

Now the sky's the limit

Now that the fast rail link from Paddington to Heathrow has been approved by Parliament, it will have a few add-on features making it possible to connect the airport with other lines from the South.

During the progress of the Bill for the line, the sponsor (Heathrow airport) was ordered by a parliamentary committee to provide three extra junctions at a cost of £2 million.

It means that a future link can be built to the former Southern lines with a tunnel near Feltham. Then up to eight Network SouthEast trains an hour would theoretically be able to get to Heathrow without disrupting the airport service to Paddington.

Claiming the credit for the change in the Bill is Hounslow Council which is led by Dave Wetzel, the proponent of many excellent rail schemes while he was a Greater London Council leader.

Hounslow's transport leader Steve Crawshaw said: "This is excellent news and is the first step towards a major improvement to south west London's rail system. We have already won the argument that

building roads does not ease London's traffic congestion.

"We have now come up with a rail scheme which is cost effective, is easily constructed and solves many of the transport problems of south west London."

Many passengers and workers travelling to Heathrow start their journey, not from the centre of London but from the south west suburbs. Without the Feltham link, they would still have to go by rail via central London.

At present it takes two hours to get to Heathrow by train. In future it could take 40 minutes.

The council, along with other London boroughs, is keen to develop an orbital rail route in connection with the Heathrow link. The route could incorporate existing but under-used track for running trains from Heathrow to Kingston, Richmond, Wimbledon, Sutton, Streatham and Croydon.

If a line could be constructed to Croydon, then a rail option would be created for journeys between Heathrow and Gatwick airports.

Ministering to commuters

By DAVID BIGG

Two Government Ministers faced Essex rail users in March to hear how Network SouthEast and InterCity - InterCity even has the cheek to refuse to meet what it calls NSE-based groups - were contriving to let down commuters in Essex.

Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman heard a series of other complaints from a delegation led by RDS treasurer David Bigg who is also chairman of the Witham and Braintree Rail Users' Association.

Sitting in on the meeting was Social Security Secretary Tony Newton who is MP for Braintree and a regular rail user. Mr Newton's personal experience was able to back up association mem-

bers who handed over their logs showing that one in four peak hour services does not arrive on time. It was agreed that Department of Transport officials would monitor services for a month and then compare notes with the association.

Mr Freeman promised to "look into" association demands for Braintree platform extensions, footbridge alterations at Witham and late staff at Kelvedon.

He also agreed to look again at the proposal for a Colchester - Coventry service which could avoid central London by using the North London line.

In return the Minister asked for a paper on the financial outlook for NSE if it were privatised.

Working with the Greens

By TREVOR GARROD

More than 5,000 people who want improved public transport had their case taken into the land of the ministerial limousine - Downing Street - in March. I accompanied Green News editor John Pearce to deliver a petition to Number 10 whose former occupant was a worshipper at the shrine of the "great car economy" and was no great friend of the railways.

The petition was jointly organised over the winter by members of RDS, Friends of the Earth, the Pedestrians' Association and readers of Green News. The venture was a small example of co-operation between RDS and other organisations.

Another example was the sponsored cycle ride in Leicestershire which several of us undertook as part of the Civic Trust's National Environment Week.

Yet another has been the useful contact we have made with People Against the River Crossing in South East London.

As the only national voluntary body for rail users, RDS is unique. But there are many other bodies with whom we can and should work to further our aims. Most of them want to see a better environment and recognise the part that increased use of rail can play to achieve that goal.

However, the way is not always easy. Last summer, we failed to persuade bodies like the Environmental Transport Association, Transport 2000, the National Council on Inland Transport and Greenpeace to fund jointly with us the leaflet "For a Safer Transport Policy". Furthermore, some people will



happily support "soft" green campaigns to clear up litter or save trees, but are less keen when it comes to questioning the need for new motorways or campaigning against "hidden subsidies" for company cars.

Anyone can stand up and mouth a fine-sounding generalised slogan. What matters is working for practical policies to make that slogan a reality. This may also mean arguing against those who have, or think they have, a vested interest in the status quo.

RDS will continue to campaign around clear policies and seek co-operation with "green" organisations and anyone else with whom we can find meaningful common ground. We must have a constructive dialogue with those who tell us they support our general aims but differ over details. We have proposed to Transport 2000, the federation of pro-public transport and pro-environmental bodies to which we are affiliated, that they should hold a Green Transport Week in the spring of 1992. By the time you read this, I hope that dates will have been fixed and we can start planning for a week of joint activity throughout the country.

*Trevor Garrod is general secretary of RDS and also writes a column every four weeks in the magazine Rail.



What the papers say

People who are provided with a Ford Fiesta car would need a £3,706 salary increase to cover the costs of running the car themselves, plus another £1,000 to cover the extra income tax and National Insurance contributions, according to a report by the fleet car firm Cowie Interleasing. *Daily Express* 20.5.91

For any international rail cooperation to work well, some form of cartel-like organisational structure is operationally logical, while it is the free enterprise spirit that is most likely to break down the traditional lethargy which still acts as a brake on intermodal international efficiency. *Cargo Systems* 4.91

Ministers are still reluctant to divert cash from the £12 billion road building programme to other forms of transport like light rail and buses. *Guardian* 26.4.91

The police paid out £1.3 million in compensation last year after being involved in 5,611 accidents, 1,200 of them during high-speed chases. The Police Federation rejected calls for tighter controls. *Daily Express* 20.5.91

The chances of getting planning consent this summer for the £3 billion King's Cross mega-office development are just about zero, according to Camden council leaders. *Planning* 12.4.91

Labour's pledge to freeze the Government's £12 billion road building programme would prove a vote winner for the Tories, said Transport Secretary Malcolm Rifkind. *Daily Telegraph* 11.5.91

Allowing 44-tonne lorries on Britain's roads would be good news for the man on the street, said the president of the Freight Transport Association. *Cambridge Evening News* 8.5.91

Direct revenue funding of BR is still only about a quarter of the Government's annual roads expenditure and one seventh of the £3.4 billion lost to the exchequer each year through company car subsidies. *Financial Times* letter 5.3.91

Over 20,000 people have to stand for more than 20 minutes on BR trains into central London in the morning peak. *Financial Times* 5.3.91

More than a quarter of all morning rush-hour trains into London carry too many standing passengers. *The Times* 3.3.91

Chancellor Norman Lamont will have to turn the screw tighter yet before there is likely to be any wholesale desertion from company-provided cars. *Financial Times* 21.3.91

You could hire a car for a weekend each month, take a taxi four times a week, buy a bicycle, use local public transport, take a long-distance train journey every month and still save money against owning a car. *London Cyclist* 4.91

There is no mystery about the cause of London's transport chaos: the cowardice of politicians. *Observer* 14.4.91

Rail is not just safer; it can carry more passengers per hour on one-third the comparable width of a road corridor. *Public Transport Information* 4.91

The CBI questions the requirement for an eight per cent return on assets before a rail project can go ahead. Current policy means that rail's environmental benefits are not taken into account under this equation. *Guardian* 14.3.91

BR is effectively pulling out of freight activity just when the facilities for moving freight are expanding in Europe. *Guardian* 8.3.91

Suffolk planning officer Edwin Barritt says the Government's environment White Paper avoids the most significant transport issue: the sheer scale of potential growth in demand for travel. *East Anglian Daily Times* 6.4.91