

# Cut fares and reduce jams

One of the most obvious ways to increase use of the railways is to reduce fares.

We know it works because British Rail – under pressure from government – used high fares as a way of depressing demand for years.

And until derailed by Tory-run Bromley council, Ken Livingstone's Fares Fair policy boosted Tube, train and bus use in 1980s London.

Yet right-wing newspapers and the road lobby have been engaged on a propaganda campaign in recent months trying to show that fuel costs for car and lorry drivers should be cut.

This would only encourage more unsustainable travel and anyway it is rail and bus users who have suffered most in the past from increased travel costs.

Official figures show that the cost of running a car is exactly the same now as it was in 1974 while the cost of going by rail has increased by 53% and by bus by 87%.

The cost of petrol and oil has indeed increased by 11% over that period but that has been offset by other factors.

The rail operators make much of the fact that they have cut prices on tickets bought in advance, but 90% of passenger miles are paid for via tickets bought at the time of travel. SuperSavers in particular have been deliberately undermined

by several train companies. One group of journalists travelling from Manchester to London to collect awards in July found it was cheaper to hire a stretched limousine than to pay £1,000 on rail tickets. Virgin please note.

People travelling between Liverpool and London in 1996 paid £35 for a SuperSaver. In early 2000 the same journey costs £140 because ticket conditions have been changed to exclude some trains.

The Rail Passengers Council is calling for SuperSaver tickets to be officially protected.

A report by Professor John Whitelegg has shown how important rail, and the level of fares, are to the unemployed, older people, children, teenagers and women.

In his report *How can Railways become Socially Inclusive by 2020?* he points out that students in the Netherlands enjoy free rail travel, and that Germans enjoy cut price weekend tickets which allow people to go anywhere in the country for £14 return.

He also points out that Germany and Austria have national railcards costing £50 or £100 giving reductions of 50% on every rail ticket.

He calls for more staff on trains and points out that the Germans have undercover police on trains to reassure passengers.

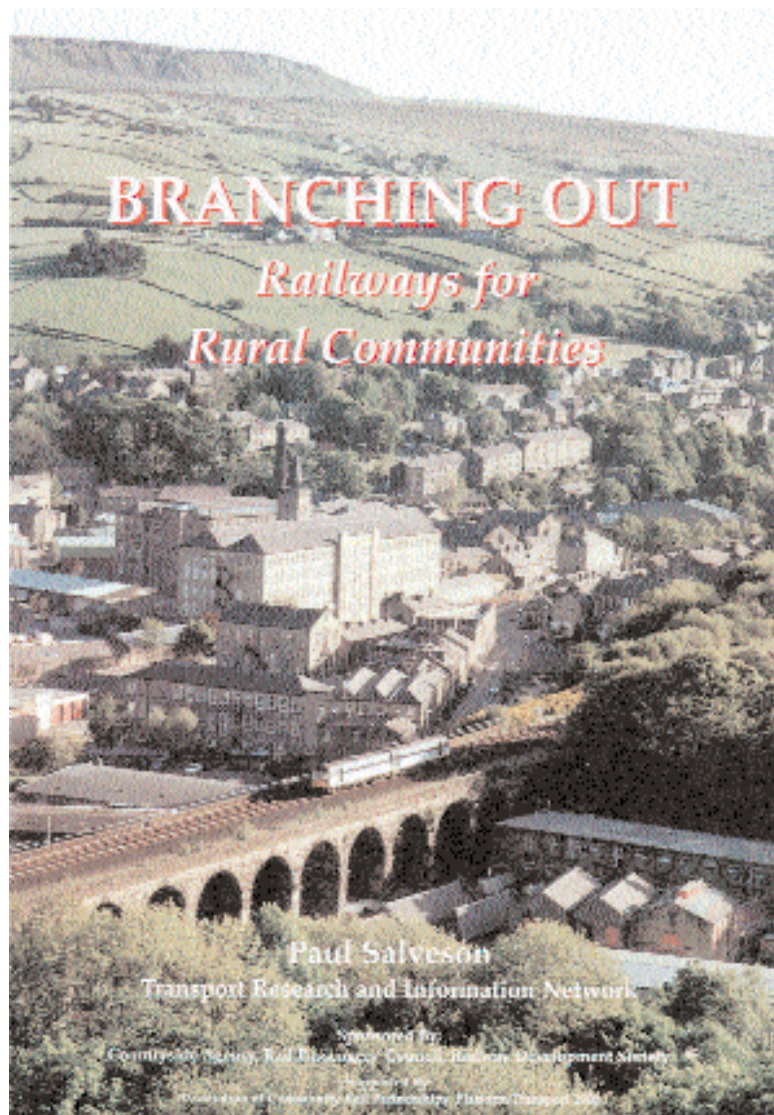
He raises the need for safe cycle paths to stations, changes in road design to protect pedestrians near stations, including instant response light-controlled pedestrian crossings.

He also insists that the difficulties of taking bikes on trains must be resolved.

The price figures are available at: <http://www.environment.detr.gov.uk/sustainable/quality99/pdf/ch4t-u.pdf>

The travel index itself is on page seven out of 24 of that download.

*How can Railways become Socially Inclusive by 2020?* is published by the Rail Passengers Council. May 2000.



***With proper investment and management, railways can play a dynamic role in rural areas, helping to reduce social exclusion and promoting sustainable tourism. The "good practice guide", above, shows examples of how rural railways can make a positive contribution to the social, economic and environmental well-being of rural communities.***

***The Transport Research and Information Network will be staging a conference in Falmouth, Cornwall, on 15 September, sponsored by Wales & West. The cost is £80.***

***There will be speakers from the rail industry and local government to highlight good practice in rural rail development in the South-West, Yorkshire Dales, and Europe. A railway musical written by Henry Lewis called I Love My Train highlighting the delights of rail travel will be staged the night before the conference at the Falmouth Hotel. Details: 01484 549737 or email: [train@platform8.demon.co.uk](mailto:train@platform8.demon.co.uk)***

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Membership: £15 per year.

Pensioners, students and unemployed £7.50. User groups, community and parish councils £15.

Other local authorities £30.

Companies £40. Families £2 extra per member, after £15.