

## 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](mailto:secretary@lurs.org.uk)), and not to the Editor of this journal. Please ensure that contributions are identified by date and source publication.

**25.11.20 EVENING STANDARD** – While there will be an understandable sense of trepidation when lockdown is eased on 2 December, it brings the opportunity to move forward and for the economy to revive. TfL stands ready to safely support the capital’s businesses and attractions. We need London to flourish again for the benefit of the UK as a whole. Given the City is a net contributor to the exchequer of around £35B each year, there is simply no UK recovery, and no money to level up other parts of the UK, without a London recovery. And there is no London recovery without a viable transport network underpinning it - getting everyone around and supporting jobs, opportunities, new homes and economic growth. Before COVID-19, TfL was on the path to achieving a level of financial self-sufficiency almost unheard of for transport authorities around the world. But the pandemic has massively impacted our finances. After much negotiation, the Government agreed a funding package so that we can continue to support London over the next six months. That is welcome, but to support longer-term economic recovery, TfL needs stable and sustainable long-term government funding. This would enable us to keep services running safely and reliably, modernise ageing trains, bridges, signalling and track, reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality. But even more pressing is the need to finalise the financial deal with Government so that we can complete Crossrail and open the Elizabeth line. The transformational railway will slash journey times, create much-needed capacity, protect social distancing, transform accessibility and provide a huge economic boost. It would be the ultimate symbol of London’s emergence from COVID-19 - a glittering sign of hope for the future. We are nearly there. We now have a clear path to completion by no later than the first half of 2022. The Greater London Authority is pledging £825 million of the outstanding funding, but we need the Government to give us the financial guarantees to backstop the deal. Without such agreement, work cannot continue. The new railway would mark the rebirth of London from the pandemic. It would be an embarrassing and wasteful disaster if victory, not just for London, but for the whole UK, is snatched away at the last moment.

**26.11.20 METRO** – *The History of Moquette* – The name of the fabric come from the French word for carpet, and it is now used in upholstery on public transport all over the world. It was first applied to public transport seating in London back in the 1920s, when patterns were produced by manufacturers. When London Transport was created in the 1930s, designers were commissioned to create contemporary patterns for the Underground, buses, trams and trolleybuses. As new Underground lines, such as the Jubilee line, and modes of transport, like the Emirates Air Line, have joined the network, they too have had moquette designs created for them.

**27.11.20 THE TIMES** – A ditty written to amuse passengers on their way to a Craig David concert led to two workers on the Underground to worldwide fame and a book. Ian Redpath and Jeremy Chopra have spent three years writing poetry anonymously on the noticeboards at Underground stations but only revealed their identities yesterday as they promoted their book *All on the Board*, a compilation of their favourite work. Their *allontheboard* Twitter account, on which they share their verse, has 75,000 followers including Michelle Obama, Katy Perry and Ricky Gervais. It began in 2017 when the pair needed to put up a sign at North Greenwich station directing concertgoers to the O2 venue for Craig David’s concert. They told Virgin Records: “There were 20,000 people coming through the station and we thought it would be fun to write a little poem based on Craig David songs on the whiteboard that otherwise was just saying “Keep Right”. Literally in seconds, people stopped, they were laughing and taking selfies with it, and we just knew we had found something special.” They began writing poems in response to the public mood after the Manchester Arena and London Bridge terrorist attacks. Mr. Redpath said he was inspired to write about serious subjects because of a traumatic experience as a train driver. He said: “In January 2008 I was driving a Victoria Line train and a young girl jumped out in front of me”. He recalled their eyes met just before she died and that he suffered from PTSD as a result. “I want our messages to let people know they are not alone, there are people to talk to. There are a lot of men out there just taking their own lives because they can’t talk to anyone”. Mr. Chopra said that he wished to tackle difficult issues because he had suffered an eating disorder. “It’s one of the hardest

things for men, to come out and say what they have been going through". Mr. Redpath said he hoped that their book, published by Yellow Kite, would unite people at a time when the pandemic is keeping them apart".

**27.11.20 THE TIMES** – *Editorial comment* – “The Underground may have become markedly less busy in recent months, yet as most people, not only those who live in or near the capital, know all too well. Underground travel can still be a uniquely soul-destroying experience. Quite aside from any delays, even if all goes well, jolting along in the depths of the earth while scrupulously avoiding all conversation and eye contact with fellow passengers is not one of life’s more pleasant experiences. Any respite from the discomfort, mild anxiety and tedium is welcome. Well done, then, to Jeremy Chopra and Ian Redpath, two TfL employees who yesterday were unmasked as the duo responsible for writing uplifting, quirky and just plain funny messages and poems on TfL whiteboards usually reserved for dismaying instructions about slippery conditions or broken escalators. Commuters, revellers and tourists alike have been enjoying the pair’s anonymous heart-warming efforts for some time, both up close and on social media, where Michelle Obama, no less, is a fan. Having produced a book collecting their work, the two colleagues have broken cover. They deserve the praise and gratitude coming their way. “All on the Board”, as Mr. Chopra and Mr. Redpath style themselves, will not win any literary prizes for the quality of verse, although some of the efforts celebrating artists at the O<sub>2</sub> arena for the benefit of fans arriving at North Greenwich station are ingenious. The TfL double act are not frustrated artists showing off, they are modest men looking to spread a little happiness in hard times. Knowing better than anyone that the Underground can be a lonely place, and with personal experience of mental ill-health, they set out to raise a smile and bring people together. Not so much minding the gap as bridging the gap. Good for them.

**30.11.20 CITY A.M.** – A proposal to extend the Bakerloo Line even further south-east than planned has garnered considerable support from local residents, Transport for London said today. Last month, the capital’s transport operator launched a consultation into the Bakerloo Line Extension (BLE), which is currently meant to extend as far as Lewisham. Local Tories urge Grant Shapps to save the ‘vital’ BLE. However, TfL is also mulling whether it would be possible to stretch the line all the way down to Beckenham and Hayes in the south. In order to do so, the transport network would convert the current National Rail line to Hayes to accommodate Underground services. In response to the consultation, 82% of respondents said that they were in favour of such a move, which could drive regeneration in Catford and Lower Sydenham, areas with some of the highest levels of deprivation in the country. Lewisham Mayor Damien Egan said: “Today’s fantastic results from TfL’s consultation shows overwhelming support for the BLE to Hayes from residents in Lewisham and Bromley. It is now more important than ever for this project to continue. The much-needed extension would connect Lewisham residents to jobs across London and bring huge growth to the local economy and vital housing for people living in Ladywell, Catford, Lower Sydenham and beyond”. TfL said that extending the line to Hayes would increase the frequency of rail services into the West End and central London rail stations, with more trains an hour than under the current National Rail schedule. But the project depends on TfL first ironing out a funding package for the initial extension to Lewisham with the government. Although the two sides managed to agree a deal to fund TfL’s day-to-day services in October after a bitter set of negotiations, talks are still going on regarding the funding of infrastructure projects such as Crossrail 2 and the BLE. TfL said: “A commitment from Government to support funding for the scheme is essential in developing a funding package. We will continue discussions with the Government, whilst being realistic about the funding London could contribute to delivering an extension over the coming years”. Councillor Kieron Williams, leader of Southwark Council, said that the extension could transform the lives of people living in the area. “Benefits of the extension are abundantly clear: new jobs, new services and the key to unlocking 20,000 new homes, including 7,000 genuinely affordable ready to buy into the BLE as a “shovel-ready scheme” primed to help us Build Back Better?”.

**04.12.20 WATFORD OBSERVER** – *E-mail by Carol Scleater* – “I refer to Mr. Ernie Mackenzie’s letter (see *Underground News No.709, page 97, From the Papers 20.11.20*). I am grateful to him for pointing out to Three Rivers District Councillor Peter Getkhan that the Met. Line Extension (MLX) has been an unwarranted burden and an albatross around our necks for over seven years up to 2018, when Mayor Sadiq Khan “pulled the plug”. There have been many previous similar Croxley Rail Link schemes, starting in 1956 when the link was costed at £500K and was stopped because it was too expensive. There may even have been attempts prior to 1956. When the current project started in 2011, the cost was to be £116M “and not a penny more”. Costs escalated until in 2018, the estimate was £384M. At

that figure, it was the most expensive five miles of track ever. Since 2011, much has changed in Watford. Developers in the Ascot Road vicinity, where the flyover and station were to be built, were in the process of obtaining planning permission for the first high rise flats in the town; the only other high-rise flats being two blocks on the Meriden Estate. Gradually since 2011, high rise flats have mushroomed particularly in St. Albans Road, Clarendon Road and St. Johns Road, etc. Importantly, these high-rise flats are close to Watford Junction station so anyone who needs a high-rise flat will have a choice of thousands close to that station. People will not choose Ascot Road, Sydney Road and Whippendell Road – MLX or no MLX – if they need Watford Junction. Why are some politicians obsessed with getting MLX built? Mr Mackenzie points out that if MLX is built, it will be curtains for Watford Met. station. Regarding the current MLX scheme, Boris Johnson, Clare Perry (when transport minister) and many other politicians care nothing for the devastation this closure would cause to the 1.86M passengers who use this station every year. Fortunately, Watford Mayor Peter Taylor said some while ago “MLX is dead” and is pressing for an alternative scheme”.

**04.12.20 WATFORD OBSERVER** – More than a quarter of people have refused to wear a face mask on the Underground during the coronavirus pandemic. The Government made wearing a mask on public transport mandatory earlier this year, with passengers risking being fined £100 and removed from services if caught not complying with the regulations. A study by Nationwide Vehicle Contracts (NVC) asked 1,507 people how they have used face masks when on public transport. It found more than 27% of the passengers travelling on the Underground have admitted not wearing a mask during the pandemic. The worst offending line was found to be the Circle Line, where 48% of passengers admitted to not wearing a mask, followed by the Hammersmith & City line at 44%. The data showed that passengers travelling on the Metropolitan Line are the safest, as 73% say they always wear a mask when using public transport. The Victoria Line was second highest at 71%, with the Jubilee at 64%. The study also found that in total, 72% of Londoners claim to always wear their mask when travelling on public transport. A director at NVC said: “with new restrictions being put in place regularly, government advice suggests we limit our use of public transport unless it is absolutely essential. The on-the-spot fine for not wearing a mask on public transport is £100 and this will double with each offence up to a hefty £3,200. If you have to travel to work, or have other essential journeys to take, it seems driving may be the safest option at the moment”.

**04.12.20 THE TIMES** – Crossrail is employing 140 drivers to operate trains through central London up to 18 months before the heavily delayed line opens to passengers. It was revealed yesterday that the drivers, who earn up to £63,533 a year for a four-day week, were being trained for tests on the 13-mile tunnel section through central London. The disclosure was made despite an admission that “intensive trial running” to replicate the full passenger service would not begin until next year. The latest figures attracted fresh criticism of the “mind-boggling” cost of Crossrail. The numbers were disclosed days after the Government announced that a further £825M would be handed to Crossrail in attempt to complete the project. TfL, which governs the project, insisted that the drivers were needed for the trials. The organisation said that testing was being increased gradually as part of vital safety preparations for the line. TfL said that many of the drivers had been trained from scratch, which takes about two years. Most had to be employed in time for the original December 2018 opening. New figures published by TfL show that 435 drivers are available to Crossrail, not including trainees, supervisors or those shielding due to coronavirus. Of these, 295 are working on sections already operating to Essex and Berkshire. Services are run under “TfL Rail” brand and a near full timetable has operated throughout the pandemic. TfL said that 140 drivers “are available for supporting dynamic testing of the new central operating section” through the main tunnels. Dynamic testing started with only two trains operating through the tunnels at one time. The Times understands that this was increased recently to six. The number will be further increased over the coming months before “trial running”, which replicates a full passenger service, begins next year.

**11.12.20 THE SCOTSMAN** – Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) has announced that the new trains for the Glasgow Subway will not enter service until 2022 some two years late, following “confrontational” discussions with its contractors who were blamed “for not getting underway on time”. The Ansta consortium of Italian signalling firm Ansaldo and Swiss train builders Stadler won the £200-million contract as part of a £288.7m overall Subway upgrade, which also includes stations being overhauled. However, having Swiss, Italian and French parts of the consortium had also caused difficulties. SPT believes that they themselves failed to understand how complex the project was going to be. Work was halted by the Covid pandemic between March and June, but an estimated six months

is expected to be saved by introducing the new trains using the existing Subway signalling while the new system is installed. The first three of the 17 trains are being trialled on a surface test track south from the Subway depot in Govan. They are due to be tested in the Subway next year overnight when the system is closed. The trains will operate with drivers until platform screen doors are fitted at stations after which they will then switch to “unattended train operation”. SPT said installing the platform doors would be the last stage of the project.

**11.12.20 EVENING STANDARD** – Motorists face a £3.50 daily charge to enter Greater London under radical plans being considered by Mayor Sadiq Khan to restore the finances of TfL – this would not be implemented for at least two years. It is one of a series of options suggested to the Mayor as a way of restoring TfL’s long-term income, which has collapsed due to COVID. Others include: (a) Scrapping the *Night Tube* and the “Boris bike” cycle hire scheme, (b) Axing (some) bus routes in the suburbs, (c) Reforming TfL’s “expensive” pension scheme, (d) Retaining the ban on free travel for pensioners in the morning peak, and (e) Closing some Underground stations at weekends. This week, TfL confirmed it had no cash to continue major projects such as:- Crossrail 2, the BLE to Lewisham, the DLR extension to Thamesmead, the rebuilding of South Kensington station and the Tramlink extension to Sutton. TfL has received two COVID bail-outs from the Government worth £3.4B, and says it will need a further £3.1B next year. Passenger income this year is only expected to reach 60% of pre-pandemic levels and 80% next year.

**14.12.20 EVENING STANDARD** – John Le Carré, one of Britain’s most celebrated writers, died at the weekend. Former EU Council President Donald Tusk recalled that Le Carré was an ardent Europhile who criticised Boris Johnson. Others have focussed on his novels. Historian Tom Holland remembers going “round and round” on the Circle Line so gripped by a Le Carré novel that he “couldn’t bear to get off the train until he finished it”. Perhaps we should remember him that way.

**16.12.20 – 29.12.20 RAIL #920** – Crossrail has completed construction of Farringdon station – the first of ten in the central section to reach this milestone. The station will have two main entrances, both with ticket halls. One will be the at Barbican, the other at the existing Underground/Thameslink station. It will be handed over to TfL in a few weeks. Testing and commissioning of systems at the station is underway. The first of Crossrail’s new stations to be handed over was Custom House (opposite the ExCeL in east London). Paddington is expected to be the next. Crossrail CEO Mark Wild said: “This is an incredibly important landmark for both the team at Farringdon station and for the Crossrail project as a whole. We now have reached the end of the construction phase at the first of our central London stations and the start of the testing and safety assurance journey, which will enable us to hand over the station to TfL and open the Elizabeth Line to passengers”. Additionally, Systems Integration Dynamic Testing began on 3 December, using eight trains in the central section. This will test the software to be used for trial running that is due to start early in 2021.

**16.12.20 – 29.12.20 RAIL #920** – Transport minister Grant Shapps has given approval to proceed with statutory safeguarding of the route of the proposed Bakerloo Line extension from Lambeth North to Lewisham. When approved, the land required for tunnels, new stations, infrastructure and construction site would be protected. It follows a TfL report which suggests there is significant support of extending the Bakerloo Line beyond Elephant & Castle to Lewisham, serving Old Kent Road and New Cross Gate. A consultation in autumn 2019 garnered 8,640 responses from the public and 109 from stakeholders; it also received a response from the Back the Bakerloo coalition on behalf of the 20,600 who had signed up to that campaign, promoted by Southwark and Lewisham councils. The majority (89%) of responses were positive about the proposals, including a new entrance at Elephant & Castle station, the route of tunnels between Lambeth North and Elephant & Castle, the worksite at New Cross Gate, and other matters, such as a possible extension beyond Lewisham to Hayes and Beckenham Junction.

**16.12.20 EVENING STANDARD** – A two-month delay in bringing on an above-inflation increase in Underground and bus fares was announced today. Mayor Sadiq Khan said the 2.6% rise would be put back until 1 March – coinciding with the delay in raising national rail fares by the same amount – rather than 1 January as expected. Mr. Khan was already planning a “cost of living” increase in Underground fares before the pandemic, but was forced to hike bus fares too under the terms of TfL’s COVID bailout from the Government.

**17.12.20 SCOTTISH DAILY MAIL** – The Clockwork Orange makes it into the Oxford English Dictionary. The bright colour of its trains earned it the title “The Clockwork Orange”. Now the nickname for Glasgow’s Subway has been honoured with a mention in the OED. One of the definitions reads: “A

humorous name for a carriage or train on the Glasgow Subway; the underground system of Glasgow". This network was the third underground railway in the world when it opened on 14 December 1896. The OED states that it got its nickname from the "bright orange livery" of trains introduced as part of a modernisation scheme in 1979. The dictionary's researchers found the first printed mention of the nickname in 1978 in the LURS's magazine. An article about the subway read: "All 33 'Clockwork Oranges' as the new cars have already been nicknamed...". A spokesman for the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, which operated the Subway, said: "However people choose to refer to it, we're delighted to play our part in serving the people of Glasgow". (*Compiler's Note:- This quotation was contained in an item on the Glasgow Subway in Underground News No. 199, page 520, by D.J. Carson*).

**18.12.20 WATFORD OBSERVER** – Watford's Mayor has called for TfL to scrap its plan to make all of its stations cashless. Passengers can currently use cash to buy tickets at just 72 of TfL's total of 270 Underground stations. But TfL wants to temporarily ban cash from all of its stations, reportedly as a way of limiting the spread of COVID-19. However, the Mayor, Peter Taylor, says the idea will cause "a lot of inconvenience" to passengers at some stations who are more than 400m away from a "ticket shop". A ticket shop is a newsagents where passengers can buy an Underground ticket – using cash if necessary – or top up their Oyster cards. Among the stations 400m or more away from a ticket stop are Watford Met., Croxley, Rickmansworth, and Chorleywood, as well as Watford High Street Overground station. Mr. Taylor said: "It's important that people are able to travel and that this is safe and straightforward. For some people, paying by cash is their preference. TfL must scrap this plan".

**27.12.20 LONDON-SE1** – The Bakerloo Line is likely to see its off-peak and weekend service reduced as part of Transport for London's efforts to tackle the financial black hole caused by the Covid-19 crisis, being one of the quieter lines on the Underground network, and has the oldest fleet of rolling stock. TfL's draft budget for next year includes savings arising from cuts to off-peak and weekend services on the Underground. The first line to be looked at is the Bakerloo, and an assumption has been made that something of the order of £5 million to £6 million would be saved on a full-year basis. The rest of the lines will be looked at over the course of the next few months.