

FROM THE PAPERS

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01.02.18 EVENING STANDARD – *Letter by Hamish Parker* – "How exactly does the Mayor know that "uncertainty over Brexit" has resulted in a fall in the number of people travelling on the Underground, as TfL faces a £400M budget hole as thousand stopped using the Underground? Has there been a fall in employment since the vote? No, employment has continued to grow despite all the worst forecasts from Remainers. There has not been a decline in the number of tourists either, as thanks to a fall in the pound, visitors continue to come to London in record levels. The reality is that the Underground, mile for mile, is one of the most expensive mass transit systems in the world and continues to offer poor service and appalling value for money. No wonder people are always on the lookout for alternative methods of getting around and seem to be finding them – walking away, quite literally".

01.02.18 EVENING STANDARD – *Letter by Nick Biskinis* – "While it is good to hear TfL will increase evening peak services on the Northern Line, this will not address the critical levels of overcrowding in the morning. The crush on the Northern Line is driven by under-investment in other forms of transport such as buses, where TfL cancelled plans to extend the 155 bus route to Moorgate via Blackfriars, which would have provided a feasible alternative for hundreds of passengers. Bus services are being reduced in frequency while the potential of Overground stations as alternatives to the Underground are not being championed. Even if the Mayor does not have full control, that does not prevent his lobbying for improvements. A reticent transport policy, whether at local or national level, gets commuter needs precisely nowhere. There has to be more drive on rail and bus services by City Hall to take the pressure off the Underground".

02.02.18 WATFORD OBSERVER – The Mayor of Watford, Dorothy Thornhill, revealed an extra £40M could be needed for the Met. Line Extension (MLE) to still go ahead, after the London Mayor Sadiq Khan said that TfL was withdrawing from building the MLE – despite £73M being found to cover the shortfall to cushion "risks and overspends". At a Council meeting, the Mayor announced extra money would need to be found for five miles of track on an existing disused railway line – where preparation work has already been done. Mayor Thornhill said: "I am left feeling that despite the rhetoric coming from Mayor Khan's office we are paying the price for two political decisions. Firstly, the Conservative transport minister's decision to withdraw £700M of funding from TfL, and secondly the Mayor's pledge not to increase fares. But it does not make this decision right, morally or economically. Mayor Thornhill added that she believes it is "still possible" to take the next step and work out at what level of risk they will now will be arguing over. She explained: "It was fully funded, including a comfortable risk package and we are now haggling over extra risk that has not yet been quantified".

02.02.18 WATFORD OBSERVER – *Letter by John Price* – "Could I thank Mayor Sadiq Khan for causing a rethink on the MLE project? It may look great from a desk in Whitehall but it looks very different from my home in Rickmansworth Road. The consultation documents overstated the claimed benefits and underestimated the likely adverse impact. It was never better than a 50/50 option. Increased traffic round the boys' grammar school as pupils who currently use the Met. would switch to car. Increased traffic round Watford Junction as commuters from Cassiobury would take the car to the station rather than walk across the park to the Met. Little benefit in west Watford where residents tend to work locally and bus or walk into the centre of Watford. Little benefit to northern away supporters getting to Wembley. Wembley Central station on the Euston main line is a nearly as close to the stadium as Wembley Park on the Met. And you would not have thousands of people struggling through the underground passages to change trains at Watford Junction. And the original builders of the Met. never planned to take the line beyond the High Street; possibly they knew what they were doing".

03.02.18 THE TIMES – Three people have been arrested on suspicion of affray after a man was stabbed on an Underground platform. Officers were called just before 19.00 yesterday to reports of a fight on a Northern Line platform at London Bridge. One man received injuries "consistent with having been stabbed", BT Police said. The Police said the incident was not related to terrorism.

06.02.18 EVENING STANDARD – A TfL events manager abused Underground staff and tried to kick a police officer after she was stopped from boarding a train home for being too drunk. She had drunk up to two bottles of red wine before she was seen staggering through Westminster station, dropping her handbag and unable to stand upright. She hurled abuse at LU staff after being denied entry to the

Underground, and then at police who arrived to deal with her. She had to be wrestled to the ground and put in leg restraints when she tried to kick a police officer. She wandered into the station control room and when staff tried to send her home in a taxi, cab drivers refused to stop because she was so drunk. In court she pleaded guilty to a public order offence of using threatening, insulting, or abusive words or behaviour. As a result, she was fined £750 and given a 12-month conditional discharge. BT Police reported more than 1,800 incidents of violence or public disorder in which London rail staff were victims between September 2015 and August 2016. TfL announced an extra £3.4M for policing when the Night Tube was introduced two years ago, amid fears of a surge in drink fuelled violence.

06.02.18 EVENING STANDARD – TfL may open in-depth investigations into deaths on roads and public transport in a long-term bid to reduce fatalities. It comes after 177 people died on the TfL network in 2016/17. There was also a 22% annual rise in the number of people seriously injured on the roads. Senior TfL officials endorsed calls from Mayor Sadiq Khan’s transport advisers for probes into fatalities, similar to the one carried out following the Croydon tram crash. Rather than apportion blame, they would seek to learn lessons to prevent loss of life. Of the 177 deaths, 116 were road deaths. There was massive jump in deaths reported on the Underground and TfL rail networks, up from three to 55. TfL attributed this to an “increase in transparency” and a decision to include Underground suicides, of which there were at least 23. The figures include the seven Croydon tram deaths. 16 Underground fatalities are awaiting an inquest. At least five deaths were due to medical problems.

06.02.18 EVENING STANDARD – *Letter by Richard Collins* – “University College London’s timely research reveals high levels of noise inflicted on Underground passengers (and drivers), noise at levels that threaten damage to Londoners’ health. But this research did not focus on the noise pollution experienced by residents living over or near Underground lines. Unlike passengers – who experience relatively brief periods of noise – residents experience recurrent noise and vibrations throughout the day and night when trains run. This noise pollution exceeds World Health Organisation (WHO) standards which state “adverse health effects are observed at noise levels between 40 and 55 decibels” and further that when noise exceeds 55 decibels “adverse health effects occur frequently.” A sizeable proportion of the population is highly annoyed and sleep-disturbed. Noise pollution regularly exceeds the WHO thresholds, and is worsening and disturbing more and more homes across London. TfL representatives have told the London Assembly Environment Committee’s hearing that funding was not an obstacle to remedial work. LU and TfL must prioritise reducing noise pollution, which is damaging the health and wellbeing of Londoners – whether they are passengers and workers on the Underground or sleep-deprived residents”.

09.02.18 WATFORD OBSERVER – Plans will be tabled for the MLE to go ahead despite last month’s shock rejection by the Mayor of London. An emergency cross-party motion has been tabled for Hertfordshire County Council’s budget council to show there is still political support for the project. The Conservatives and LibDems are in agreement, but Labour’s stance is not currently known. One councillor said that he believes that if TfL does not want to deliver it, perhaps it should be opened to the market to do so. Also that it seems totally crazy with all the money being in place and TfL now planning to fund step-free access to Underground stations such as Rickmansworth, and probably Croyley, that it would not back a scheme that would reduce congestion and provide long term revenue for them.

09.02.18 WATFORD OBSERVER – *Editorial comment* – The recent news that TfL was scrapping the MLE despite the shortfall funding being raised, quite rightly incensed many politicians who worked hard for many years to raise the huge amount of money needed. However, it seems the parties are pointing the accusatory finger at each other in a bid to justify why the scheme is not going ahead. Rather than trying to single out who is to blame for the decisions, why not join forces to figure out an alternative.

09.02.18 EVENING STANDARD – Rude commuters have been blasted for demanding a blind former doctor move his guide dog, so they could get past him in an Underground station. The doctor was standing on the right side of the escalator with his dog next to him when he was accused of blocking the way. The scene was captured on a camera which the doctor fitted to the guide dog’s collar after becoming fed up with how he was treated by fellow passengers. The man, who the doctor says was trying to “barge” his way through the crowds at London Bridge, can be heard saying: “Can you all move please? I want to get past”. The doctor politely responded: “I can’t do that, she’s guide dog.” Before the traveller snapped back: “I know that!” The TfL worker assisting the doctor said: “How do you expect him to move? He needs to hold onto the handrail”. A second commuter snapped: “Just let go of the handrail so I can walk past”. Towards the end of the footage, other commuters can be heard calling angry passengers “inconsiderate”. Later the doctor posted a clip on Twitter, and social media users

condemned the “disgusting” commuters. One wrote: “To the rude commuter; mate, you are a horrible person of the highest order. Guide dogs rule”.

13.02.18 METRO – Look out for a new set of *Poems on the Underground*, celebrating links between past and present, love, longing and the rich experiences of life. The collection features poets from a range of countries and cultural backgrounds, including two past winners of The Poetry Society’s Foyle Young Poets of the Year Awards. The Head of *Art on the Underground* said: “*Poems on the Underground* is loved by millions who enjoy being challenged, surprised and encouraged to contemplate by coming across a poem on their journey. The selection resonates with London as an international city, with voices from around the world coming together to explore the human experience”. The initiative, founded in 1986, aims to bring poetry to a mass audience and helps make journeys more simulating by showcasing diverse poetry in Underground carriages across London.

13.02.18 EVENING STANDARD – Some of the capital’s less familiar faces will be appearing on the Underground this week. Five stations will host a series of 33 photographs including images of a keeper at the London Zoo, which will be at Barbican, and Pearly King John Walters, which will be at Canary Wharf. Also on display there are Underground customer service assistant Tracey Hayward, and George Gladwell, who has had a stall at Columbia Road flower market since 1949. A picture of the artists Bob and Roberta Smith will be put up at Walthamstow Central, showing them posing at the nearby William Morris Gallery. The pictures, which will also be at Aldgate East and St. Paul’s stations, are part of a campaign run by *Historic England* with TfL to celebrate the city’s heritage.

13.02.18 EVENING STANDARD – *Letter by Jules Stewart* – “Just as I was starting to come to terms with “see it, say it, sorted” being announced at train stations and “please hold on while the bus is moving” on London’s buses, I find myself at Baker Street, where I am treated to the voice of a little girl squeaking “please stand back and mind the gap.” Thinking it can’t get any more annoying, a male voice then booms “please stand back, we want you to get on the train and not on the track.” Why are passengers being treated like 11-year-olds? Can we persuade the Mayor to bring in a one-week announcement-free-week across London?”.

16.02.18 WATFORD OBSERVER – The MP for Watford, Richard Harrington, has slammed claims that the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, wanted the MLE project to go ahead. The Mayor pulled the plug on the scheme last month despite additional government funding of £74M. This paper has seen letters from the Mayor to Transport Secretary Chris Grayling dated 21 December 2017, which mentioned he was “keen to see this project delivered”. One letter read: “I would be willing to proceed with the delivery of this project and for TfL to take on the cost risk under the following conditions”. The Chairman of Watford Labour Party said: “The letters show that Sadiq Khan was negotiating in good faith and we urge Chris Grayling to reopen negotiations to bring this scheme to fruition. Having already spent £130M of taxpayers’ money, including £10M from Watford, it is vital that everyone gets round the table to negotiate an agreement that allows the MLE to go ahead”. Chris Grayling and Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said: “Our position remains the same, and we therefore cannot accept your conditions which would push a significant proportion of the cost overruns risk onto government. If you do not agree for TfL to bear the cost of all future cost overruns, this scheme will not be able to proceed”.

16.02.18 WATFORD OBSERVER – *Editorial comment* – “With constant talk of improvement works to the town centre and the “will it/won’t it” nature of the MLE, it is only right that the Watford Mayoral election campaign in Watford will involve transport. Now, Councillor Peter Taylor has upped the ante by unveiling grand plans for an app that will streamline this issue. Noting the potential increase of visitors to Watford – as well as the ever-changing face of public transport – he wants residents to benefit from the latest technology. The app is a wonderful idea – pretty much everyone now carries a smart phone and these things are often quicker, and more user friendly, when it comes to finding out information. These apps often show how late trains and buses are running, giving us something else to check while we wait. We wonder if the app could predict how long it may take before the MLE finally arrives”.

21.02.18 METRO – A woman aged 78 is recovering in hospital after being dragged along Notting Hill Gate station platform and under a train when her bag got trapped in the doors, on 31 January. Fellow passengers tried to help her and activated the emergency alarms but six of the eight coaches [sic] were already inside the tunnel by the time the driver stopped. The woman, who suffered serious injuries, was trapped between the underside of the train and the tunnel wall. She was eventually freed by members of the Underground’s Emergency Response Unit and taken to hospital. The Rail Accident Investigation Branch has launched an investigation and is seeking witnesses to the incident. The woman was on the

westbound Central Line platform when her bag got trapped. She was unable to free it or let it go before the train departed, despite being helped by other passengers.

21.02.18 METRO – A transgender beautician who shoved an off-duty policeman on to the Underground tracks has been spared jail. The beautician pushed the constable off the platform after he intervened during a row she was having with a friend at Hanger Lane station. After the policeman asked her to calm down, the beautician, who had drunk four bottles of Prosecco, told him to “mind his own business, as she wasn’t talking to him”. Unaware that she had undergone surgery, the officer gave her “a defensive push” in the chest to maintain a safe distance. The beautician shoved back with “excessive” force on to the tracks and he missed hitting his head by inches. He climbed back on to the platform and arrested the beautician, who later in court pleaded guilty to intent to endanger a person on the railway. The sentence given was for six months, suspended for two years and a rehabilitation order for up to 20 days. The court heard that the beautician has 39 convictions, mainly for theft and violence, and also has a history of mental health problems and drug-related difficulties.

22.02.18 EVENING STANDARD – *By columnist Rohan Silva* – A number of intellectuals believe the pace of technological change and innovation is slowing down – and argue that this is a bad thing for humanity. One example to back up this argument is the fact that 12 people set foot on the moon between 1969 and 1972 but no-one has been back since. What’s fascinating is how many of examples involve travel. Passenger aeroplanes have actually got slower since Concorde was retired in 2003. Trains were often faster in the Victorian era than they are today. You can find a similar picture here in London. Average traffic speeds have fallen steadily over the past decade, to just 8mph. Back in the 19th century London was the first in the world to have an underground railway, which was a bold technological leap forward that made it easier and cheaper to navigate the metropolis. A couple of decades later there was another global first, with the launch of the first subterranean electric trains. It’s not unreasonable to say that since then the pace of innovation has slowed. That doesn’t mean TfL isn’t doing a great job. The *Night Tube* and improvements to the Overground network have made a difference to life in the city, and Crossrail will no doubt do the same. But with demographic and economic change happening all around us, it’s clear that our transport system is going to have to evolve fast to keep up. New work patterns and online shopping mean that Londoners are travelling in different ways – leading to major shifts in the way public transport is being used. As the most recent data shows, even though the capital’s population is growing, there’s been a drop in passenger numbers – with 20M fewer journeys made over the past year. This has led to a big fall in fare revenue and, the LSE reported: “TfL’s finances are now in a dire condition”.