

Labour's Rail Britannia

Watch Live

LOUISE HAIGH

**Announces Labour's
plan to fix Britain's
railways**

9am Thursday 25 April

 **Labour**

BRITAIN'S FUTURE

Labour's shadow transport secretary Louise Haigh launched the party's plan for the railways at the office of Trainline, which she praised for making the best of the complicated ticket system. You can watch her full speech at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8KPxggsn0Q>

Labour has outlined its plans for the railways if it wins the next general election. The word nationalisation was not mentioned but Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer said: "We have tried privatisation for two or three decades and it is a complete mess."

Labour's transport spokesperson Louise Haigh said that fragmentation could be solved by a cost-free policy of absorbing the private train operators into public ownership when current contracts expire. No compensation will be paid.

Labour is aiming to bring together decision-making on both track and train together by setting up Great British Railways, which will include already-nationalised Network Rail, from Day One.

Ms Haigh joked that, instead of adopting the Conservatives' planned Great British Railways, she would have preferred a body called Rail Britannia, but she has been overruled. The Labour version of GBR would be led by "rail experts" rather than Whitehall and Labour said its plan would save the taxpayer more than £2 billion a year, compared to the current rail "subsidy" of £4 billion a year.

Labour's Get Britain Moving: Labour's Plan to Fix Britain's Railways will incentivise GBR to increase revenue from both passengers and freight, and it acknowledged that rail already has the power to drive economic growth.

railaction

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Ms Haigh said that shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves has not yet agreed that all the estimated £2 billion in savings can be invested into rail services.

Ms Haigh also said the Trainline had done well in providing guidance to passengers confused by rail's complex ticketing. Labour wants to provide a network-wide best-price guarantee.

Labour is also committed to negotiating with the rail unions and said there are no plans for ticket office closures. Ms Haigh said: "The workforce is an asset not a liability."

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said Labour's plan to bring train operating companies into a publicly owned network was in the best interests of railway workers, passengers and the taxpayer, but the plan should be a first step to completely integrating all of our railway into public ownership.

The rail freight operators will also stay private, as well as open access passenger operations, such as Hull Trains. Rail Freight Group director general Maggie Simpson said: "We are pleased that the Labour Party has highlighted the huge economic potential of rail freight and is committed to measures including statutory duties for freight and long-term growth targets."

The existing Office of Rail and Road and the Transport Focus watchdog will be combined into a passenger standards authority which would hold the new operating body accountable for its performance. It would also have a role in setting future fare levels.

Labour's plan was welcomed as providing greater certainty to the supply chain, said the Railway Industry Association.

With a long-term plan offering more visibility of the supply pipeline, there would be greater ability to plan ahead.

The danger signal is that the railways will be forced to compete with other public services, such as the NHS, for what could be dwindling public resources.

Labour parliamentary candidate for Carlisle Julie Minns said: "Carlisle and North Cumbria have borne the brunt of the cost of Conservative rail failure, with two of the train operating companies that serve our area – Avanti and Northern – recording the largest increase in the percentage of trains cancelled over the last eight years. Privatisation of our rail network has failed."

Keith Williams, who was tasked with a "root and branch" review of the industry over five years ago, has indicated that Labour's proposals are largely consistent with his proposals published as part of the "Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail" and latterly the "Plan for Rail" following a change in the secretary of state for transport.

TransPennine Express, London North Eastern Railway, Northern and Southeastern have already been taken under public control and are being run by the government's Operator of Last Resort.

Transport for Wales was brought under Welsh Government control in 2021, while ScotRail was taken over by the Scottish Government in 2022.

Editor's note: Many Railfuture members are happy to use the Trainline to research fares but use the National Rail website or operators' websites to make their booking, because the Trainline charges a booking fee.

Labour leaves the ROSCOs untouched

Untouched by Labour plans are the rolling stock companies which lease trains to operators.

The wealthy ROSCOs will remain privately owned and the trains will not be brought into public ownership.

Railfuture vice-president Roger Ford has estimated that new trains would require £1.5 billion in funding per year.

He said: "New trains will continue to be financed by the private sector."

"The private sector will do the capital expenditure for the government."

"If you did not have the ROSCOs, the Treasury would have to come up with the money to buy new trains."



Rail minister Huw Merriman, left, East West Rail chief executive Beth West, and Greg Smith, Conservative MP for Buckingham, marking the completion of track between Bicester and Bletchley on 7 March Picture: East West Rail

Positive news for East West

The government made money available in its March budget to speed up work on the Bedford-Bletchley section of East West Rail.

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt said the £240 million (from existing budgets) would allow trains to start running from Oxford to Bedford within six years.

On budget day, the House of Commons transport select committee questioned Tom Wootton, the Conservative mayor of Bedford, who wants EWR to change its plans for the next stage from Bedford to Cambridge.

At an earlier meeting with East West Rail to discuss eight alternative routes proposed by Bedford Council, Mr Wootton said he was disappointed.

Beth West, chief executive of EWR, said that while it would look at Mr Wootton's suggestions, the first part of a statutory consultation starting in June would be based on the preferred route announced last year.

A new survey of people in Bedford shows that 80% believe EWR will improve access to jobs, 75% say it will boost access to education, 78% believe it will improve access to essential public services like hospitals and 83% say it will improve how people can travel around the area.

The preferred route, however, would require the demolition of up to 37 homes in Bedford, with a further 28 homes set to lose part of their gardens. Ms West said she was determined to make sure the project offered value for money, and that lowering half the embankments along the 86-mile route of the line was already saving money.

"We are looking at minimising the cost of delivering this railway," she said.

Rail minister Huw Merriman praised EWR for delivering the first phase of EWR on time and on budget. He hoped the section linking Oxford with Bletchley would

Hot topics

Hot topics for Railfuture at the moment are:

- 1 The future of ticket retailing
 - 2 Fares reform
 - 3 The March fares rise
- Please consult the website and provide input to your Railfuture branch.

The Railfuture board is currently considering:

- 1 The structure of the industry
- 2 Areas to focus on for operational improvement
- 3 How to reduce fares complexity

What's on

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

[railfuture.org.uk/events](https://www.railfuture.org.uk/events)

Railfuture AGM

You can book your place at:

https://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/#2024_edinburgh

Scan this QR code to join Railfuture



open next year. Referring to the need to electrify East West Rail, he added: "Great Western Railway has finished a battery exercise that allowed it to deliver 86 miles of journey on a single charge. Oxford to Cambridge is 84 miles.

"The starting point has been diesel because of the architecture of the existing line, but we are looking to make decisions in the summer working with the Treasury as to whether we can come up with a better transport technology to decarbonise the line."

The £6 billion East West Rail project is vital for the economic potential of the area, the transport committee heard from Naomi West of England's Economic Heartland, the sub-national transport body.

Later, she said EWR will put Britain on the map, with a world-leading science and innovation cluster, and as a great place to live, work and do business.

East West Rail will spread the opportunities of Oxford and Cambridge into a much wider region, provide access to a greater labour market and create an important critical mass which brings in other clusters such as around Cranfield and Motorsport Valley, said Dr Andy Williams, chair of the Oxford to Cambridge Science Supercluster Board.

Negative on electrification

More than 11,000 kilometres of railway could have been electrified with the amount of revenue lost on the fuel duty freeze handed to motorists at the budget in March. The Campaign to Electrify Britain's Railways says the cut is expected to cost the taxpayer £27 billion over five years. The campaign's Noel Dolphin said: "This is roughly the same amount it would cost to electrify 11,000 kilometres of railway – 17 times the length from London to Edinburgh on the East Coast main line and the same amount Network Rail says it needs to electrify to meet Net Zero."

Cost estimates are based on Network Rail's target cost for the Midland main line electrification programme of £2.5 million per single track kilometre.

Network Rail's Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy has identified 11,700 kilometres of railway that would suit electrification.

As every Railfuture member knows, electrified railways carry more people and freight, while saving money and carbon in the long run.

They have more seats than diesel or hybrid trains and accelerate and brake faster, meaning quicker journeys and the ability to get more trains on a line.

They are quieter and emission-free, bringing cleaner air to communities along lines and at stations.

Electric trains are cheaper to buy, cheaper to maintain and cheaper to run while electrified tracks are cheaper to maintain. See:

www.riagb.org.uk/RIA/Newsroom/Press_Releases/Railway_Industry_publishes_new_paper_outlining_benefits_rail_electrification.aspx

Analysis by CarbonBrief suggests UK emissions were already 7% higher in 2022 as a result of the cut to fuel duty: <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-fuel-duty-freezes-have-increased-uk-co2-emissions-by-up-to-7/>

The cut in costs for motorists compares with the 4.9% rise in March in regulated rail fares in England and Wales which includes season tickets and off-peak tickets.

Railfuture website

The Railfuture website is a mine of information for members. You can gain access to the members area at:

www.railfuture.org.uk/Members+area

From there you can view or download the 11-page members handbook.

By using the Google search box on the Railfuture website you can discover many other nuggets of information which might help in your own rail campaigning.

Bargain book offer

Railfuture's book, **Britain's Growing Railway**, gives details of the 400 stations and over 950km of new routes which opened to passengers between 1960 and 2017.

The original published price was £9.95, but it is now available at the reduced price of £5 including postage.

You can order your copy at:

www.railfuture.org.uk/shop/books.php?id=bgr1

Red Wall warning from campaigners

Marginal constituencies in Red Wall areas were ignored in the chancellor's March budget, said Skipton to Colne rail campaigners.

Accrington, East Lancashire, was where the prime minister Rishi Sunak and chancellor Jeremy Hunt relaunched the Conservative party's levelling up election manifesto commitment in January.

The Skipton to Colne rail project runs through key Red Wall constituencies but not a penny of the money promised in the budget for new transport projects has been delivered anywhere in one of the most deprived places in England, said the Skipton and East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership.

Funds released by the recent cancellation of part of HS2 were supposed to be spent on transformational transport projects across "The North".

However east Lancashire, including Accrington, has once again been ignored by the chancellor and PM, said SELRAP, which has been working with government ministers, civil servants and Network Rail to reinstate the strategic trans-Pennine Skipton to Colne railway.

The line would reconnect long-marginalised east Lancashire to numerous employment opportunities in Yorkshire. This transformational project has an excellent business case.

SELRAP chair Peter Bryson said: "All Members of Parliament along the route fully support this vital project and they all want it delivered quickly.

"This truly transformational project requires just a tiny fraction of the funding released by the cancellation of HS2. To deliver on its election manifesto promises to level up, this government needs to put its money where its mouth is".

The project runs through the town centres of many marginal Red Wall constituencies: Philip Davies – Conservative MP for Shipley, Robbie Moore – Conservative MP for Keighley and Ilkley, Julian Smith – Conservative MP for Skipton and Ripon (neighbouring the prime minister), Andrew Stephenson – Conservative MP for Pendle (a former HS2 minister), Anthony Higginbotham – Conservative MP for Burnley, Sara Britcliffe – Conservative MP for Hyndburn. SELRAP sent a 21-page presentation to all candidates in the 2 May elections, explaining how transformational the Skipton-Colne link could be.

Train drivers win reduction of hours

Train drivers in Germany have agreed an "intelligent" deal to cut their hours from 38 to 35 without a pay cut. The standard working week will be reduced in stages from 2026 to 2029, but drivers can choose to work 40 hours if they want to earn more. Pay will also rise, with an added amount to compensate for inflation.

Meanwhile in Britain, train drivers' union ASLEF has been taking industrial action for 20 months, but claims government and rail bosses are colluding in blocking a deal. ASLEF staged three one-day strikes across different train operating companies between 5 and 8 April, as well as an overtime ban across 16 train companies from Thursday 4 to Saturday 6 April and from Monday 8 to Tuesday 9 April. ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan said: "I've got drivers who have gone five years without a pay deal – half a decade."

Railfuture Lottery

Railfuture Lottery profits go towards the Fighting Fund which supports the campaigns our members are working on.

For a small sum of £12 per year for 12 entries, you can take part and win one of six prizes every month.

Multiple entries are possible and taking part is easy – contact

lottery@railfuture.org.uk

and decide how many entries you want every month and how you would like to pay: via online banking, Paypal or cheque.

With 72 winners every year and increased prizes in the December draw, give it a try – who knows, you could easily be a winner!

Railfuture press releases

Railfuture press releases can be read in full at

[railfuture.org.uk/
Press-releases](https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Press-releases)

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

Railfuture in the news
[www.railfuture.org.uk/
Railfuture-in-the-news](https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Railfuture-in-the-news)

Ely's importance for rail strategy

Labour shadow rail minister Stephen Morgan was briefed on the importance of delivering the Ely Junction improvement works during a visit to Cambridge in February.

Mr Morgan was joined by Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Dr Nik Johnson, and Naomi Green of England's Economic Heartland, with representatives from the Rail Freight Group, Freeport East and Network Rail.

The Ely upgrade will enable more freight trains to travel between Felixstowe and the English Midlands and North, reducing the need for 100,000 lorry trips a year and cutting road congestion by 5.6 million hours a year.

The Ely upgrade is also crucial from a passenger service perspective. It is key to enabling an hourly Ipswich-Peterborough service which we all wish to see and for which Greater Anglia made provision in the number of bimode trains ordered as part of its fleet of new trains. The trains are already in service. Greater Anglia said: "Hopefully our constructive and collective case-making will result in this key project moving forward as soon as possible."

The government announced in October that funding for Ely would ensure preparatory work begins "as soon as possible". Seven months later, there is no news about the actual funding being available.

Ely map: [wikipedia/Andy F](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ely)

ASLEF last met the Rail Delivery Group, which represents rail companies, in April 2023.

Come to Edinburgh with Railfuture

It is still possible to book your place for Railfuture's annual national conference in Edinburgh on Saturday 13 July 2024. Railfuture members will find the venue and timing are significant because the Levenmouth railway is expected to reopen on 2 June 2024 while the Edinburgh tram extension to Leith and Newhaven opened in 2023.

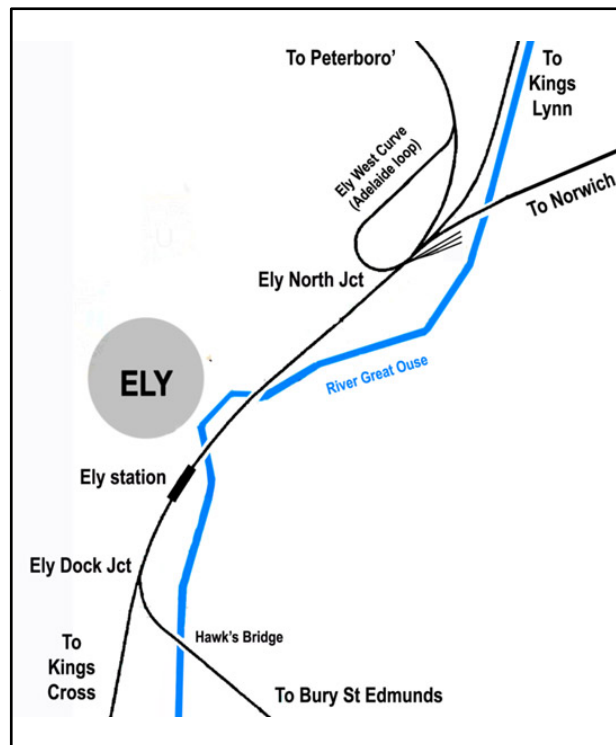
More information can be found on the Railfuture website at

www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/#2024_edinburgh

Edinburgh City Councillor Scott Arthur is guest speaker, talking about Edinburgh Trams, including proposals for a second line.

For enquiries about the conference, please email:

conferences@railfuture.org.uk



RAILFUTURE MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2023-24

Nominations for Railfuture Member of the Year 2023-24 are now open. The award will be presented at the Railfuture AGM in Edinburgh on Saturday 13 July 2024.

Do you know an individual Railfuture member who has contributed to the success of the organisation? Perhaps they have raised the profile of Railfuture in their local area? Or they may volunteer helping run their local branch? Whoever they are, if you think they deserve recognition we would like to hear about them.

We will require a written statement of no more than 500 words explaining why they deserve to be recognised.

- All Railfuture individual members (not RUGs) are eligible to be nominated
 - This award is completely separate from the Rail User Group (RUG) Awards which have their own nomination criteria
 - The deadline for nominations to be received is 30 June 2024
- For further details or to submit a nomination please email membership director Wendy Thorne at: wendy.thorne@railfuture.org.uk

Rules wreck the railway replacement bus

By Paul Hollinghurst

Where has the rail replacement bus to Stansted gone?

Why do the rail industry and Department for Transport fail passengers?

These are questions I have been asked by colleagues wanting to get from Cambridge to Stansted Airport during engineering work south of Cambridge on a Saturday.

They want to know why there are sometimes direct buses every hour, but sometimes only every two hours.

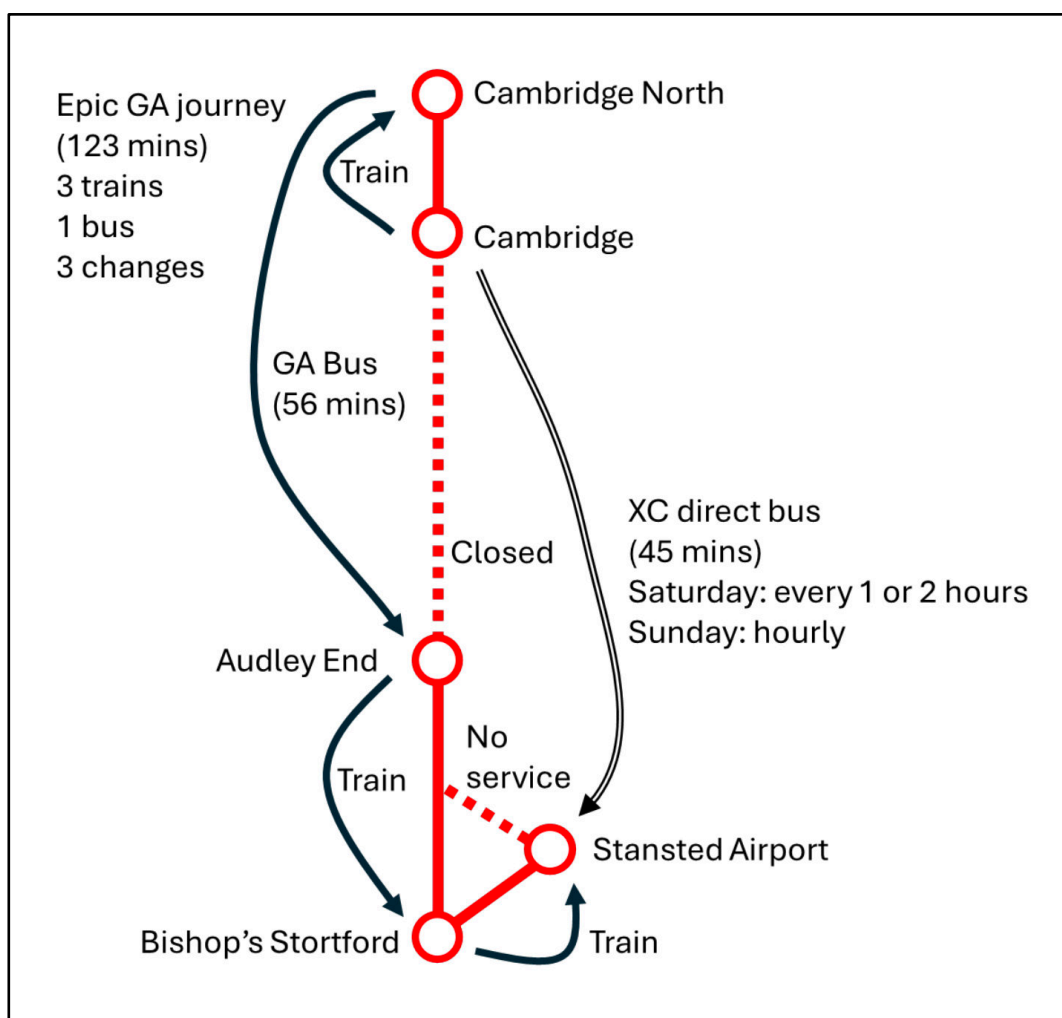
Two-hour gaps are not what you want to see when you are trying to arrive at the airport at a good time for a flight or heading home from the airport.

No problem on a Sunday – there is a rail replacement bus every hour taking 45 mins. So why?

To understand it, we must look at the existing rail services, the DfT’s rules designed to reduce costs, and the train operator’s interpretation of these.

Starting with Sunday, things are simple. CrossCountry operates a rail service every hour from Cambridge to Stansted and when the line is closed cannot realistically operate a rail service south of the line closure, so the simple result is a rail replacement bus direct from Cambridge to Stansted every hour.

On Saturdays the DfT’s post-covid cost cutting has led to five CrossCountry rail



Think tanks

One of the reasons that public transport does not get fair treatment in Britain could be that politicians and bureaucrats are excessively influenced by well-financed think tanks defending the status quo. Tufton Street in Westminster is reported to be home to climate crisis deniers Global Warming Policy Foundation and Net Zero Watch.

An organisation called Open Democracy is trying to find out where the think tank funds come from and wants to “get dark money out of UK politics”.

Shadow climate secretary Ed Miliband has said: “US right-wing groups with links to big oil are desperate to stop action against the climate crisis. “They are trying to extend their reach into UK political debate.”

Some of the think tanks are registered as charities and surprisingly “charities” are not legally required to reveal sources of funding.

The importance of public transport

Nationally 22% of households do not have access to a car.

In London, 42% of households do not have access to a car.

In Wales, 26% of households do not have access to a car.

services being trimmed from the timetable (expected to be restored in 2025), and in most cases Greater Anglia covers the gaps with its Norwich-Stansted airport service.

So why the gaps in the bus service?

This is because in the fragmented rail industry only CrossCountry is running a direct bus service. Greater Anglia is doing something very different, an epic journey of 123 minutes involving three changes, three trains and a bus. You can follow the journey on the map.

In practice of course, the Greater Anglia option is completely useless for Cambridge to Stansted passengers as the journey takes so long and involves so many changes that passengers will simply aim for the two hourly direct bus – or find some other way of getting to the airport.

So why is Greater Anglia not running a direct bus?

Greater Anglia explains that this comes down to Department for Transport rules about rail replacement buses.

The line is closed from Cambridge to Audley End so GA only gets compensation to cover the costs of the bus operation for the closed part of the route, with passengers transferring back to trains at Audley End with its large interchange area.

However, it then gets worse, having already needed to travel to Cambridge North to catch the bus in the first place, there is insufficient capacity to provide a direct Audley End to Stansted service so passengers must go via Bishop's Stortford with yet another change.

But does it not still make sense to run a direct bus when there is no CrossCountry one?

Even if Greater Anglia gets compensation only for the closed section from Cambridge to Audley End it still does not seem to make sense that it does not choose to run a direct service – surely it can choose to use the compensation to provide a 45 minute direct bus rather than a 56 minute bus which then involves multiple extra changes?

The cost and resources should be similar if GA and XC combine their resources. We are still talking about one bus doing a journey of around 45 minutes for Stansted passengers. Whether it goes from Cambridge North to Audley End, or direct from Cambridge to Stansted is immaterial to the costs, but very material to the passenger experience.

In reality, the costs will not be the same. Passengers faced with the 123 minute journey will simply desert the railway and Greater Anglia will no longer need buses to carry them.

A win for the DfT's cost-cutting agenda but a continuing tragedy for the railway which everyone apart from the government and DfT understands needs to recover by focusing on passengers and increasing revenue.

The Department for Transport claims: "The CrossCountry replacement bus appropriately covers the existing demand for direct services between Cambridge and Stansted." This is incorrect as there are twice as many direct rail services when Greater Anglia is included.

■ It would be helpful to know if there are any similar situations in other parts of the country, so if you find an example please get in touch:

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Rail can help beat climate change

Research carried out by the University of Birmingham shows that expanding railways in poorer countries is a good way to achieve climate goals.

"We hope that this research will prompt the global community to action," said Paul Plummer, professor in rail strategy at the university's Centre for Railway Research and Education.

The International Union of Railways director general Francois Davenne said: "The economic benefits of railways are not adequately captured in financial models. It is time to level up finance."

Tools are needed to be made available to low and lower middle income countries (LICs and LMICs) in order to allow them to reach climate goals and provide economic benefits. The research, backed by Alstom, is contained in a paper, entitled *Bridging the Rail Finance Gap: Challenges and Opportunities for Low- and Lower-Middle-Income Countries*.

It was published last year on the first ever United Nations' World Sustainable Transport Day.

The rail industry and the international community need to unlock the potential that railways can provide in achieving climate goals while also giving substantial economic benefits.

The research says that

Rail money diverted to fill road potholes

The Department for Transport issued a press release on 10 April 2024 with the following heading.

Revealed: the roads being resurfaced in your area thanks to reallocated HS2 funding.

The press release boasted that an additional £8.3 billion had been allocated to authorities across England for local road improvements.

Transport secretary Mark Harper was quoted as saying: "We are on the side of drivers, which is why this government is getting on with delivering our plan to invest an additional £8.3 billion in the biggest ever funding increase for local road improvements, made possible by reallocated HS2 funding."

Rick Green, chair of the Asphalt Industry Alliance, said: "The reallocated HS2 funding is a positive step, demonstrating the government recognises that maintaining local roads is about more than filling in potholes."

Greenpeace exposes rail-road funding gap

Last year, it was revealed that European countries allocated around two thirds more money to roads than railways between 1995 and 2018, a period which saw the construction of an extra 30,000 kilometres of motorways and a contraction of the rail network by over 15,000 kilometres.

The figures were revealed after Greenpeace funded research carried out by Germany-based groups – the Wuppertal Institute and T3 Transportation.

The study examined spending on road and rail in all EU countries, as well as Norway, Switzerland and the UK.

Around £1.3 trillion was spent on road infrastructure, with £800 billion going to rail over the last decades – a difference of some £490 billion.

Greenpeace said the decision to fund motorways while rolling back the rail network has contributed to greater car dependence across the continent, exacerbating the climate crisis.

It added: "Governments and the European Union must hit the brakes on this dismantling of our train lines, reopen disused tracks and invest in rail – and stop the massive subsidies for roads that wreck the climate, pollute the air and make people's lives miserable."

investing in rail for LICs and LMICs could help these countries achieve climate goals by quadrupling rail modal share to 8%, avoiding a total of 1.8 gigatonnes of carbon emissions by 2050, while offering economic advantages such as job creation, accessibility and connectivity. High-income countries were advised to provide substantial grants for rail projects, under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement on carbon credits for emission reductions.

International financial institutions should update their cost-benefit analysis methods for rail projects, prioritise low-carbon modes, and increase funding allocated to rail. Governments should incentivise modal shift by collaborating with the rail industry to maximise economic benefits. The rail industry should concentrate on improving technology to make projects more attractive and cheaper.

Read the full white paper: https://uic.org/events/IMG/pdf/cop28_rail_lmics_a4_32pp_a-w_6_web_29112023.pdf

railaction May 2024

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