the road network. London Transport (LT) was building the Victoria Line and had financial deficits, but in 1968 obtained powers to construct Stage 1 of the Fleet Line to Charing Cross.

Funding for this was granted in 1971, together with a preceding reconstruction of LT debt and large fare increases as part of the GLC takeover of LT in 1970. However, support for further stages never materialised. Lower British Rail demand, and their plans for a major capacity upgrade for south-east approaches, reduced the need for relief there. The case for Stage 2 to Fenchurch Street alone was poor. The GLC continued Ringway priorities until 1973, whilst the 'transport-only' rail planning process came to an end – it would increasingly need to anticipate land uses.

The future of Docklands was uncertain at this time. Covering over 25 sq.km., it was larger than any previously regenerated area in the UK. Planning was undertaken as for smaller areas, with mainly low-density housing with industrial jobs or business parks. There were no high-density areas to justify a tube service, although the curving river offered scope for numerous crossings for an east-west route, which could help the case. The 1976 London Docklands Strategic Plan from the GLC put together the different boroughs' visions, which were individual bids not an area masterplan. Thamesmead was already under construction, so no adequate case was made for a tube extension.

In the early 1970s, LT continued to press for powers to construct the Fleet Line to Lewisham, and its commissioned 1973 "South-East London and the Fleet Line" land use proposals suggested plans for higher density development around a proposed route. Decisions were delayed until the 1973/74 London Rail Study, when LT was brought under tighter GLC control. A River Line to Thamesmead then became the favoured corridor, although competing for funds with Crossrail, Chelsea/Hackney, and North London Orbital proposals. Central Government continued to refuse funds, even for Stage 2 to the City due to its poor financial case, and with greater doubts about the merits of a tube to Docklands as costs rose. In the meantime, LT obtained an extension of its powers for Stage 2 and safeguarded properties and tunnel space along the route.

From the mid-1970s the UK was facing financial limits from the International Monetary Fund which restricted public spending. Cost cutting ideas to reduce the number of intermediate stations were evaluated. Internal LT working documents showed a possible 'Thames Line' name, and also lower cost options for earlier benefits to Docklands including busway or light rail from Fenchurch Street via Beckton.

By the late-1970s, LT were into detailed planning for a route to Thamesmead via Woolwich, with a depot at Beckton, with the aim of shortly securing powers. The GLC under Horace Cutler renamed the Fleet Line as the Jubilee Line in 1977, and started selling surplus properties to amass a £100m 'war chest' for Stage 2. There was also a £6m pre-tube investment in the area including the East London

Line upgrade, and a West Ham station on the North Woolwich line. A proposal was floated for this line to use a new tunnel link to Woolwich until the Jubilee Line arrived.

Whilst the cross-party view at the GLC was in favour of the new line, the united view at Westminster was opposed. Tube construction costs soared with inflation, which affected Stage 1 to Charing Cross, whilst a two-year delay to its eventual opening in 1979 did not help garner support. Powers to construct a line to Woolwich received Royal Assent in 1980, but they were never sought to Thamesmead. Compared to city 'metro'-type schemes elsewhere in the UK, the projected return in London was poor, and the cost per job created was high.

In 1979 the Tories controlled both levels of Government. The GLC worked on a stronger case and Cutler put this face-to-face to Thatcher on 3 December 1979. The PM had in mind using the GLC £100m 'war chest' to fund mortgages for home ownership, but the Environment Department recognised Docklands had access issues and would consider lower-cost solutions. Powers for Fleet Line Stage 2 were not renewed in December 1982.

The London Docklands Development Corporation eventually took control under Reg Ward, supported by Environment Secretary Michael Heseltine. After several studies into lower cost rapid transit options, £65m only (£77m outturn) was allocated for a light rail system. This became the early stages of DLR. The balance of the £100m was to be spent on roads in the area. At this time, the GLC faced abolition after vigorous anti-Government disputes, but not before introducing an integrated fare system which began to transform demand for public transport.

Land use planning was dismantled at GLC level, and LT was re-nationalised in 1984. Transport planning barely survived the initial Thatcher years, but the new London Regional Transport (LRT) retained its core Underground planning role. New dynamics applied in London as city living regrew and non-car demand grew, helped by the former GLC's fares. Project evaluation had improved over the 1970s and 1980s. Docklands remained an urgent area for replanning, both for route-level planning and developer demands (the LDDC was a rate-free area with light planning controls).

The DLR was now linked to a wider revival in East London, not just within Docklands, but with Stratford and West Ham also on the map. The DLR was the start of a Docklands distributor as rail travel demand was turning the corner with new fare zones, Travelcard and Capitalcard. There was active lobbying on route-level projects, e.g. the East London Line, and scope for radical ideas from developers and London boroughs, not just from ideas started by the former GLC.

Mainstream rail planning again commenced with the Underground Capacity Study in 1986-87 followed by the Central London Rail Study (CLRS) in 1988-89. Growing demand pointed to new lines: Crossrail 1, Chelsea/Hackney, and the Jubilee Line to Ilford – in that order. Other schemes at the time included Thameslink 2000, DLR extension to Lewisham, the East London Line, and Croydon Tramlink.

In parallel, restructuring of the financial industry was anticipated to result in large-scale employment growth, with demand for large open-area trading floors which were not available in the City. The Isle of Dogs offered unrestricted space within 10 minutes once the DLR opened. The property developer G Ware Travelstead bought into Canary Wharf in 1985. To reach Bank the 1987 DLR City Extension bill would fill the gap, but this so alarmed the City that it reduced its planning restrictions. The Canary Wharf backers were now worried, and Paul Reichmann took over with Olympia & York (O&Y), the world's largest development company.

O&Y had a much bigger vision, with a development for 50,000 employees rather than 12,000, and insisted on a direct rail link from the southern termini of London Bridge and Waterloo. They weren't content to wait in the queue of projects from the CLRS. They put £148m up-front to get the DLR link to Bank, etc., but still needed a tube link. The dead powers for the Jubilee/River line were of little use, and did not link with the main-line termini south of the Thames. Consideration was given to extensions from the Bakerloo or Jubilee lines.

Eventually O&Y decided to promote their own private sector tube scheme, the first for 60 years, to get powers and fund a £400m tube shuttle similar to the 'Drain' – the Waterloo and Greenwich Railway between Waterloo, London Bridge and the Isle of Dogs, and onwards to the Greenwich Peninsula including a depot there and a park and ride station at Westcombe Park (near the A2 spur).

The developers had a close relationship with No.10, but their tube scheme was in conflict with the CLRS. Paradoxically for a 'free-market' Government, Departments became worried by an uncontrolled scheme. Canary Wharf Group published the formal route plans and Book of Reference (defining

property ownerships etc.) in November 1988, a week before the formal Parliamentary Bill was due – but that never appeared. Instead a new East London Rail Study (ELRS) appeared in January 1989, designed to provide options for an eastern Jubilee Line extension.

The ELRS reported in summer 1989, along with a final CLRS mark 2 which, unsurprisingly, had revised priorities giving first place to the new Jubilee Line extension via Waterloo and the Isle of Dogs. LRT and the Department for Transport still favoured the original proposed construction order to support existing commercial centres, rather than a new area. However, the Cabinet felt that whilst the financial case was poor, if the private sector were willing to put up near £400m, over a longish period, then the public sector should give its support.

A Bakerloo extension was considered, but Elephant was far from London Bridge. At the time, the Jubilee Line 'beyond the Cross' ended under the Strand near Waterloo Bridge. How could it be routed to serve Waterloo station? A route curving via Temple and then back eastward, or a diversion short of Charing Cross to a new Embankment station and then south-east were dismissed in favour of diversion east of Green Park to Westminster.

An audience member suggested a route via Victoria rather than Westminster could have provided greater benefits, but our speaker said there had been no time to assess such an alternative within just a two-month period, and the main objective was to link as cheaply as possible with the proposed Canary Wharf scheme, on which much preparatory work had been done. A route via Westminster did not harm the case in the eyes of the Government!

A new Bill for the route to Stratford via Canary Wharf was pursued in 1990-92. The estimated cost of £1bn was to be part-funded by the developer's offer of the same £400m (40%), though over 25 years. Discounting to current costs, this was worth only £180m in real terms, with the projected cost rising to £1.8bn in 1992 (10%), while the final out-turn was nearer £3.5bn (5%). However, not all was paid over by the developers due to late completion penalties.

By the early 1990s, banking pressures put a stop to O&Y. Tenants had started moving into Canary Wharf from 1991, but O&Y missed their first £98m instalment due 29 March 1992. Political supporters Thatcher and Heseltine had by now moved on, and the Government did nothing without a start to the promised financial support. Eventually the O&Y Administrators found funds, and construction started in 1993.

The new service commenced in 1999. The line has proved itself a very successful tube, with the final routing proving correct. Demand now exceeds capacity at 30tph, particularly for the cross-river sector and the link between main line termini and Canary Wharf. Now, the Isle of Dogs is aiming for 250,000 jobs, a quarter of the historic Central London total.

Lessons from history show five main criteria to be met by any major project: a business case; merits and priorities over other projects; Government and stakeholder backing; funding; and affordability. The Fleet/Jubilee case study shows that you also need continuous political support at a national level, even with £100m held locally; departmental backing and funding; and a supportive planning context, not merely the project's transport merits. The Fleet Line, when redirected to Docklands as the River Line, offered convenient access, but was not allowed to offer added value to the development, which would in turn have repaid the high access costs through higher densities. Neither national political nor official visions found a rôle for this scheme.

Its second incarnation answered the questions then arising: distributor access from key main line termini and other interchanges into London's third office development. The case study demonstrates that if the promoting authorities cannot create the best possible case, then normal checks and balances will see off the scheme. A failure to mutually align the transport scheme with land use requirements (or wider benefits) is likely to result in failure.

Looking to future years, with current plans for 250,000 jobs, the DLR and Jubilee line will be insufficient: hence Crossrail 1. O&Y had a key role in lobbying for this Crossrail branch in 1999-2005, but further capacity will be needed with projected overcrowding on the Jubilee by 2031. So this takes us back to the beginning of the talk, with the hindsight of overcrowding risks which we have seen.

Foresight is needed now, with more jobs to come on the Isle of Dogs, and potential large housing growth in the Opportunity Area (up to 30-40,000 extra homes, so many more residents). The Jubilee is overloaded now and is expected to be again in the 2030s, while forecasts for the 2040s show the DLR also at risk. A critical element is the river crossings, with a strong case for relief capacity and maybe a new rail crossing.

A Bakerloo branch from Elephant to Canary and beyond, to *relieve* the Jubilee (an interesting possibility given the Jubilee's origins!), was considered in 2016, but now appears unlikely with a Lewisham extension planned. It would be challenging for a Bakerloo to be able to support the future passenger demands of two East/South East London branches – and indeed would risk a SE version of the original Baker Street problems ...

However, an upgraded DLR or 11-car Crossrail trains, or the National Infrastructure Commission's projected Stratford to Croydon line may appear. Crossrail does not meet the needs of many Jubilee Line flows, so specific relief for that line will still be needed. Perhaps in a generation the Crossrail 1 eastern branches will need to be separated, with a new relief line across the central area?

In the question and answer session that followed, it was pointed out that other London development areas such as Old Oak Common could learn lessons from the Canary Wharf experience. Up to 50% of interchange benefits are lost if a very lengthy walk is involved between connecting lines, as proposed there for the interchange links between new OOC Overground stations and the Crossrail 1 station.

John Hawkins