

16 September 2005

IN PARLIAMENT
HOUSE OF COMMONS
SESSION 2004-2005

Crossrail Bill

Against – on Merits – Praying to be heard by Counsel, &c.

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF THE THAMES VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE GROUP

SHEWETH as follows:-

1. A Bill (hereinafter referred to as "the Bill") has been introduced and is now pending in your honourable House entitled "Crossrail Bill". **Against the current start and termination at Maidenhead, Berkshire instead of Reading, Berkshire.**
2. **The current proposal to terminate the service at Maidenhead is illogical and potentially damaging to the quality of stopping services between Reading and Paddington. Accordingly, the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Group (the Petitioner) believes that if a Crossrail service is to extend beyond Slough it should terminate at Reading as a logical hub and carry appropriate limited stopping services.**
3. **The Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Group is calling on Crossrail and the Government to review their western terminal proposal and agree that Reading is the most appropriate location. We are mindful that this is an ambitious initiative and we fully support its concept, however, we urge Crossrail and the Government to seriously consider our position and the points raised to ensure that Reading is phased into the project as a minimum.**
4. Your Petitioner, The Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Group, speaks on behalf of nearly 3,000 businesses in the Thames Valley, which encapsulates 178,000 employees equating to 25% of the working population. The Chamber represents 31% market share of the large corporates in the Thames Valley.

5. Your Petitioner identified, in a recent survey of members, that poor transport infrastructure costs each business an average of £27,000 per year and 56% of businesses have reported it as a major influencing factor when deciding where to locate. As well as impacting on business operating costs, 46% of our members are convinced that a lack of inward investment in their region is caused by the inadequate regional transport system.
6. Your Petitioner sites the rail network is an important component of the overall transport system and is used by 66% of our members for business related activities. This consultation is, therefore, an essential opportunity to argue the case for Crossrail to choose Reading as its western terminus.
7. Your Petitioner states that businesses in Reading are very disappointed that the proposed Crossrail plan to provide a direct rail link from the Thames Valley into and across London with reduced overcrowding, simpler connections and improved access will not be extending to Reading.

HEATHROW LINK

8. Your Petitioner states that many large companies are based in the Reading area due to the close access to Heathrow airport for international links where a direct rail link is essential, providing economic benefits beyond the south-east. Currently, the only rail service to Heathrow involves 40 excess miles travelling into Paddington and then taking the *Heathrow Express* back to the airport. (The coach service to Heathrow is 40 minutes throughout the day, but rush hour travellers are subject to potential hold-ups and the common M4 problems.)
9. Your Petitioner states that more than ever in history, US and UK corporations are deciding to base their headquarters in countries other than their own. It is essential that we safeguard those major players already in the region, and make the area as attractive a prospect as possible, by providing an integrated transport network.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

10. **The strategic choice** – Reading is the second largest rail interchange outside of London and is a strategic hub both regionally and nationally and should be the natural western terminus for Crossrail. The proposal fails to link with national rail services from a recognised 'hub'.
11. **Opportunity lost** – Not to include Reading would be an opportunity lost and could fulfil several long-term strategic objectives and facilitate a national need.
12. **Cost in perspective** – The costs of electrification of the line to Reading from Maidenhead (13 miles) would add £300 million to a £10 billion project. Crossrail estimates a 2:1 return on investment.

13. **Impact on current service** – The current proposal would adversely affect Reading HST services into London by slowing train speeds.
14. **Business Contribution** – Crossrail would help maintain the concentration of large businesses in the region who provide much needed tax revenue for investment in such schemes.
15. **Efficient use of public funds** – Businesses contribute substantially to the railways through a plethora of taxes. It is important that this money is spent prudently.
16. **Attracting Private Sector Investment** – Since there will be a significant reliance on private sector finance it is essential that to increase this the project is strategic and integrates with other transport facilities and projects. It is crucial that in this consultation Crossrail agrees a route that increases its attractiveness to private sector investors.
17. Government investment in Crossrail is crucial to encouraging car users to move towards sustainable options such as the rail network. Those responsible for strategic decisions on Crossrail must consider the key drivers to changing the pattern of car users such as the cost of running a car due to ongoing increases in global oil prices, congestion related charges (in central London) and access to fast, direct links in modern air-conditioned trains.

STATISTICS

18. Approximately 5,000 people travel from Reading to London Paddington daily, Monday to Friday.
19. For 2003/04 the number of rail journeys per year to Reading station is just over 16 million (up from 13.6 million in 1999/2000).
20. The number of trips to Reading Station in a 12 hour period has increased from 14,400 in 2000/01 to 15,200 in 2003/04.
21. Reading has approximately 30 million visitors a year.

GENERAL

22. Your Petitioner has noted the benefits that Crossrail would bring, particularly the support for regeneration and development areas and the creation of thousands of jobs during the construction and operation of the railway, and as a result of knock-on effects upon the economy. We also note your Environmental Policy and your commitment to complying with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

23. Reading is cited as a strategic hub in most local, regional, national rail and multi model strategies including:

- Thames Valley Multi Modal Study
- South East Regional Transport Strategy
- South West Regional Assemblies – cited as priority
- South East Regional Assemblies – cited as priority
- South East Development Agency
- National Assembly for Wales
- Local Transport Strategy
- Strategic Rail Authority

YOUR PETITIONER therefore prays that the Bill may not be allowed to pass into law as it now stands and that it may be heard by its officers, Counsel, Agent and witnesses in support of the allegations of the Petition against so much of the Bill as affects the rights and interests of your Petitioner and in support of such other clauses, amendments or provisions as may be necessary or expedient for its protection, or that such other relief may be given to your Petitioner as your Honourable House shall deem meet.

AND your Petitioner will ever pray, &c.

RACHEL HOWELL

AGENT FOR THE ABOVE-NAMED PETITIONER