REPORT OF TRANSPORT TIMES CONFERENCE HELD ON 17 NOVEMBER 2015 DELIVERING HIGH SPEED RAIL

Ian McDonald attended this conference on behalf of the Railfuture Policy Directorate. The speakers involved and issues raised are reported here with primary emphasis on the issues raised which are relevant to Railfuture's campaigning.

09.20 Session 1: Welcome and Keynote address: Chaired by Anthony Smith, Chief Executive, Passenger Focus

A. Smith said it was exciting that HS2 was going ahead at last. Passengers were demanding more frequent and less crowded trains, and improved connections. Handling infrastructure improvements needed to be carefully controlled. An early questioner asked how passengers were expected to reach HS2 stations in the West Midlands; would they all drive? He replied that he hoped they would not.

09.25 Robert Goodwill MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport

The Minister felt we were entering an exciting new stage of HS2 development, now moving on from debate to actually starting the project. £411 billion was planned by the Treasury for new transport infrastructure, announced recently. HS2 would be at the cornerstone of this. Increased rail capacity is a major part of this plan; he referred for example to the Birmingham New Street station rebuild with 11 platforms and lifts, and emphasised the scale of Old Oak Common redevelopment planned. Procurement for HS2 Stage I has started with £11.8 billion being committed already, and construction starting in 2017. 25,000 jobs would be created during construction alone, with plans to train 3,000 apprentices by 2020. Suppliers bidding for work were required to take on graduates and apprentices. £37m would be spent on three new training centres and ultimately there would be seven. We needed younger recruits as most of the current workforce involved is over 45 years old.

09.35 Simon Kirby, Chief Executive, HS2

He emphasised that rail passenger traffic was expected to double in next 10 years. He said they were optimistic that Royal Assent and a start on construction could be achieved by 2017. HS2 needed to be built faster than this. Besides existing techniques, there was a need for more innovation in construction. There was more off-site pre-installation work planned than on previous projects, with modular assembly and smarter solutions. They were "building" a virtual railway first before actual construction started. Also unsafe working would not be tolerated on the project.

Building HS2 stations will support up to 100,000 jobs across the UK (no evidence or explanation how was offered - IM). Worldwide expertise was being sought. By 2020 we will need two million engineers (presumably not all railway ones – IM). At HS2 they were

recruiting two new employees daily, with staff now of 1,100. When line is fully up and running it will offer a level of service see anywhere in the world (Japan,China? – IM). Journey times will be substantially reduced, interchange will be improved, such as that at Old Oak Common for example, and journeys will be comfortable and stress-free. An estimated 500,000 lorries will be removed from the roads. He referred to the report by David Higgins in 2014 on traffic potential in great detail, and recommended further study of it.

Q & A:
Q: A.Smith: What will it feel like in 2017?
A: SK: HS all around the world. In UK there would eventually be a great increase in route capacity, including the classic network. He added that Crossrail and other projects being built showed we could deliver as required.
A2: RG: A mistake Government made at the outset was allowing the media to report that it was only about faster journeys, with little mention of extra capacity provided on other routes.
Q: Simon Alisdair: Are we doing enough with investment in railways, to improve access?
A: RG: We were not building HS2 instead of other projects; also East-West rail route, electrification and other major investment, plus road projects A303/A358 (Stonehenge).
Q: Me: What connectivity? There would be only three locations where HS2 tracks connected to classic network: Lichfield, Crewe, and near York, none at Birmingham? In France and Germany there were plentiful track connections to/from HS lines plus many diversionary route options. In UK on HS1 any accident or major mishap resulted in complete service withdrawal?
A: SK: No we will have to ensure more reliability on HS2. (!! – IM).
Q; Lawrie Quinn, (I.C.E. London): There were economic advantages with rebuilt Kings Cross and St Pancras; when are we going to accelerate development around these terminals?
A: SK: There had been many varied delays around developments in Kings Cross area.
Q: George Muir (Passenger Transport Magazine): How will HS2 financing proceed?
A: RG: Public and private sectors to be involved, and careful investment planning. Public finances are currently in order, though private sector can borrow extra funds more easily.
Q: Stephen Gasche (Kent County Council): HS1 had been an outstanding success. However will the Govt reconsider need for a dedicated HS1-HS2 rail link?
A; SK: Infrastructure problems caused withdrawal of previous proposed link. Fares for longer distance services were an additional disincentive for passengers (not clear if he was thinking about air competition - IM), but there will be passive provision for a new link to be built at a future date.
A2: RG: A problem also exists if you have domestic passengers on same trains as international passengers with a need for passport and security checks. (what about Birmingham-Ramsgate? – IM).
Q: (unnamed): Recent House of Lords debate whether to start construction from the north southwards, or build improved northern east-west line, but not satisfactorily answered?
A: RG: The Lords report was badly written up; is there a cheaper way to do it? Yes of course, but if we opened another piece of classic railway, the public response would be why did you not build an HS line like elsewhere?

Q: (unnamed) How to get the balance right between security and passenger convenience?
A: RG: A thorough analysis needed first.
A2: A.Smith: Security measures not helpful to the traditional concept of "turn up and go".
Q: Andrew Sharp (Business Travel News): What about a north-south link from Old Oak Common to Gatwick Airport?
A: RG: Too early to speculate about extra rail links to Gatwick. Both Birmingham-Heathrow and Birmingham-Gatwick may be possible eventually, but depends on spare capacity on HS2.

11.00 Session 2: Maximising the economic impact on city regions (Chaired by A.Smith)

Keith Brown MSP, Cabinet Secretary (Scotland) for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities

Mr Brown saw HS2 as unequivocally beneficial to Scotland's economy in spite of many gainsayers and he was impatient to see the benefits of HS2. But the positive impacts of HS needed to be ensured throughout the UK. He repeated the points made about job creation and apprentices in local industries, and he quoted some business statistics to support this view. (He made zero reference to proposed services on HS2! – IM).

11.15 Sir Richard Leese CBE, Leader, Manchester City Council

He informed the conference that five city regions in the north had produced jointly a report "One North" seeking £15m for multi-modal routes across the northern regions. Repeated claims of delivering economic benefit, making use of industry skills, and referred to economic growth activities. Improved local connectivity was needed, including light rail, and regeneration around HS stations, including Birmingham Curzon St, Manchester Piccadilly, and Manchester Airport.

11.20 Jim Steer, Director, Steer Davies Gleave

He is the Director of Greengauge 21 (GG21), Vice Chair of CILT, and currently a regular columnist for Transport Times. He reported on his group's involvement with HS2 project. GG21 was a more ambitious plan for HS routes in the UK. Now that HS2 route had been finalised he saw his primary role to strengthen resolve of politicians to go ahead. The most important characteristics to focus on were capacity and reliable performance, connectivity, and rebalancing the economy. Euston was the fastest growing terminus (?) with high levels of traffic growth. Objectors to HS2 were advocating improving the West Coast Main Line and lengthening trains, but clearly this would be inadequate to cope in the longer term. Growth was now much higher than could be managed by this scale of improvements. Was this now also time to roll out the digital railway and utilise ERTMS?

Extension of Phase 1 to include Crewe extension may get early approval. But why create a new hub station at Crewe in a poor location? It should be possible to divide and join up

separate HS units, and closely regulate headways. What about an Anglo-Scottish HSR? There is a capacity problem now, and a 3-hour London-Glasgow time would be an ideal target. There was a need to build in more capacity and meet the need for a stronger rebalanced economy, and meet the (annual?) traffic growth of 5%.

Q. Surely ERTMS introduction and technical improvements are a quicker solution to meet increased demand?
A. Jim Steer: HS2 will be equipped with ETCS Level 3, but this imposed on the existing classic network is not a long term solution.
Q. (Me): Do the panel really believe passengers will choose to take a HS train to Toton and change there for local trains to Nottingham and Derby rather than take a direct if slower train from London to these cities?
Q. Anon: In Birmingham and Manchester the HS stations will be close to existing main city centre stations, but both Toton and Meadowhall will be hub stations, and the cities will have no direct HS services.
A. Richard Leese: Toton is equi-distant between Nottingham and Derby; the LAs in South Yorkshire could not agree on which location was best for an HS station. If good services ran to the city centres from these hubs there would be a reasonable compromise.
A. Jim Steer: City centre stations are important. Regeneration elsewhere in the area is an alternative choice to be made; these are important questions to be resolved.
Further discussion and questions on this topic followed.
Q. (Me again): Also does Keith Brown (Scottish MSP) realise that when HS trains come off the HS route (even after Stage 2 completion) that London-Glasgow trains will lose 15-20 minutes of present journey time from that point on, as a result of replacing Pendolino trains with non-tilting trainsets?
A. Keith Brown: Yes, so I understand, and for that reason it is essential that HS2 be extended all the way to Glasgow.
(Note: Since HS2 is <u>not</u> planned currently to run to Glasgow, I was disappointed that none of the others responded to my point!).

12.15 David Brown, Chief Executive, Transport for the North (TfN)

TfN had been created by 25 local authorities ((LAs), Network Rail, HS2 Ltd, and Consortium for Northern England, to help generate the northern England economy. He then elucidated ongoing progress with local issues, e.g. smart integrated ticketing, increasing train services and speeds (for example a minibus journey with Lord Adonis from Manchester to Sheffield took 1hr 45m to cover the 35 miles!). The new electric Liverpool-Manchester, using 20-year old trains, still generated almost 20% increase in passengers. Better services, increasing speeds with minor infrastructure rebuilds, and electrification, would create best and quicker impacts than longer term HS2 project. Need a pattern of connectivity between east and west (Liverpool-Newcastle) not just North-South.

Q. Laurie Quinn (I.C.E. London) HS1 had generated much new traffic and benefits, but so far almost none had arisen at Ebbsfleet where proposed development had not taken place yet. Were panel sure there would not be long waits for redevelopment in Manchester, for example?
A. Richard Leese (Manchester CC): Regeneration around Piccadilly should be very fast. Traffic would also increase on Manchester-Leeds axis.
A. Keith Brown: Borders Railway reopening plans saw rapid housing developments before the railway was even built!
Q/A: Discussion by several on need for HS2 to Scotland, capacity and speed increases.

LUNCH

13.30 Session 3, Procurement of Rolling Stock; Chair Richard Threlfall (KPMG):
Giles Thomas, Acting Technical Director, HS2:

He outlined scale of the project and what was required. There would be 800-tonne trains of 16 cars each, running at speeds up to 360 kmh. There had been massive improvements in technology since first generation HS trains introduced. He then covered the following: European TSI problems, different platform heights, time need to clean and turn trains round, etc. They were running innovations programme within HS2 Ltd to gain from best ideas.

13.45 Luis Fernandez Jimenez, Business Dev't & Strategy Director, Thales, Spain:

He described history of AVE (HS) train development in Spain since 1992, with start of Madrid-Seville service at 300 kmh. 10 years later Madrid-Barcelona services started at 350 kmh, then with extension into France (Perpignan). He listed parallel and subsequent routes and services. Today there were 2,300 km of HS lines second largest in the world after China. Currently there were plans to increase this to 3,900 km. Siemens, Bombardier and Alstom were all involved with building the trainsets. He mentioned some of the most outstanding inter-city time improvements that have resulted and traffic generated.

14.00 Graeme Clark, Head of Business Development, Siemens:

In a very technical presentation, he described current orders for Siemens HS trainsets; described alternative seating plans possible, and referred to problems of coping with different platform heights, different signalling standards, etc. There was a need to optimise designs and procurement availability. Questions included how far in Europe new sets could run, multi-voltage options, should classic sets have tilting option?

Q. Chair: Two types of rolling stock were planned for use on HS2; were we taking too much risk in having two fleets, only one of which could run on classic lines?
A. G.Clark: He believed it would work, but advised as much type compatibility as possible.
Q. L.Quinn and others had some detailed technical questions; only some were answered.

A. G.Thomas: Depots will be part of the stock procurement issues. Stage 1 train procurement would cost £3 billion. Additional response: DfT have asked HS2 Ltd to look at how a franchise could be utilised for operating HS2 services.

15.30 Session 4: International Best Practice, chair: Daniel Loshchaoff, Global Head of Rail, KPMG:
Giles Godard, Project Director, VINCI SA (Brazil):

In 2006 there had been only two relevant transport deadlines: 2014 and 2016 to cater for major international sporting events and to transport participants and visitors. The expectations were too high and the bidding and procurement were far too late, with vague allocation of responsibility. Lessons needed to be learned.

15.40 Hans Dekker, President of Infrastructure, Fluor Corporation:

His group handled 1,000 projects annually. The Dutch HS project, HSL South covering Amsterdam-Rotterdam-Antwerp, 245 km, started build in 2002 for completion in 2007. The line was duly constructed after routeing difficulties, but there were no trains! He described saga of failure to deliver Ansaldobreda trains as ordered, and the myriad of problems, with culpability laid with HSL, NS state railways, the Minister of Transport and other politicians. Only Thalys trains and a limited NS train service were running at present, 9 years later.

16.00 Jordi Ferrando, M.D. for Europe, FCC Construction:

They had built over 30% of HS lines in Spain; he listed statistics on infrastructure types. Tunnelling was extensive but had not been as big a problem as for the UK Spanish lines were routes through vast unpopulated areas. In the UK dense urbanisation and environment would cause problems and cost much more. Lines being built for HS purposes and extensions now included Madrid Atocha-Chamartin tunnel, Atlantic Axis Line(?), Madrid-Extremadura, Madrid-Zaragoza, Barcelona La Segrera station, Girona Station, Vigo-Pontevedra.

The Q and A session which followed was very technical and of limited interest to any but construction companies present, and some of little relevance to HS2 at all.

The Conference closed at 16.30 and all were thanked for their interest and support.