

# The earth moves for London's new railway



**BRICK LANE:** The Great Eastern main line came to a halt over the bank holiday weekend of 4 May while this 800-tonne bridge was shunted into place. A few weeks later the main line was closed again when scaffolding or concrete reportedly fell on to the tracks

Railfuture members watched admiringly as a series of bridges were moved into place over the past few months to clear the way for a major new rail line in London which will connect 20 of the capital's 33 boroughs.

Crucial works at a series of key points will enable parts of the city's existing rail and Tube network to be linked up.

The initial announcement for work on the ELL extension was made by the then mayor of London Ken Livingstone in 2006.

Railfuture members played an important role in campaigning for the current works to go ahead.

Now they are concentrating on ensuring that the essential follow-up work takes place so that the East London line can fulfil its full potential.

The first stage – from West Croydon to Dalston Junction on the North London line – will open in two years time after the £1.4billion upgrade programme is finished.

Although the bridges are in place, a new viaduct and new station are still under construction at Shoreditch.

By June 2010, the northern extension to Dalston should be complete, with new step-free stations at Dalston, Haggerston, Hoxton and Shoreditch. This part of the line uses the former North London Railway tracks from Broad Street which closed in 1985-6.

The southern extension to New Cross, Crystal Palace and West Croydon should also be finished by 2010.

It is also hoped that by February 2011, there will be an extension from Dalston Junction to Highbury & Islington.

The East London line extension is seen as crucial to support the regeneration of east London.

Transport for London said the Brick Lane bridge was inched slowly into place on the same kind of wheels used to manoeuvre space shuttles to their launch pads.

A short section of Brick Lane is closed for four months to allow completion of the bridge and construction of the viaduct from there to Shoreditch High Street.

At New Cross a temporary path of ballast was created over the main line.

The total weight of the steelwork and deck was so heavy that an

installation by crane lift was seen to be impracticable. Instead two rubber-tyred multi-wheeled self-propelled mobile transporters were used to spread the load.

While work has been progressing on the East London line, the North London and Barking-Gospel Oak lines have seen stations and services improved, though there is serious overcrowding at peak times.

Together the two lines will be part of TfL's London Overground.

They also have the potential to provide an orbital rail route for London.

That was the idea promoted in a Railfuture leaflet in 1997, financed by a grant from the Railfuture annual draw fund.

Railfuture also produced a four-page business planning brief.

In 2000, the then deputy mayor Nicky Gavron gave the name Orbirail to the idea.

Orbirail was intended to connect the extended East London line, the North London line, the West London line, the South London line and (possibly) the Gospel Oak to Barking Line to form a route that would orbit London in Travelcard

zones two and three and possibly zone four. Outgoing TfL vice chairman Dave Wetzel has played a key role in pushing the scheme forward.

Campaigners are now concentrating on trying to ensure that the line from Surrey Quays to Clapham Junction is given attention. It is provisionally scheduled for 2011-2015.

A decision on this is needed soon because the existing South London service will be unable to run into London Bridge after 2011.

Railfuture also wants to see electrification of the Barking to Gospel Oak line which is being resignalled and upgraded during the next 12 months.



**How London's Overground network could expand**



**HAGGERSTON:** The first bow-string bridge for the East London line extension was built over the Regent's Canal in 2007



**SHOREDITCH HIGH STREET:** This 350-tonne bridge was lifted into place with Britain's biggest mobile crane in March 2008

**NEW CROSS:** This 600 tonne truss steel structure was shunted into place on 10 May just north of New Cross Gate station, where it will carry the East London line over the existing London Bridge to Brighton main line tracks. The flyover was put together over a period of months alongside the main line.

The bridge was moved into place by multi-wheeled units that spread heavy loads between their numerous axles

Pictures: Transport for London

