

WESTMINSTER WATCH

Transport Minister Keith Hill was asked on 26 October if he would make a statement about Thameslink services to central London from Mill Hill Broadway and Hendon.

Mr Hill told Hendon's Labour MP Andrew Dismore: "The frequency of service Thameslink is providing from Mill Hill Broadway and Hendon to Central London is greater than required by their passenger service requirement. The Franchising Director is aware that services during peak periods are overcrowded beyond allowable thresholds and he has required Thameslink accordingly to produce a feasibility study detailing ways in which capacity can be increased to reduce this overcrowding. In addition to the feasibility study, Thameslink is currently negotiating with other train operators to lease additional trains.

Underground

Poole MP Robert Syms (Con) asked what progress had been made on the public-private partnership for the London Underground.

Mr Hill said: "Excellent progress has been made on the PPP. London Underground has been restructured, in shadow form, into one operating company and three infrastructure companies. Four consortia have been invited to tender for each of the two deep Tube infrastructure companies. Discussions with Railtrack concerning the integration of the sub-surface railway and the national rail network are continuing to make progress.

Harry Cohen (Lab Leyton and Wanstead) asked what estimates there were of the principal capital sums which need to be expended on the London Underground in respect of (a)



each line, (b) multi-line improvements and (c) other aspects, indicating the principal purposes of each and the (i) sums and (ii) proportion of each item or the total amount arising from the shortfall in past maintenance.

Mr Hill: Information is not available in the form requested. London Underground has made the following line-by-line estimates of how much it will cost to implement the performance regime being developed for the first 15 years of the proposed PPP. It estimates that £1.2 billion of the total projected expenditure of £7.36 billion can be attributed to past funding constraints on the Underground network.

Indicative projection of 15 year investment expenditure at 1999 prices:

Bakerloo £390 million.

Central, Waterloo and City £780 million.

Victoria £900 million.

Northern £950 million. (1)

Jubilee £280 million. (2)

Piccadilly £1,190 million.

Metropolitan, Circle, Hammersmith and City £1,700 million.

District £970 million.

East London £200 million. (3)

Total £7,360 million.

(1) Northern Line train investment costs are contracted for under a separate Private

Finance Initiative scheme and are excluded from the figures.

(2) Excludes operating and maintenance costs for the Jubilee Line Extension project.

(3) Excludes costs from potential project for extending East London Line.

One wonders what the figures for the Met and Circle line include, vis-a-vis proposals by Railtrack to include them in some incredible crossrail scheme!

Eurostar

The saga of Regional Eurostars is no nearer resolution as this exchange shows!

George Stevenson (Lab Stoke-on-Trent S) asked what progress had been made with the study into Regional Eurostar Services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Hill: The review commissioned by the Government is currently on-going. The results are expected soon, at which time I will make a statement.

Signals Passed at Danger

One result of the Paddington crash will be that for a while MPs will be obsessed with SPADs, as the following questions show:-

Shaun Woodward (Con Witney) Asked on what date in August he and his Department's officials first saw the Signals Passed at

Danger statistics for 1998-99? Mr Hill: Ministers were informed in a submission from the Chief Inspector of Railways dated 9 August 1999. HSE first sent officials an early draft of these statistics on 22 June 1999.

Similar questions came from **Paul Burstow** (Lib-Dem Sutton and Cheam) **Bernad Jenkin**, **John Whittingdale** (Con Malden and East Chelmsford) and Shadow Transport Secretary **John Redwood** who went on to ask:

How the remit of the new railway safety body proposed to replace Railtrack's Safety remit will differ from it?

What plans he has to re-employ Railtrack safety regulatory staff at the new railway safety body?

Mr Prescott: We have not proposed a new railway safety body. We are considering all options for how the work of Railtrack's safety and standards directorate might best be carried out.

Mr Redwood asked when Mr Prescott first asked for a report on signals passed at danger.

Mr Prescott: Immediately after the election I asked for advice on all aspects of rail safety. This was received in June 1997 and included information on measures to stop signals being passed at danger. After discussions with the Health and Safety Commission I made it clear they should bring forward any formal proposals on (inter alia) automatic train protection they considered necessary. I signed the resulting regulations in July. In September the HSE announced the result of their audit of the increase in signals passed at danger and 22 specific actions they required the industry to progress.