

FROM THE PAPERS

Items for the section 'From the Papers' (except for 'The Times' and London's 'Evening Standard') should be sent to Richard Thorogood at 81 Columbia Road, London, E2 7RG and not to the Editor of this journal.

November 2007 MODERN RAILWAYS – LU's Bakerloo Line serves two distinct roles: on the central London section between Baker Street and Waterloo (the two stations whose ellipsis by Edwardian sketch writers gave the line its name), the Bakerloo acts as an urban people-carrier, shuttling passengers around the metropolis, further out to the northwest, the line has the air of a commuter railway, taking people to work in the morning and back home again in the evening. In central London the Bakerloo manages some of the busiest stations on the network, including Oxford Circus (the fourth busiest, with 53.1 million passenger journeys pa) and Piccadilly Circus (the tenth busiest, 33.7 million passenger journeys pa). With the launch of London Overground on 11 November, the Bakerloo has taken over operating management of the nine stations from Queen's Park to Harrow & Wealdstone (excepting Willesden Junction). Being the stations facility operator is a new concept for LU.

RAILNEWS – Actual work has started on the £5.5 billion Thameslink upgrade, nearly 20 years after the scheme was first proposed. The go-ahead came when rail minister Tom Harris visited Luton Airport Parkway station and symbolically dug into the ground where platforms are to be extended to take 12-car trains.

RAILSTAFF – (1) Bombardier transportation has signed a new contract to supply rail signalling equipment for the Delhi Metro. The contract, valued at 30 million Euros, includes train control and signalling systems for two new sections of lines, totalling 23 miles. The system will use Bombardier Cityflo 350, an automatic train operating feature that automatically takes the train from station to station, with the driver supervising passengers, opening and closing doors and giving the all clear to depart.

(2) Deutsche Bahn has been flooded with applications to join its new driver training scheme. 5,000 would-be drivers applied for 1,000 vacancies. Selection is now under way. Applicants have been attracted by job security, free travel and pensions. Plans to privatise the network look like being put back until after elections in 2009.

01.11.07 THE TIMES – (1) Network Rail is looking for at least 1,000 new engineers to help deliver a £10 billion programme of improvements to Britain's railways. The rail group, which yesterday published its business plan for the next five years, has struck agreements with several universities to take many of their engineering graduates in 2009 and 2010 when demand will hit a peak.

(2) The accused mastermind of Europe's worst Islamist terrorist attack was cleared of all charges along with six others yesterday. Twenty-one others were convicted of playing a role in the 2004 Madrid train bombings, though many of them on much lesser charges than the prosecution had sought. Family members of the 191 people killed and 1,800 injured expressed astonishment and anger, branding the sentences as lenient and feeble.

02.11.07 BUILDING MAGAZINE – Under the headline "Can Ken Untangle the Tube?" and a full-colour very tangled diagram just recognisable as the LU network, Katie Puckett and Stuart MacDonald report on the task awaiting the Mayor and his team as they are poised to take over the demoralised Metronet consortium. Ken Livingstone has never made any secret of his contempt for the PPP model chosen to

maintain and upgrade London Underground. He described the two private-sector consortia that took on the contracts as “the worst scum of modern capitalism” and denounced as “obscene” profits they would make. The contracts were supposed to be worth £50 million a year, but for the companies involved in Metronet it could hardly be described as a cash bonanza. Earlier this year Balfour Beatty wrote off £103 million and Atkins £121 million. In June Metronet called in an independent arbiter to help it recover £2 billion of cost overruns, but to no good. Denied £551m of emergency funding, it went into administration in July 2007. Since then administrator Ernst & Young has struggled to create any private-sector interest in the group. Hardly surprising given the track record, the lack of information on the work yet to be done and a militant, unionised work force. With the ultimate client, Transport for London, now wading in, it looks as if Metronet will come back under the Mayor’s control, exactly as he wanted all along.

06.11.07 EVENING STANDARD – (1) Today’s Queen’s Speech comprised a 28-strong list of bills including a Crossrail Bill that will outline the details for London’s new east-west rail link.

(2) Tim O’Toole, LU managing director, confirmed today that Transport for London was the “only bidder” to take over Metronet. “We are now working with the Administrator to transfer the Metronet companies to TfL’s control in early 2008”.

METRO – A two-month crackdown on assaults on National Rail and Underground staff was launched yesterday by the British Transport Police. Seventy-three per cent of assaults on staff recorded by BTP in 2006/07 were in London and the campaign, with support from Transport for London, is targeting hotspots around the capital.

07.11.07 THE TIMES – Having opened one venerable British institution yesterday morning, the Queen reopened another last night. After years of parsimony and dithering, the nation that invented railways has caught up with the fact that trains are enjoying a 21st-century renaissance. The Queen’s official opening last night of the 68-mile high-speed link from central London to the Channel Tunnel marked not only the completion of Britain’s largest construction project but also a determined effort to reunite the train with the concept of romance. In a showy ceremony involving an orchestra, singers and giant screens, William Barlow’s 1868 iron-and-glass train shed was transformed into a theatre with 1,000 invited guests. Guillaume Pépy, head of SNCF, has described the majestically rejuvenated St. Pancras, a cathedral of Victorian engineering, as possibly the best station in the world.

08.11.07 CAMDEN NEW JOURNAL – Staff at Kentish Town station are reportedly so fed up with antisocial behaviour at the station that they are refusing to work on Saturdays. Underground staff have been called to a meeting with BT Police to discuss such behaviour at the station, which is the transport hub for a growing nightclub scene around Kentish Town. Saturday night’s School Disco at the Forum is followed by the so-called Church at the Highgate Road venue, not a religious event but a daytime party for young people.

EVENING STANDARD – (1) Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly has come under pressure to hold a public inquiry into the collapse of Metronet amid allegations of corruption. An MP on the Commons transport committee accused Metronet of funnelling cash into a building contractor which they owned. Labour MP Graham Stringer suggested the move shielded shareholders – Balfour Beatty, Atkins, Thames Water and EDF – from greater losses when the failed group went into administration. It would also have given them another income stream from the

stations renovation project. A fifth shareholder, Bombardier, had no stake in the contractor Trans4M.

(2) At 02.00 next Sunday, contracts will be signed by lawyers that mean that Transport for London will take charge of Silverlink Metro services from National Express. Using the brand name "Overground" the Mayor will control the North London Railway, which includes the Richmond to Stratford, Euston to Watford Junction (DC local line), the West London line from Willesden Junction to Clapham Junction and the Barking to Gospel Oak lines.

(3) Peter Ford, former chairman of London Transport, writes that without wanting to detract from the excellent refurbishment of St. Pancras, the opening of the Eurostar terminal and the high-speed line to Folkestone ranks as one of the biggest wastes of public money in years. Few will remember why this terminal has been built at St. Pancras when there was a perfectly good one at Waterloo, which itself cost many millions. Originally it was thought people would want to travel direct to Paris and Brussels from cities such as Manchester and Leeds, but when the Tunnel opened it became clear that few wished to do so – the journey was too long compared to air travel. The fleet of trains that had been built, at great cost, specifically for these journeys, was scrapped. Mr. Ford concludes that the financial benefit is about 1.5 per cent on investment, but the prospective return on Crossrail is 20-30 times higher.

METRO – Jacky Emberton, a duty manager in the London Bus operations centre, used to watch the Remembrance Sunday parade as a child. This year, she will lead the London Transport Old Comrades as they march past the Cenotaph, the first woman to do so.

09.11.07 THE TIMES – **(1)** Transport for London fixed conditions on the sale of Metronet that could not be met by the private sector to ensure that the only option for the troubled group was to return it to the public sector. TfL removed a government commitment to underwrite 95 per cent of Metronet's borrowings. When it became clear that the letter of comfort had been withdrawn, the prospects of a sale evaporated. TfL now looks certain to take over Metronet Rail early in the new year as it is the only formal offer so far.

(2) Sir Ian Blair was criticised yesterday for blocking an independent inquiry into the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes, but the embattled Metropolitan Police Commissioner insisted again that he would not resign. A report from the Independent Police Complaints Commission said Sir Ian had prevented it from beginning its investigation for three days, which has given officers time to alter a surveillance log and allowed conspiracy theories to build up. Nick Hardwick, chairman of the IPCC, pointedly refused to offer his support to Sir Ian, who has faced calls for his resignation since the Met was fined £175,000 over the Stockwell shooting at a trial at the Old Bailey last week.

10.11.07 THE TIMES – The fifth member of the failed 21 July suicide bombers, who lost his nerve at the last minute and dumped his explosives in Little Wormwood Scrubs, is facing life in jail after pleading at the Old Bailey to taking part in the plot.

12.11.07 EVENING NEWS – **(1)** London Overground was launched today, taking over routes previously operated by Silverlink Metro: The North London line, the West London line, Gospel Oak to Barking and Euston to Watford Junction (DC lines). It is promising 44 trains by the end of 2008.

(2) Within the London area season ticket fares will be based on the fare zone system from 2010. About 50,000 people, those travelling from an inner edge of a zone, will

be worse off. Zonal pricing for single and day return fares was introduced in 2007. Although some passengers saw their fares fall, others had to pay up to 35 per cent more. A memo sent to the Transport Secretary from the working group responsible for introducing zonal prices admits some passengers will see a “significant” increase in fares and warns that the changes will need “careful media handling”.

13.11.07 THE TIMES – Bombay commuters yesterday enjoyed the first upgrade in rolling stock since 1925. The 500 million rupee (£2.4 million) silver bullet, one of 157 new trains to be commissioned over the next three years, has doors (!), ventilation, pneumatic suspension, handrails and cushioned seats. This is the first fleet upgrade since the line was electrified and the trains built by Britons in India using technology then employed by London Underground.

14.11.07 EVENING STANDARD – (1) Last night the two final Eurostar trains arrived at Waterloo, the 19.28 from Brussels and the 19.58 from Paris – immediately workmen started putting up hoardings. The last passenger off the final train brought the total to 81,891,738 having travelled since Eurostar began operations exactly 13 years ago. A huge banner proclaimed “Goodbye Waterloo, Hallo St. Pancras”. Of Eurostar’s 1,500 staff, around 350 are on duty at any one time. They clocked off last night and reported to their new offices today. At the same time drivers moved their £24 million-a-time, quarter-mile-long Eurostars, from Waterloo and the North Pole depot to St. Pancras and the new Temple Mills depot at Stratford. Other trains in the 27-strong fleet have been parked in depots near to Paris Gare du Nord and Brussels-Midi/Zuid. Station staff, drivers, computer personnel, security, immigration, customs, BT Police and a contingent of their French colleagues based here, all moved. The first 186mph passenger service pulled out of St. Pancras International at 11.06 this morning.

(2) Business chiefs today wrote to Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly to express concern about the sketchy finance details and proposed management details for the Crossrail link. They asked Ms Kelly to set out in detail how the scheme will be paid for, including the exact contributions from Government, private companies and the taxpayer. The letter is signed by representatives of the three most prominent business groups in London – CBI chairman Andrew Eddy; Stephen Greene, president of the London Chamber of Commerce & Industry; and Harvey McGrath of London First.

(3) Fraudsters are targeting Oyster cards and ticket machines in London Underground stations after a police crackdown on similar attacks at cashpoints. Gangs of thieves have fitted more than 50 skimming devices which copy the user's card details and pin number as they buy tickets or top up their Oyster cards. So far, 58 machines across the network have been targeted and 27 skimming devices have been discovered, with the District and Piccadilly lines particularly affected. BT Police have sent a series of E-Mails to LU staff warning them to be alert to any suspicious behaviour. Two people have been arrested after using a device at a Piccadilly Line station.

(4) An advertising campaign on the Underground is said to be confusing passengers. Posters have appeared on the Northern Line platform at King’s Cross station showing people waiting to be interviewed for a job, above the slogan: “The best platform for your City career”. But because the poster, for Hays recruitment agency, includes a roundel and signs saying “Moorgate”, some passengers have been left thinking they are at the wrong station.

THE TIMES – The five ex-Eurostar platforms at Waterloo station are to lie empty for at least a year. Despite knowing more than three years ago that all Eurostar services would switch to St. Pancras, the Department for Transport has failed to produce plans for using the platforms, the longest in Britain, to relieve congestion. South West Trains, which operates Britain's most overcrowded services, wants to use the platforms for its trains. Tom Harris, the Rail Minister, said yesterday that only one of the platforms was likely to be brought back into use by December 2008 for some domestic services.

15.11.07 EVENING STANDARD – The Advertising Standards Authority has criticised Mayor Livingstone for misleading passengers over bus fares. A TfL poster (*publication date not cited*) claimed that if travellers used their oyster card, single fares were the same as in 2000, which was 70p. However, the cost was 10p more as peak time single bus journeys with Oyster went up to 80p in 2005. The advertising watchdog ruled the poster had misled the public by breaching rules on substantiation and truthfulness.

16.11.07 EVENING STANDARD – Eurostar has launched a provocative advertising campaign to lure Belgians to London. The posters poke fun at the English way of life, featuring former prime ministers, football hooligans and the fondness for tea drunk from china mugs. One of the adverts shows a half-naked skinhead with the England flag painted on his back and urinating into a china tea cup. Another uses look-alikes of Tony Blair, John Major and Margaret Thatcher clutching Union flag balloons and holding knitting needles. The slogan reads: "Attention, Londres est au coin de la rue". A Eurostar spokeswoman said the adverts were intended to poke gentle fun at the English, promoting them as a nation with a sense of humour.

THE TIMES – Rail industry leaders have accused the Government of wasting hundreds of million of pounds and undermining the environmental benefits of rail travel by choosing diesel instead of electric trains. Iain Couche, chief executive of Network Rail, has written to the Department for Transport, describing its failure to electrify more lines as very short-sighted. Britain is one of the only countries in the world that continues to use diesel to power high speed trains. Only 39 per cent of the network is electrified, one of the lowest proportions of any leading European country.

19.11.07 EVENING STANDARD – Dick Murray, *ES* Transport Editor, reports that plans for the much-heralded £150 million cooling system for the Underground are to be scrapped in the aftermath of the collapse of the maintenance group Metronet. There will also be cutbacks on plans to improve accessibility for disabled passengers. The cutbacks will also mean plans to brighten and refurbish stations will not now take place for the foreseeable future. Tim O'Toole, LU managing director, said: "It is not possible to have a collapse on the scale of Metronet without it having major implications".

METRO – This week Underground passengers can collect examples of work from some of the UK's best contemporary artists for free. The artworks will be given out at King's Cross, Victoria, Waterloo, Paddington and Liverpool Street stations to celebrate a new era of "Art on the Underground". Five artists have been commissioned to create works to mark the launch of the art programme: Mark Titchner, James Ireland, Kleger, Layla Curtis and Katy Dove.

THE TIMES – Last Thursday a group of engineers, architects and historians met to dine beside the Thames to mark the 180th anniversary of the "Underwater Banquet",

a feast beneath the river that rescued the Brunels' great tunnel project from bankruptcy. Members of the latterday Tunnel Club will look forward rather than back as the East London line will close for restoration and extension works before the 2012 Olympics. The museum dedicated to this feat of Victorian engineering plans to make its own extension. The Brunel Museum is based in the Engine House in Rotherhithe, its main exhibit the tunnel itself. The plan now is for the installation of a shelf at the bottom of the 50ft-deep shaft beside the engine house. From this, through a glass panel only feet above the line, visitors will get a close-up view of the construction and its modern use.

20.11.07 THE TIMES – Half of Britain's rail services would be brought back within public control under a plan to strip train companies of the right to set fares, timetables and quality standards across London and the Home Counties. Ken Livingstone is preparing to submit a bid to take over all commuter trains that terminate in the capital, including those that start their journeys well beyond Greater London. The Mayor wants to introduce a unified ticketing system for the entire London commuter network. Frequencies would be increased to give most stations a train every 15 minutes.

21.11.07 THE TIMES – Tom Harris, the Rail Minister, told MPs yesterday that London & Continental Railways, the company behind the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, would be restructured into three businesses and sold to the highest bidder in 2009. The decision comes less than a week after St. Pancras International, owned by LCR, and the high-speed rail link from London to the tunnel were opened. Sale proceeds will go to the Treasury, which underwrote the private sector debt for the high-speed rail project. The biggest element of the auction will be LCR's infrastructure comprising the track and stations including St. Pancras. LCR's land interests, which include the site of the athletes' village for the 2012 Olympics and a big retail park at Stratford, will form the second unit to be sold. The third asset is LCR's stake in Eurostar. Altogether the auction could fetch more than £6 billion.

22.11.07 THE TIMES – Saboteurs raised the stakes in the stand-off over President Sarkozy's reforms yesterday, staging a series of attacks on France's high-speed rail network that further disrupted services already crippled by a week-long transport strike. Vandalism to signal systems delayed TGV express trains for up to three hours, adding to the disruption from the strike on SNCF railways and RATP Paris transport authority. Eurostar services were not affected. M. Sarkozy called for the culprits to be punished with the utmost severity. All the unions are ready to resume their strikes if a planned month of negotiations does not win enough concessions. The Government has suggested salary rises and top-up pension schemes to soften the end of early retirement.

23.11.07 THE TIMES – The London Transport Museum is open again after a two-year, £22 million facelift. Highlights of the renovation include interactive displays and sophisticated exhibits that relate the story of London's and transport system over 200 years. Future transport development and the story of how transport has shaped five other world cities – Delhi, New York, Paris, Shanghai and Tokyo – are also on show, as well as new galleries featuring original artworks and advertising posters.

24.11.07 THE TIMES – (1) Network Rail has paid out hundreds of thousands of pounds in bonuses that were withheld in the wake of the fatal Cumbria rail crash. Yesterday it emerged it has now paid a total of £286,074 to senior executives and £100,000 to frontline staff and their managers. The remuneration committee took

the decision after an internal investigation into why a Virgin train crashed at 95mph. A BT Police investigation is continuing.

(2) The SNCF and Métro services are expected to return to normal in France this weekend after a nine-day strike by unions about pension reform created transport chaos.

26.11.07 EVENING STANDARD – (1) Transport for London is to become the 100 per cent owner of the company set up to deliver the Crossrail project. The deal is set out in heads of terms published by Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly today, with new details of the £16 billion funding package and management agreements. In a move aimed at reassuring City chiefs, four senior businessmen will be appointed as independent non-executive directors of the delivery company, Cross London Rail Links.

(2) Underground passengers will soon be able to pay for journeys using their mobile phones. The scheme will allow people to swipe a phone with a in-built Oyster card across a ticket-reading machine. Transport for London, Nokia and the O2 network are in talks over the idea, which will be extended to other modes.

(3) Emma Clarke, the woman whose voice has been heard across the Underground network for eight years, urging passengers to “mind the gap” has been axed after releasing a number of spoof announcements on her website. Singled out for her mockery were American tourists, Sudoku solvers and peeping Toms. “We’d like to remind our American tourist friends that you’re almost certainly talking too loudly” was one of her more innocuous messages. A Transport for London spokesman said that London Underground is sorry to announce that further contracts for Miss Clarke are experiencing severe delays.

28.11.07 THE TIMES – Rail passengers will be stung by ticket price rises in the new year that are higher than the rate of inflation. The fare increases are expected to average about 4.8 per cent, the level agreed for regulated fares such as season tickets and standard returns. But other fares, including cheap-day returns, will increase by much more than this at the operator’s discretion. Commuters in the South East of England, particularly Kent, will be among those hardest hit.

29.11.07 THE TIMES – Flexible rail travel is becoming the preserve of the rich and everyone else must book well in advance to get an affordable ticket, the official passenger watchdog said yesterday in response to fare increases of double the rate of inflation. Anthony Smith, the chief executive of Passenger Focus, said that the increases were largely the result of government policy, which was to make passengers pay more of the total cost of running the railways. This year the £10 billion cost is evenly split between taxpayers and farepayers. In July the Government said it wanted passengers to be paying 75 per cent of the total cost by 2014.

30.11.07 EVENING STANDARD – The number of short-haul flights taken by London’s public servants was attacked today by environmental campaigners. Figures obtained by the Green Party group on the London Assembly reveal that Metropolitan Police officers make more than 2,100 return flights a year to other British cities. Transport for London staff continue to use planes rather than trains in spite of Ken Livingstone’s pledge to cut carbon emissions as part of his drive to address climate change.

02.12.07 SUNDAY TIMES – An ambitious plan to build a high-speed rail line north of London via Heathrow, relieving the pressure for a third runway at the airport, is

being drawn up by Arup, the influential engineering firm. The plan would see the Channel Tunnel line extended west, parallel with the Great Western line. After Heathrow trains would turn north along the alignment of the Chiltern line, running to Birmingham and Scotland. Mark Bostock, a director at Arup and one of the key individuals in the battle over the routing of the Channel Tunnel link, said "What this plan brings is connectivity, bringing the north and the Midlands onto the international high-speed network, and so bringing Heathrow within two-and-a-half hours of central Paris".

03.12.07 EVENING STANDARD – (1) Ken Livingstone has revealed plans to look at changing the names of at least four Underground stations. The Mayor has confirmed in a written answer that Shepherd's Bush station on the Hammersmith & City Line would be changed to Shepherd's Bush Market in 2008. He has also said that the two Edgware Road stations could be changed to end the confusion between them. There is local pressure to change the Circle, District and H&C stop to Chapel Street. London Assembly member, Murad Qureshi has said the Bakerloo Line stop should be called Church Street Market. There have also been calls for Aldgate East station to be renamed Brick Lane in a bid to promote tourism and business. Campaigners have suggested that Highgate station be renamed Dick Whittington, following local usage. Residents want Arsenal station to be changed back to its original name, Gillespie Road, now that the football club has moved to the Emirates stadium.

(2) Proposals for a high-speed railway linking Heathrow and Paris will be officially aired today. The plan is to extend the Eurostar line which terminates at St. Pancras to a new Heathrow station via Paddington. It would then loop back towards Marylebone and run parallel to the existing Chiltern line towards Birmingham and on to Scotland. The new link will be proposed by Arup at a parliamentary reception to launch The Right Line, a history of the high-speed rail link.

THE TIMES – Police are investigating after a passenger running to catch a heritage steam train at Arlesford, on the Watercress line, slipped and fell from the platform and subsequently died.

04.12.07 EVENING STANDARD – Transport for London spends almost £2.5 million a year running its press office. The cost has almost trebled since the Mayor was re-elected three and a half years ago.

METRO – Artist Stephen Willats has been commissioned by Art on the underground to create a new film, *Assumptions and Presumptions*, as part of its Thin Cities project to celebrate 100 years of the Piccadilly Line. The film is showing on screens within disused station kiosks at Rayners Lane and Sudbury Town until the end of January. It explores the idea that as people go about their daily business fleeting relationships are formed and judgements made.

THE TIMES – Escalating theft of rail signalling and electrical cabling by criminals cashing in on the high cost of scrap metal has led Ian Johnstone, the Chief Constable of the BT Police, to declare the problem the second highest challenge after terrorism.

05.12.07 METRO – This evening, St. Martin in the Fields will host the Transport for London annual Festival of Carols. Members of the public are welcome and admission is by souvenir programme which costs £2.

EVENING STANDARD – Transport for London is doubling its borrowing to £1.25 billion next year. Theresa Villiers, the shadow transport secretary, said TfL is being

forced to borrow twice as much to help cover the costs of maintenance firm Metronet. She said taxpayers would be forced to bear the extra costs and accused Gordon Brown of arrogance and incompetence in forcing through the PPP scheme for the Underground. A TfL spokesman said the borrowing would allow the organisation to meet its obligations for the financing of Crossrail.

06.12.07 LONDON LITE – A photograph of a train indicator shows *1st train Kennington via CX in 1 minute*, but the 4th train (same description) in “9999 mins”. This was timed at 08.17:56 (but date and location wasn’t revealed, although it was in the open air as an old canopy edge was showing) and captioned “we’d probably better get that first train then”.

07.12.07 EVENING STANDARD – An announcer for London Underground sacked for posting mocking messengers on her website was told last night that LU would not offer more work. Her voice will now be used by a mobile phone company.

09.12.07 SUNDAY TIMES – Deutsche Bahn and NedRail, its Dutch equivalent, are the two remaining bidders to take over Chiltern Railways, that runs commuter and long-distance services from London Marylebone. Chiltern has been put up for sale by funds controlled by Henderson, the fund-management company, who acquired Chiltern last year.

10.12.07 EVENING STANDARD – Thousands of commuters and longer distance travellers received a major boost today with the opening of the new £70 million St. Pancras Thameslink station. It is built alongside the £800 million St. Pancras International station which opened last month. The station cuts out the eight-minute walk from the old King’s Cross Thameslink station. Benefits include longer, wider platforms with new lifts and escalators, state-of-the-art information screens and dedicated customer service staff, many of whom speak more than one language.

THE TIMES – Richard Bowker, the chief executive of National Express Group, put himself on a collision course with rail unions yesterday when his company took over the East Coast intercity route, promising faster journeys, improved punctuality and a tight grip on costs. A spokesman for the Transport Salaried Staffs’ Association said he was concerned by NEG’s intentions. Mr. Bowker would not comment on whether redundancies would be necessary.

11.12.07 METRO – Langdon Park station on the Docklands Light Railway opened yesterday. The £7.5 million construction is situated between All Saints and Devons Road stations, at the heart of the Teviot and Lansbury estates.

12.12.07 EVENING STANDARD – An Underground train wrecked in the 7/7 London bombings is being rebuilt in Hungary because there are no facilities to do the work in Britain. The six-car train was extensively damaged when a device exploded on the Hammersmith & City Line train close to Edgware Road station killing six people. Four carriages are at the Bombardier works in Budapest, the other two, which suffered minor damage, are being worked on in Britain before they are sent to Hungary for completion. Bombardier, which was a member of Metronet, has train building facilities across the world.

13.12.07 THE TIMES – A train driver who was jailed after he admitted killing five people in a rail crash 18 years ago has had his conviction quashed by the Court of Appeal after new evidence showed that a signal was faulty. Robert Morgan was the first railman in Britain to be imprisoned for manslaughter after his train went through a red light and hit another at Purley in March 1989. Judges at the Royal Courts of Justice ruled the verdict unsafe because a jury might have cleared him if they had

known about the new evidence. The signal had been passed by four other drivers between 1984 and 1987. Mr. Morgan was originally sentenced to eighteen months' jail, reduced to four on appeal.

14.12.07 BUCKS ADVERTISER – Work has officially started on building new track between Aylesbury Town station and the new station at Aylesbury Vale Parkway. Last weekend, existing track was removed and work begun on installing about one mile of new line. The new station is currently scheduled to open in 2010 but is dependent on the construction of the Berryfields development, as the station only becomes viable once 40 per cent of the housing is occupied.

EVENING STANDARD – (1) The Bill paving the way for the Crossrail project has finally cleared the Commons and now goes to the Lords.

(2) A report by the Commons public accounts committee warns that the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, which is the government body responsible for compensating victims of the London 2005 bombings is slowly grinding to a halt and adding to the victims' woes by failing to process claims quickly enough.

15.12.07 THE TIMES – Dozens of rail schemes designed to relieve overcrowding may be scrapped or delayed indefinitely because of a £1.5 billion funding gap in the Government's railway expansion programme. Ministers promised in July to increase railway capacity by more than a fifth by 2014 and improve punctuality to 93 per cent of trains arriving on time. But the Department for Transport has cut the public subsidy for the railways so severely that there is not enough money to pay for the promised improvements, even assuming big efficiency gains by the industry. Key schemes, such as lengthening trains on the most overcrowded routes, removing bottlenecks on the tracks and expanding stations, may have to be abandoned. The Association of Train Operating Companies estimates that passenger numbers will grow by 40 per cent by 2014. With the Government planning to increase capacity by only half that amount, the trains would be overwhelmed.

16.12.07 THE OBSERVER – Fears are growing that LU contractor Tube Lines will be starved of cash because of the huge cost overruns incurred by collapsed rival consortium Metronet. Tube Lines has begun preliminary negotiations with Transport for London over the next phase of its 30-year public-private partnership contract, originally budgeted at £13 billion. But the funding it will receive after its current programme expires in 2010 is uncertain. Planned station improvements would be most likely to be sacrificed in any funding squeeze.

SUNDAY TIMES – Canary Wharf Group gave more than £120,000 to the Labour Party to help gain access to ministers and key officials during a lobbying campaign for the Crossrail scheme.

18.12.07 EVENING STANDARD – Ian Johnstone and Andy Trotter are Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Constable respectively with the British Transport Police following careers with the Metropolitan Police. But it was revealed today they are still being paid their pensions from their former jobs as police forces across the country are threatening to strike over wages.

METRO – Shepherd's Bush (Central Line) station will close for eight months from 2 February to speed up transport improvements ahead of the Westfield development, which opens in late 2008. The closure will allow the ticket hall to be demolished and rebuilt, as well as the installation of new escalators and other modernisation.

20.12.07 EVENING STANDARD – Long distance rail travellers face being charged six times the normal price for journeys before Christmas. Tens of thousands of people are expected to leave London by train over the next few days but most cheap fares for tomorrow and Christmas Eve have sold out, but the same tickets are available days later with huge discounts, prompting accusations that train companies are ripping off Christmas travellers. Anthony Smith, chief executive of the Rail Passengers Council, said that rail companies refused to say how many cheap tickets they put on sale.

21.12.07 THE TIMES – Andrew Braddock writes, in a letter to the editor, that on completely valid safety grounds, there can be no new-build of an open-platform bus. Even if such a vehicle could legally be built, it would be grossly uneconomic because the quantity required would be pitifully small in the context of the pan-European markets the manufacturers must now serve. The Routemaster was outmoded when it appeared and it is little short of a tragedy that its principal purpose was to replace the environmentally superior trolleybus. It is time to bury the notion of “a son of Routemaster”. The idea is nonsense.

23.12.07 THE TIMES – Moscow’s metro is not the biggest in the world or the oldest, but maybe the most spectacular, with stations more like the ballrooms of fin de siècle stately homes. Moscow's first line opened on 15 May 1935 with 12 stations. There are now 175, spread across 12 lines, with 9,915 trains on more than 155 miles of track.

27.12.07 EVENING STANDARD – A string of central London Underground stations have been targeted by vandals who caused tens of thousands of pounds damage over Christmas. Old Street, Angel, Caledonian Road, Holloway Road and Arsenal stations were all defaced with graffiti in a spree which started when the network shut down over the holiday.

28.12.07 EVENING STANDARD – (1) The RMT union claims it would cost Tube Lines, which maintains the Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines, less than £2 million a year to increase its 500 cleaners wages to £7.20 an hour. Most earn little more than the legal minimum of £5.52 an hour, said the union. However, cleaners formerly employed by Metronet will receive £7.20 after their contracts are taken over by Transport for London. More than 40 MPs have signed a Commons motion backing the campaign.

(2) A review of London’s train fare zones is being called for after a deluge of protests by passengers. LSE transport economist Tim Leunig believes a review is overdue. He said that the rings were squeezed to fit the shape of the old GLC boundary. They are close together in some places, which means fares rise quicker, but elsewhere they are far apart and passengers can travel longer for the same price.

HAM & HIGH – Commuters at King’s Cross are struggling to find their trains because of lack of signs for the Thameslink service. Also what signs do exist refer to First Capital Connect, which many passengers do not realise is the name of the new franchise running the service.

30.12.07 SUNDAY EXPRESS – The build up to Christmas saw a new record for the most people travelling on the London Underground in a single day. An estimated 4.17 million passengers used the network on 7 December. More than one billion people did so in 2007.

SUNDAY TIMES – Gordon Brown’s pledge to honour members of the public for heroism during terrorist attacks has been labelled a sham after dozens of civilians

who went to the rescue of the 2005 bombing victims were snubbed for awards, even though more than two dozen public service staff, some of whom were doing desk jobs, have been honoured for their conduct on 7/7.