- **CLAIMS THAT THE WEST COAST MAIN LINE WILL SOON BE FULL ARE NOT ROBUST AND DEMAND FORECASTS FOR FUTURE USE ARE OVER OPTIMISTIC.**
- **INVESTING SO MUCH IN A CORRIDOR WHICH ALREADY HAS ONE OF OUR FASTEST AND LEAST CROWDED MAINLINE SERVICES IS A GROSS MISALLOCATION OF RESOURCES.**
- **ALTERNATIVES TO HS2 CAN BE IMPLEMENTED QUICKLY AND IN STAGES, WITH MORE CAPACITY CREATED AND PAID FOR ONLY IF NEEDED. THIS WOULD ALSO ADDRESS EXISTING COMMUTER OVERCROWDING BEFORE 2026.**

HS2 ACTION ALLIANCE

THE CASE AGAINST HS2: CAPACITY

As the benefits claimed for HS2 evaporate under scrutiny, the scheme's backers claim the "killer" argument requiring the construction of HS2 is a pressing need for additional capacity. They state that the West Coast Main Line (WCML), which links London to Glasgow serving Birmingham and Manchester, will be full over the next decade.

Just how realistic are these claims? Can the country's major rail artery, which was the focus of major upgrades just 10 years ago, really be so close to capacity that it faces being completely full? A review of government data indicates that the WCML has significant capacity both to meet current demand and likely future increases in passenger numbers. Claims made for future growth in passenger numbers are exaggerated. In any event, the Department for Transport's (DfT) demand forecast can be met by cheaper incremental improvements.

Network Rail's latest figures, published in 2012, show Euston as the least busy London domestic long-distance station – using just 60 per cent of capacity in the three-hour morning peak, compared to equivalent figures at Paddington and Waterloo stations of over 100 per cent at peak times. These figures are consistent with the findings of a 2011 independent study which showed Virgin's peak evening services from Euston are only 56 per cent full and Manchester trains only 45 per cent.

The 60 per cent capacity figures are all before taking into account the additional capacity provided by improvements currently being implemented on the WCML which involve lengthening 31 out of the existing 52 Pendolino units (by adding two standard class carriages) and also providing four new 11 carriage trains. These improvements will provide 106 more coaches in total. When these improvements are made, occupancy on the WCML will be just 35 per cent.

London Terminals Services Busiest One Hour in Morning Peak

Station	Service Group	Total Demand as a % of Total Capacity
Waterloo	SW Main Line	110%
Paddington	Main Line	109%
Moorgate	All services	103%
London Bridge	Terminating	102%
Victoria	Kent routes	97%
Blackfriars	All services	97%
Fenchurch Street	All services	94%
Marylebone	All services	91%
Liverpool Street	West Anglia	90%
St Pancreas	Midland Mainline	79%
Kings Cross	ECML	74%
Euston	Long Distance	64%

(Source: Network Rail)

FirstGroup who were awarded the WCML franchise in August 2012 say they will accommodate a doubling in demand by 2026 without creating any further capacity on the Southern end of the WCML. On winning they stated: *Network Rail's own forecasts of rail demand do not suggest the line will become full in the next ten years*.

Forecasting future passenger numbers is complex but the approach used by the DfT is not robust and does not deal adequately with uncertainty. Flaws include: using an out of date forecasting model that systematically exaggerates the growth of long distance trips as they now accept in their own guidance; arbitrarily adopting a doubling in demand and ignoring the impact of price competition which the Public Accounts Committee endorsed.

But what if, despite all the evidence to the contrary, the DfT's forecasts turn out to be correct? Even in these unlikely circumstances, there would still not be justification for a new high speed rail line. 51M, the group of local authorities opposed to HS2, has produced an Optimised Alternative (OA) which delivers more than the DfT's forecasted long distance capacity requirements. It enables a tripling of standard class capacity (which is where overcrowding matters) from a 2008 base. The proposal's ability to deliver this additional intercity capacity has not been challenged by DfT or Network Rail.

The OA involves (with a cost of £2bn and a benefit cost ratio 3 times better than HS2) rolling stock reconfiguration, conversion of one first class carriage to standard class, operation of longer trains and targeted infrastructure investment to clear selected bottlenecks enabling frequency to be increased. This incremental approach, where improvements are made as demand grows, offers better value for money. It is also entirely based on existing technology, unlike HS2, reducing the risk of cost overrun. Ironically, it is HS2, rather than the existing rail system alternatives, that has capacity problems – given that the trains HS2 Ltd plans to use (serving places beyond the high speed network but on the existing network) have less capacity than those trains they replace. HS2 Ltd's assumption that it would be able to run 18 trains an hour all day has not been achieved anywhere in the world.

> ***"The West Coast Main Line is unique.... because it has a considerable amount of unused capacity that will expand further with the addition of 106 new Pendolino coaches by the start of our new franchise".***
>
> FirstGroup, September 2012

So where should the priority for investment be? HS2 Action Alliance believes that future upgrades should focus on those services with the biggest problems of overcrowding and on improving connections between regional cities. The diversion of funding into HS2 inevitably reduces the funds available for other projects.

Cancelling HS2 would free up funds to complete other more pressing projects and enable proper investment in sustainable transport. These projects wouldn't be focussed on linking a few destinations which already have good transport links, but instead enable Britain to transform its entire transport infrastructure into one that is the envy of the world.

AGAHST

HS2 ACTION ALLIANCE

STOP HS2 No business case. No environmental case. No money to pay for it.

www.betterthanhs2.org **www.hs2actionalliance.org** **www.stophs2.org**

HS2 Action Alliance is a company limited by guarantee. Company Number 07227882 Registered Office The Red House, 10 Market Square, Amersham HP7 0DQ