

High speed trains to Mecca



Picture: JOSE JURADO

Talgo @TalgoGroup · Oct 11
Every single part has been designed for the Arabian climate: pressurized coaches, military-grade filtering, thermal resistivity from 0° to 50° C, full 2-hour long autonomy in case of overhead electrification failure... (Pic by Jose Jurado)

HIGH SPEED HAJJ: Muslim pilgrims will be able to travel from Medina to Mecca

Saudi Arabia's Haramain high speed rail line linking Mecca, Jeddah and Medina was inaugurated by King Salman in September and launched to the public in October.

The king travelled in one of the Talgo-built trains for a trip from Jeddah to Medina. The 280-mile line is designed for a maximum speed of 200 mph and is intended to carry up to 60 million passengers a year to the holy cities.

The line has been built by Chinese and Saudi Arabian contractors, and a Spanish-led consortium will operate the line as part of a £6 billion concession. The 36 Talgo 350 trains are managed by Spain's state-owned rail operator RENFE and infrastructure owner ADIF for the first 12 years.

Initially the train is operating four days a week, from Thursday to Sunday. It is eventually expected to operate daily, by which time direct trips between Mecca and Medina will take two hours, and trips between Mecca and Medina stopping at Jeddah and King Abdullah Economic City will take an additional 20 minutes. The cost of an economy class ticket is around £30 single.

The full service is expected to be in operation by September, in time for the annual Hajj pilgrimage, which attracts more than two million Muslims to the Mecca area.

Saudi Arabia is boosting its infrastructure spending and expanding its railways, with an £18 billion metro system under construction in Riyadh, as it seeks to diversify its oil-dependent economy.

railaction

railaction is edited by
Ray King

editor@railwatch.org.uk

twitter: @railfuture

twitter: @railwatch

Rail passengers rewarded with yet another kick in the wallet

Rail fares went up by an average of 3.1% on 2 January 2019, despite 2018 being one of the worst years ever for punctuality.

"After a terrible year of timetable chaos, passengers are being rewarded with yet another kick in the wallet," said Railfuture's Bruce Williamson.

"Since 2004, rail fares have raced ahead of people's incomes whilst the cost of motoring has remained static, partly thanks to the government's continuing freeze on fuel duty.

"Petrol is now cheaper than it was in 2011, when the last fuel duty increase kicked in. In that time, rail fares have gone up 28%. Are they trying to drive us off the railways?

"Why are hard-working commuters being punished for the 'crime' of trying to get the train to work? It really is war against the train passenger."

Rail fare increases are based on the Retail Price Index (RPI) rather than the Government-preferred Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is usually lower.

"So why not use CPI?" asked Bruce. "It is a very deliberate policy on the part of the Government to make the most expensive walk-on fares in Europe even more expensive year on year.

"Rail passengers are paying the price for the Government's inability to control industry costs. It is time that Transport Secretary Chris Grayling got a grip. After all, if he is not the 'fat controller', who is?"

Railfuture has produced some figures comparing the effect of CPI v RPI on rail fares:

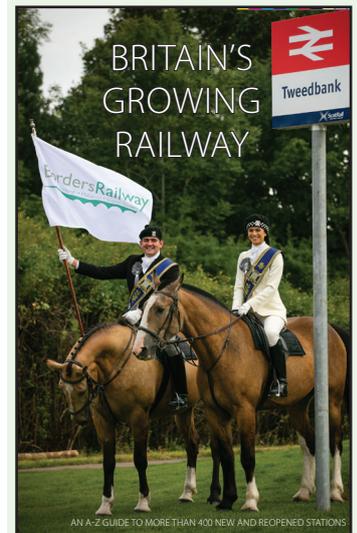
Railfuture press releases

Railfuture press releases can be read in full at

[Railfuture press releases](#)

A review of other Railfuture appearances in print and broadcast media can be seen at

[Railfuture in the news](#)



Graphic: RAILFUTURE

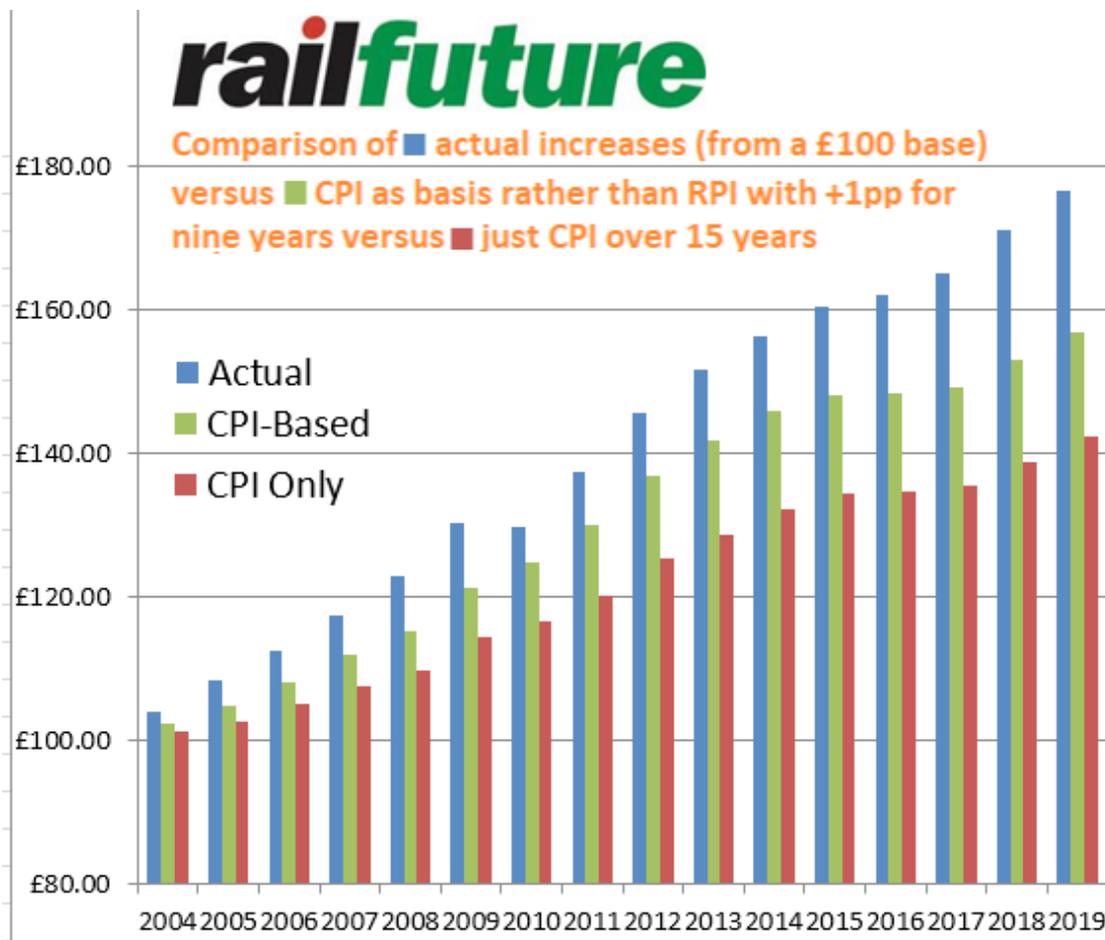
Railfuture's book gives details of the 400 stations and over 950km of new routes which have opened to passengers since 1960.

£9.95 including postage.

You can order your copy at:

www.railfuture.org.uk/

shop/books.php





**FARE RISES IN BRITAIN OVER 15 YEARS
EFFECT OF USING RPI INSTEAD OF CPI
ON GOVERNMENT-SET REGULATED FARES**

The government has imposed RPI+1% fare rises between 2004 and 2013, and RPI since. These figures show the effect if the government had based rises on the standard CPI rather than the obsolete RPI. It was RPI-1% between 1999 and 2003, and was RPI before that.

	RPI	CPI	Diff	Jan	Govt	Actual	£100.00		If CPI	£100.00
2003 JUL	3.1	1.3	1.8	2004	RPI+1%	4.1	£104.10	CPI+1%	2.3	£102.30
2004 JUL	3.0	1.4	1.6	2005	RPI+1%	4.0	£108.26	CPI+1%	2.4	£104.76
2005 JUL	2.9	2.3	0.6	2006	RPI+1%	3.9	£112.48	CPI+1%	3.3	£108.22
2006 JUL	3.3	2.4	0.9	2007	RPI+1%	4.3	£117.32	CPI+1%	3.4	£111.90
2007 JUL	3.8	1.9	1.9	2008	RPI+1%	4.8	£122.95	CPI+1%	2.9	£115.15
2008 JUL	5.0	4.4	0.6	2009	RPI+1%	6.0	£130.33	CPI+1%	5.4	£121.37
2009 JUL	-1.4	1.8	-3.2	2010	RPI+1%	-0.4	£129.81	CPI+1%	2.8	£124.77
2010 JUL	4.8	3.1	1.7	2011	RPI+1%	5.8	£137.34	CPI+1%	4.1	£129.89
2011 JUL	5.0	4.4	0.6	2012	RPI+1%	6.0	£145.58	CPI+1%	5.4	£136.90
2012 JUL	3.2	2.6	0.6	2013	RPI+1%	4.2	£151.69	CPI+1%	3.6	£141.83
2013 JUL	3.1	2.8	0.3	2014	RPI	3.1	£156.39	CPI	2.8	£145.80
2014 JUL	2.5	1.6	0.9	2015	RPI	2.5	£160.30	CPI	1.6	£148.13
2015 JUL	1.0	0.1	0.9	2016	RPI	1.0	£161.90	CPI	0.1	£148.28
2016 JUL	1.9	0.6	1.3	2017	RPI	1.9	£164.98	CPI	0.6	£149.17
2017 JUL	3.6	2.6	1.0	2018	RPI	3.6	£170.92	CPI	2.6	£153.05
2018 JUL	3.2	2.5	0.7	2019	RPI	3.2	£176.39	CPI	2.5	£156.88

From a £100 fare in 2003, using RPI as a basis rather than CPI has increased that fare by £19.51.

Note: figures apply to England (except Southeastern). In recent years Scotland and Wales may have differed.

RAILFUTURE - CAMPAIGNING FOR BETTER SERVICES OVER A BIGGER RAILWAY

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New 26-30 railcard is launched

Rail travellers aged between 26 and 30 can now buy a Railcard, giving them a one-third discount on rail fares.

Called the Millennial Railcard, it went on sale from 2 January 2019. It follows a trial last year, when a limited number of the cards sold out immediately. Four million passengers will qualify for the latest card.

For a long trip, Millennial Railcard holders can save more on their fare than the cost of the card in just one journey.

Rail travellers aged between 16 and 25 and pensioners are already able to buy railcards to give them discounts.

In September, a new railcard will be launched for 16- and 17-year-olds to buy half-price train tickets, the Government has announced.

Railfuture has shown that a national railcard available to everyone would make economic sense for the rail industry.

Graphic: RAILFUTURE

Railfuture submissions

Railfuture responds to many formal consultations about the railways.

Submissions can be downloaded from:

<http://www.railfuture.org.uk/consultation+responses>

Government undermines public transport with handout to drivers

The Chancellor announced proudly in his Budget that the Government will freeze fuel duties for the ninth successive year. This move further undercuts public transport and traps people in car dependence, warned London Assembly Member Caroline Russell, who added: "Cars: £9 billion. Road: £30 billion. Mentions of climate change: 0." Railfuture president Christian Wolmar said: "The idea of ringfencing road fund revenue for roadbuilding is a retrograde tax move that makes no sense in economic, fiscal or environmental terms. Has the Chancellor not realised that there is an air pollution and climate change crisis?"

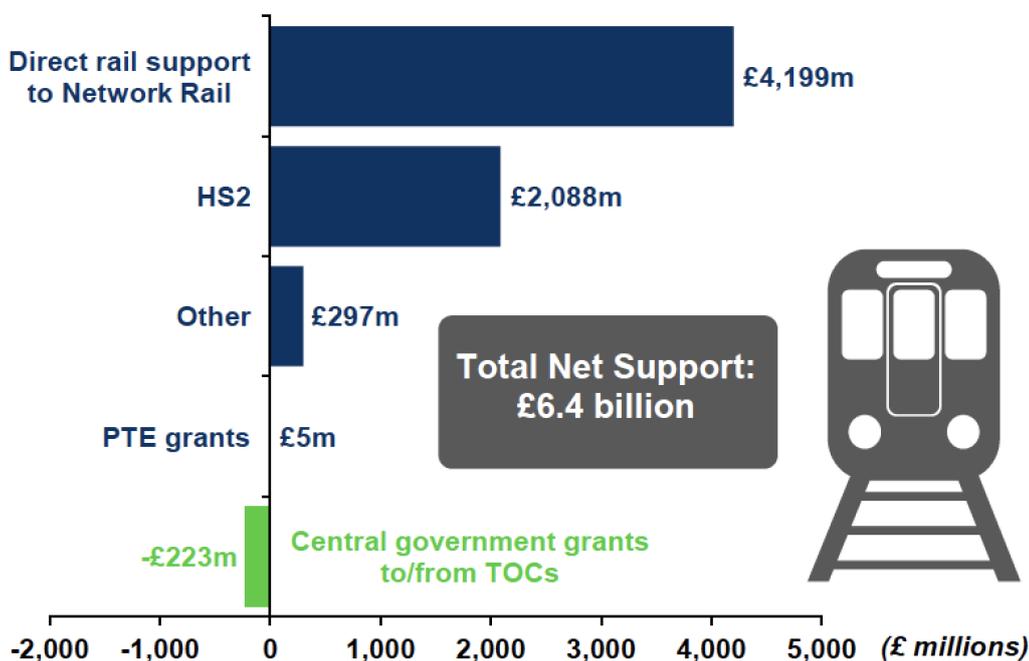
Taxpayers and passengers pay big money for our private railway

The Office for Rail and Road published details of railway finance in October showing that net Government support to the rail industry amounted to £6.4 billion in 2017-18. In return, the Government received £223 million from train operating companies, compared to £776 million in the previous year.

The ORR calculates that the Government provided 6.1p for every rail passenger kilometre travelled, up by 0.9p on the previous year.

But Government support totalling £6.4 billion is less than the £9.6 billion which passengers paid for their tickets.

Private-sector investment in the railways added up to £1.3 billion over the year, according to the train operators' lobby organisation, the Rail Delivery Group. The private sector investment includes money for new trains, which train operators have to pay to lease and passengers have to pay to use.



MONEY FOR RAIL: The ORR published a chart of what the taxpayer contributed



WRONG DIRECTION: Government support for rail freight has been going down even though most people want more freight to go by rail, rather than road

What's on

Many rail-related events are listed on Railfuture's website:

<http://railfuture.org.uk/events>

Parents driving children to school prosecuted

In under one hour, West Midlands Police who checked parents taking their children to Nansen Primary School in Birmingham reported 51 offences of unsecured children, two drivers with no insurance, one with no licence, five with dangerously carried passengers, one obstruction, one offence of leaving a vehicle in a dangerous position and three drivers with no MoT certificate.

Graphic: ORR

The Department for Transport and its crazy ideas

The Government has revealed one part of its method for determining the economic impact of road schemes. A car driver's time is estimated to be worth £17.69 per hour while a cyclist's time is worth only £10.02 per hour. The figures were revealed in relation to plans for Milton Road, Cambridge.

Graphic: ORR

Pacers on notice as all trains will soon be accessible

Pacer trains will continue to operate in several parts of Britain during 2019, despite hopes that they would have been retired by now. Delays to electrification projects have prevented the “cascade” of more modern diesel trains to replace Pacers.

The Pacers are unlikely to survive into next year because all train carriages will have to be fully accessible by 1 January 2020, thanks to the Disability Discrimination Act, which was passed 15 years ago. The rail industry was given that period to get ready for the Act to be fully implemented in 2020.

We will have to wait even longer for the Government to get to grips with the problem of most railway stations not being accessible. Only a quarter of Britain’s stations are step-free so the prospect of disabled people being able to “turn up and go” remains distant.

Of course, the lack of accessibility affects not only disabled people, but those with impaired mobility, such as the elderly, and parents with young children. The obvious result is that more people are forced to travel by less environmentally friendly and less safe modes, including the car, which leads to isolation and loneliness, congestion and pollution.



CARLISLE: 142 Pacer from Newcastle in June 2018

Electrification can be delivered more cost-effectively

The Government has agreed to work with the Railway Industry Association to produce a report on how electrification can be delivered cost-effectively.

The RIA admits that there were cost problems in electrifying the Great Western routes out of London Paddington but believes that costs can be held at 2009 levels for future schemes.

The RIA has launched an electrification costs challenge among its 240 rail supplier members.

David Clarke, technical director of the RIA, says electrification is the best option for intensively used routes such as TransPennine which will benefit passengers, freight and the environment.

Railfuture conferences

The next Railfuture conference is in Darlington on 22 June 2019

www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences

Picture: RAILWATCH

Bikes best for use of road space

London’s Embankment cycle lane takes up one lane out of four, but carries more people at rush hour than the other three lanes combined. The Government claims Britain’s roads are the safest in Europe but safety campaigners say this misrepresents the evidence. Dr Rachel Aldred shows that cyclists and pedestrians are more at risk in Britain than in Finland, Germany, Switzerland, Norway and the Netherlands. The spin-free evidence is here: <https://www.itf-oecd.org/exposure-adjusted-road-fatality-rates-cycling-and-walking-european-countries>

Commander of the British Empire

Mark Carne, who retired from his £820,000 job as Network Rail chief executive, was honoured with a CBE. He picked up his award on 29 November, on the same day that the Office for Rail and Road condemned Network Rail for “systemic” failings and ordered it “urgently” to improve.



Picture: TYNE VALLEY CRP

HALTWHISTLE: A class 156 diesel train on the Newcastle-Carlisle line

Tyne Valley stations win backing from adopters

Most of the stations on the Newcastle-Carlisle line now have station adopters in "some form or other", according to the Tyne Valley community rail partnership. The CRP and operator Northern are, however, still looking for adopters for Dunston and Blydon at the Newcastle end of the line, as well as Brampton which is 10 miles from Carlisle. At Blydon there has been an initiative to get pupils who use the train to get to St Thomas Moore School to take an interest in the station. The school's art department is considering producing art work for the station, which also serves as a railhead for Ryton, which lost its station as far back as 1954, well before the Beeching cuts.



Picture: TYNE VALLEY CRP

HALTWHISTLE: Poppies for Remembrance Day

The AGM of the Tyne Valley Rail Users was told that the frequency of the train service will be increased in May. The guest speaker Mike Paterson, from operator Northern, asked the audience to guess how much it costs to operate a train on the Newcastle-Carlisle route. The answer: £675 for one train. The CRP was involved in coordinating volunteers at all 14 stations along the line to make poppies to mark Remembrance Day in November 2018.

Firms pay 80% of commuters' rail fare

In Belgium, employers are legally required to pay about 80% of the cost of a worker's rail season ticket for travel to work. The *Independent's* European correspondent Jon Stone commented: "Curious that nothing similar exists in the UK. Suspect such a policy would go down extremely well with voters in London and the south east!"

Belgian Railways explains to companies: "There are 3 types of railcards for your employees:

- Journey Railcard: railcard for a fixed journey
- Network Railcard: unlimited daily travel across the entire Belgian network
- Part-time Railcard: the solution for part-time employees

ASLEF backing for Welsh First Minister

Mark Drakeford, 64, became First Minister of the Welsh Government in December, succeeding Carwyn Jones. He was supported for the post by train drivers union ASLEF.