

FROM THE PAPERS

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21.05.21 EVENING STANDARD – Crossrail chiefs have insisted the long-delayed £18.6B line is on course to open next year despite being warned of significant challenges ahead. An independent watchdog has raised concerns that the delayed start to “trial running” – the dress rehearsal stage – could cause difficulties. Stephen Hill, who scrutinises the progress on Crossrail, said TfL faced the “competing pressures” of testing the trains, finishing the stations, and ensuring safety. But Crossrail chief executive Mark Wild insists the target of opening it in the first half of next year remains “unchanged”.

04.06.21 CITY A.M. – Vital London transport projects, including a new rail branch deemed vital to the success of HS2, may have to be mothballed due to continued uncertainty over TfL future funding. Earlier this week the government gave the transport network yet another short-term deal, worth around £1.1B, much to TfL’s dismay. But now a new report from the body has flagged a number of projects that could be in jeopardy due to the lack of a long-term deal. Principal among these, the Daily Telegraph reported, is the West London Orbital, a rail line running from Hounslow to Hampstead. The line would connect with the new HS2 mega-hub at Old Oak Common, which is currently under construction, linking the station to west London. In the report, called *Delivering the Mayor’s Transport Strategy 2020/21*, TfL officials say that the line would “unlock potential for new homes and jobs, and connecting to town centres, employment hubs and existing and future transport links to the Underground, the Overground, Crossrail, National Rail and HS2 interchanges”. But, it adds, “the future development of these schemes, and the benefits they enable, is contingent on the outcome of discussions with the Government on longer-term funding”. The latest funding deal, which will cover the period from 29 May until 11 December, came after months of difficult negotiations between both sides. Mayor Sadiq Khan said the new agreement was “not the deal we wanted”. It means that the government has now spent more than £4B keeping the network going. TfL had been seeking a multi-year funding deal, saying it would need £3B in operational support for the next year, as well as £1.6B a year in capital spending support between 2023 and 2030. The report also said the DLR extension could also be shelved, while the Bakerloo extension and Crossrail 2 have already been shelved. A spokesman for TfL said: “We continue to work with the Government on our longer-term funding so we can plan effectively for London’s future. We are delivering transformative additions and enhancements across the transport network, such as completing the Elizabeth Line, the Northern Line Extension, the extension of the Overground to Barking Riverside, new signalling on the Circle, District, Hammersmith & City and Metropolitan lines, and the Bank Station Upgrade. Our Financial Sustainability Plan, published in January this year, sets out what we need to deliver and outlines how long term funding certainty will enable us to deliver these economically and efficiently. However, the development of new major projects, which are vital for decarbonisation, improving air quality and supporting new homes and jobs, is reliant on the outcome of discussions over our longer term funding.”

04.06.21 EVENING STANDARD - Police have released an image of people they would like to speak to after a woman was threatened with a screwdriver on the Underground. The victim, 24, was travelling on the Central Line when she was approached by a woman holding a screwdriver. The woman was travelling with around seven teenagers, police said. The Underground passenger got off at Marble Arch station but a man from the group followed and tried to snatch her e-scooter. Passengers intervened as the man tried to push the victim to the floor. He then retreated and got back on the train. BT Police have released a picture of people they wish to speak to as part of their investigation into the incident, which took place at around 16.10 on 11 February.

07.06.21 CITY A.M. – News of the latest financial support package for TfL will have been met by sighs of relief across London. At the very least, buses, trains and Underground will continue running for the next few months. But fundamental questions about TfL’s future and how public transport is funded remain unanswered. Should a transport authority like TfL receive a subsidy from the taxpayer and, if so, should that come from the national pot, or should London pay? The government is reluctant to subsidise TfL, preferring them to be self-sufficient through fares and other income. Some of this is

political, tied up with growing anti-London sentiment. City Hall and TfL argue that the pandemic has exposed the flaws with being solely dependent on fare income, and that no other city of the same stature runs its transport authority without some form of public subsidy, either from the national government, local taxation, or a mixture of the two. And yet ultimately, in times of crisis as we have seen this past 15 months, only the government has the financial clout to be the funder of last resort. For London's sake, there needs to be a way forward. First, an understanding about the scale of the financial support required to sustain TfL at the level that London needs. Second, an agreement on how this is to be funded, while closely monitoring the longer-term impact of behaviour changes on public transport usage. That is going to take considerable close working on all sides, something that the mood music of this week indicates will be challenging. The Mayor will need to be bold and honest with Londoners about difficult choices and not be deflected by the electoral cycle if new sources of income generation need to be found. Business groups argue it would be a mistake to slash TfL funding because of the consequences for the London economy, particularly at this delicate time. Deferring or cancelling investments risks even higher costs in the future, increased delays and overcrowding and threatens jobs in the supply chain up and down the country. Cuts to buses and the Underground could push more people into cars and create more congestion. Access to job opportunities could become harder. Running businesses could be more costly. Building new homes become more difficult. A shrunken TfL could drive foreign investment elsewhere, not to Manchester or Leeds, but to New York, Berlin or Shanghai, leaving the whole country worse off. And TfL has always been more than just a transport authority. It's an agent for improving public health, a place shaper and a tool of regeneration. Many Mayors and council leaders outside the M25 want their own TfL equivalent and Ministers want to replicate its innovation elsewhere. There's talk of rolling out "London-style" Oyster and contactless ticketing. The ULEZ is the blueprint for many clean air zones in other cities. Andy Burnham cites London's bus network – and the relative low cost of journeys – as his aspiration for Greater Manchester. And Ministers hail the concession model used by TfL as the future for the rail industry. But leaders across the country need to keep a close eye on London. A diminished TfL, with a much-reduced budget, fewer powers and more central government involvement in operational decision making isn't what London needs, and it's not a model the rest of the country should demand either. Devolution of transport and accountability for it via the Mayor is an underestimated element of TfL's success. Those with long enough memories will remember how poorly London transport was run from Whitehall. It's also the case that falling fuel duty as vehicles move to electric will leave HM Treasury desperate for new sources of income. With a political nervousness over any national road user charging system, Ministers might just need TfL to do them a favour and be a trailblazer on simple, smart and fair road user charging as *Centre for London* has long advocated. An under-resourced TfL might struggle to continue to be a driver of innovation and deliver the benefits of integrated public transport, which London and the rest of the UK needs. It would be a mistake to assume London will continue swelling the Treasury's coffers given how hard hit the capital has been by the pandemic. National taxpayer support to TfL should be seen in the context of the huge returns it helps deliver for the rest of the country. And Ministers need to be much more confident in explaining to voters beyond the M25 why it is in the whole country's interests to invest in London's buses, tubes and trains.

07.06.21 DAILY TELEGRAPH – For those travelling into the Square Mile, it was a welcome relief. On Monday, the Waterloo & City Line opened for the first time since the start of the pandemic, running every five minutes into the heart of London's financial district. (*It actually reopened for the evening peak on Friday 4 June – Ed.*) The service on the Underground line, nicknamed *The Drain*, had been due to resume on 21 June. However, the date was brought forward following a 20% increase in Underground passengers since 17 May. It took several commuters by surprise. "I was walking through the station to get on another line, they announced on the tannoy it was open" said Sophie Cole, 22, who is one of the many graduates starting her career in the City this month. Cole added that while it was good to have a balance between working remotely and being in the office, it was particularly important for new starters to get a chance to meet their team. She made the four-minute journey from Waterloo to Bank, enjoying a much quieter service, with the once crowded Underground carriages full of empty seats and stripped of advertisements. It may not be business as usual but workers like Cole, tired of cramped home offices and worried about promotion opportunities, are beginning to trickle back into the office ahead of 21 June. One Goldman Sachs employee said: "The growing line of cabs waiting outside the office every evening marked the start of a return to normality". "It is definitely getting busier back in the office and certainly I have noticed the Underground is getting busier by the day," says Bruce Carnegie-

Brown, the chairman of insurance market Lloyd's of London. "People are driven by a variety of factors - craving a return to normality, poor working from home conditions, desire to see the backs of people's heads, desire for a change of environment, missing colleagues and a desire to learn and develop professionally". As well as going back into the office, removing the last batch of restrictions on 21 June (which didn't happen) could allow nightclubs to reopen, sports stadiums to fill to capacity, people to queue for drinks in bars, and large weddings and conferences to resume. Pushing back on the date will be a further knock for TfL, which was hoping that a return to office working would help its finances after the pandemic blew a multi-billion pound hole in its budget. TfL is more exposed to a downturn in passenger numbers than its counterparts elsewhere in the world. Roughly 70p in every pound it costs to run public transport in the capital is generated by fares. This compares with around 35% in the likes of Paris and New York. But Sadiq Khan, is now facing difficult decisions over cuts to service levels in order to save money. The most recent bailout from taxpayers – agreed at the end of last month – came with a requirement to find £900M of savings, which could include fresh cuts to buses, Underground and Overground trains. Much will hinge on when exactly restrictions end this summer. Ministers will receive papers setting out the options from scientific advisers this week to help them thrash out a plan before a decision is announced on 14 June.

10.06.21 LONDON SE1 – Mayor Sadiq Khan says he remains committed to extending the Bakerloo Line beyond Elephant & Castle "when the time is right". Mr. Khan was replying to one of the first mayoral questions to be tabled by Lambeth & Southwark's new London Assembly member Marina Ahmad who asked for an update on the Bakerloo Line extension scheme. "The Bakerloo Line extension remains a priority for both me and TfL," said the Mayor, "In March 2021, the Secretary of State for Transport issued Statutory Safeguarding Directions for the extension from Elephant & Castle to Lewisham, giving greater certainty and protection for the proposed route. Following safeguarding, we continue to work closely with Southwark and Lewisham Councils to develop our plans for the scheme as well as to maximise the potential benefits it would bring in relation to housing delivery and Good Growth. We remain committed to delivering the scheme when the time is right and are working with the boroughs on funding for ongoing development work. Delivering the scheme remains dependent on a viable funding package being put together, which will require a funding commitment from Government. We continue to work with the Government and others on options for funding so this scheme can be delivered, and its many benefits realised". At Wednesday's meeting of the TfL board, director of city planning Alex Williams struck a more cautious note: "In reality we are not going to have the money for Crossrail 2 or Bakerloo for some time" he said. In March, TfL's finance boss Simon Kilonback warned that "the Bakerloo Line extension is something that we won't see in the next decade".

10.06.21 EVENING STANDARD – TfL is facing a "haemorrhaging" of top staff scared off by cuts required as part of its latest £1B Covid-19 bailout. The terms of the Government deal requires TfL to find £900M of savings this financial year; implement a pay freeze possibly until April 2023 and review its generous staff pension scheme. It also has to review introducing driverless trains on the Underground, with the Waterloo & City and Piccadilly lines the first set for feasibility studies. TfL commissioner Andy Byford said news of the deal had created "uncertainty" among TfL's 26,000-strong workforce and warned the "haemorrhaging" of staff was a "real issue". He told the TfL board yesterday: "We are starting to see quite a trickle, later becoming a bit of an exodus of real-quality people". Mayor Sadiq Khan told BBC London that closing TfL offices, merging departments, reducing non-permanent staff and cuts to services were all under consideration. Final details are due to be published next month. TfL's workforce had already been cut by 710 employees over the course of 2020/21, reducing by 3% from 26,898 to 26,188 workers. TfL said Underground drivers on multi-year incremental pay deals will not be affected by the pay freeze. Mr. Byford insisted that it was vital for TfL to "get off Government support" and regain control of its own finances. He warned that the impact on staff of having to implement the multitude of conditions attached to each of the three Government bail-outs was "gruelling", adding: "The impact is just relentless. We are indeed paying very close attention not only to the impact on people's wellbeing and morale but we are also considering the whole issue of retention and the risk of haemorrhaging staff". He said managers were looking for "signs of tension and changes in people's behaviour", and ensuring they took a vacation and were aware help was available. He said: "There is a lot of uncertainty as a result of the funding deal – talk about pay freezes, talk about changes potentially to the pension scheme, albeit it is just a review, talk about review of driverless trains – these things all create uncertainty". The TfL board was told that the pandemic has cost TfL £3.1B in lost passenger income in 2020-21. However, there were signs of a faster than anticipated return of

passengers as lockdown restrictions eased. Underground ridership is currently about 40% of pre-pandemic levels, and at about 60-65% on the buses. Simon Kilonback, TfL's chief finance officer said passenger numbers across the network were currently at almost 60% of normal levels – up from 35% at the end of March. He said this had to increase to 90% by the end of next March to remain in line with TfL's budget projections, and efforts would be made to reach 100%. This "acceleration" in the number of passengers resulted in fares income being £120M higher than expected, reaching £1.6B for 2020-21, compared with an expected £1.48B.

11.06.21 EVENING STANDARD – A nine-day summer shutdown of sections of the District and Circle lines was announced today for "safety critical" engineering works. Rail and bus passengers at Victoria station, will only be accessible via the Victoria Line. Underground bosses said they had "not taken the decision lightly" but the scale of the works meant a full closure was needed. There will be no service in either direction on the District Line between Earl's Court and Aldgate East, and on the Circle Line between Edgware Road and Aldgate via Victoria, between Wednesday 4 August and Thursday 10 August. In addition, there will be a wider shutdown on the western section of the District Line on the weekend of 7-8 August. South Kensington, Sloane Square, St James's Park, Embankment, Mansion House and Tower Hill will be completely closed for the nine-day period of the track replacement works. This includes replacing the outdated timber track at Embankment station with concrete slab track, a process that involves pumping more than 100m of concrete from road level. Esther Sharples, director of asset performance at TfL, said: "Closing a station of the Circle and District lines is not a decision we have taken lightly, but this is safety critical work. By carrying it out in one closure we can reduce overall disruption. During this closure, we will be carrying out other maintenance and improvement work at stations to minimise future disruption". Passenger number on the Underground are at about 40% of pre-pandemic levels but are said to be "accelerating" more quickly than expected.

17.06.21 EVENING STANDARD – *Letter by Sarah Kirk* – "Who was the lunatic who thought it would be a good idea to have electric scooters in our city? I've got used to dodging out of their way on pavements and in stations and on train platforms, but the station staff also take not a blind bit of notice and do nothing to stop them. Tonight, on the District Line, a man rode his scooter rapidly up the middle of the train and a woman with a crutch had to jump out of his way. If we have to have these scooters then they should be licensed and riders both identifiable and accountable".

22.06.21 EVENING STANDARD – Thousands of London commuters will be locked out of the savings offered by new flexi-season tickets because they are not valid on the Underground, Overground or National Rail journeys wholly within the capital. The new passes – which offer eight return journeys in the rush hour during any 28-day period – were launched yesterday. But the tickets are not available on any network run by TfL, leading to accusations that shorter distance commuters who use monthly or annual passes could be disadvantaged.