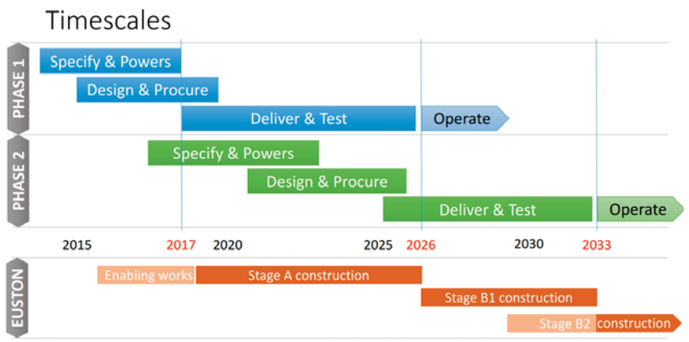
But what about the disruption?

To discredit the Optimised Alternative, the Department for Transport have claimed works would require 14 years of weekend closures, but have provided absolutely no evidence to support this. The Hitchin flyover works show this is nowhere near the truth. However, this did not stop Baroness Kramer from telling the House of Lords in September 2015; *"Those alternatives require virtually ever tunnel, viaduct and bridge to be rebuilt, taking virtually every weekend, year in, year out."*

The only way that would ever be the case is if the whole West Coast Mainline was converted to continental loading gauge, something no-one has ever suggested.. All this shows is that proponents of HS2 will literally say anything to promote it and discredit the alternatives. It is notable that Government never make any mention of the disruption which will be caused on the strategic road network, crossing and moving several main roads and motorways. Nor do they mention the disruption to existing railways which HS2 would cause. In June 2015 HS2 Ltd said Phase 1 would need 183 weekend closures, but just a month later the DfT upped this to 223, both of which seem grossly optimistic.



Those figures ignore two decades of disruption HS2 would cause at Euston station. Two of the approach tracks will be closed during construction, which will have impacts all along the West Coast Mainline,. What was meant to be a 9 year build is now 16 years, with work on the remaining platforms in 'Stage B2', happening after that. This is completely unplanned in what seems to be an effort from HS2 Ltd to shift that spend onto the Network Rail budget. This is likely to be repeated with Phase 2 requiring changes at Crewe & Manchester Piccadilly stations.

And there's more…..

When Sir David Higgins was appointed, the headlines were that he was going to bring the costs of HS2 down. Instead of that, he has cut parts off the HS2 project, such as the link to HS1 and the Channel Tunnel, and a link to Heathrow Airport. One proposed idea for getting people from HS2 to HS1, without any costings, is to build an airport style travellator between Euston and St Pancras.

Instead of cutting costs, Higgins has added to them, but Ministers say HS2 is on budget, as they are already eating into the contingency which was meant to be there for construction over-runs. Despite the fact the costs do not include things like inflation, financing or the additional electricity generation which would be needed to run HS2, perhaps the largest missing cost is what would be needed to integrate HS2 into the transport network. In the West Midlands alone, a £1.6bn "HS2 Connectivity Package" is deemed necessary to plumb HS2 in, before we look at associated redevelopment funds. The same will be repeated in those places considering themselves 'lucky' enough to get stations

Everyone knows the cost of HS2 will keep going up. The made-up benefits are simply not worth losing every other opportunity to invest in the rail network we really need.

STOP HS2
No business case.
No environmental case.
No money to pay for it.
www.stophs2.org

HS2: A DISASTER FOR THE RAILWAY.

Proponents of HS2 claim that HS2 is necessary because the West Coast Mainline will run out of capacity, alternatives will be too disruptive and not deliver the same benefits and be massively disruptive, and that "It's not a case of either/or' when it comes to rail investment. Like many of the claims made about HS2, they sound like they could be true, but a simple analysis shows that like a top economist said about the economic benefits of HS2, *"They are essentially made up."*

It *is* a case of either/or.

Whenever anyone has said that the money earmarked for HS2 should go on other rail projects, Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin has said: *"It is not a case of either/or, we are doing both!"* This was never the case as the HS2 economic Case includes £5.67bn (2011 costs) of classic service cuts over the lifetime of the project when Phase 1 is operational, rising to £8.26bn for HS2 Phase 2.

The argument that HS2 is not going to suck up the entire rail infrastructure budget was completely destroyed by the recent 'pausing' of Midland Mainline and Trans-Pennine Electrification, due to escalating costs and drifting timescales. On top of that, the Government have confirmed that with the exception of HS2, all other enhancement projects and programmes would be reviewed by Sir Peter Hendy, including supposedly ring-fenced funds.

Threatened projects include; Nuneaton-Southampton Electrification, East-West Rail, Welsh Valley Electrification, and station improvement, train lengthening, safety, signalling and access plans.

Projects already underway may be spared, but North West Electrification is already in jeopardy as Balfour Beatty have walked away from their contact with phases 3-7 outstanding, and essential double tracking on the Nuneaton-Felixstowe freight route has already been abandoned.

The truth of the matter is there has never been a standardised way of estimating the cost and duration of rail projects, HS2 included, which is one of the reasons why cost escalation and over-running timetables are commonplace. HS2 is already 50% over the original budget, with costs still being worked out on 2011 prices. In terms of the timetable, Phase 1 was meant to have been passed into law before the 2015 election, and the announcement of the Phase 2 route, originally expected in Autumn 2014, is now expected in 2016.

One point is exceptionally clear, whatever the cost of HS2 ends up being, it would exceed the cost of all the other currently planned rail projects combined. It is now very clear that in terms of rail investment, it **is** a case of either/or.

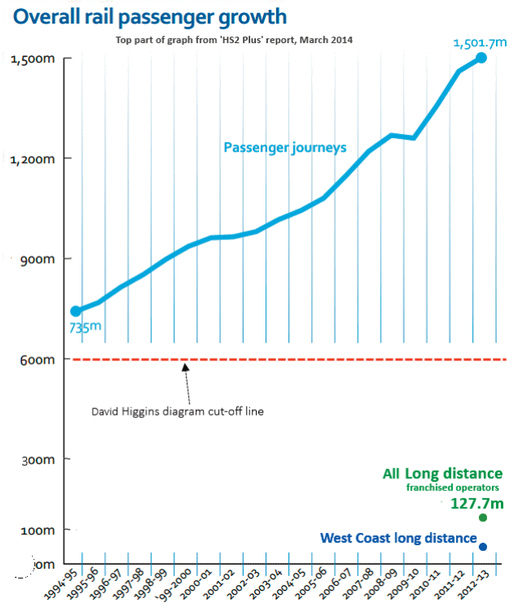
So which is most important? Upgrades which benefit passengers and freight routes throughout the country, or a fast train which will be the domain of the richest in society and will only serve to drag more economic activity to London?

The Major Projects Authority, which has consistently rated HS2 ‘amber-red’, or ‘In danger of failing’ stated clearly in a report the Government tried to bury for three years: "*The Department* [for Transport] *believes however, that the costs of this project are so large, and over such a long period, that it will not be able to afford it alongside all its other likely spending commitments.”* .

Capacity, the inconvenient truth.

It is now claimed that HS2 is needed for capacity reasons, but this is just a lazy argument aimed to impress commuters crammed into crush hour conditions on lines which HS2 will do nothing for, besides starve them of the investment they need. The reality internationally with high speed rail proposals is passenger forecasts are grossly exaggerated to justify their construction, but they never materialise, significantly increasing the running costs of such projects.

HS2 is no different. HS2 Ltd Chief Executive Sir David Higgins, who brought in the 2012 Olympics for four times the original budget and was in charge at Network Rail when all the decisions which caused the current mess were made, decided to use a graph in his ‘HS2 Plus’ report of the growth in passenger numbers to demonstrate a supposed need for HS2. However, as can be seen here, Higgins decided to start his graph at a point four times higher than the number of long-distance passengers. If capacity is needed, it’s for local and regional passengers.



Even this masks the truth in terms of the actual number of long-distance passengers. As the Lords Economic Affairs Committee have pointed out, a passenger travelling from Manchester to Stockport or Wolverhampton to Birmingham counts in the statistics as a long-distance passenger, if they make their journey on an inter-city train.

Bent Flyvbjerg, Professor of Major Programme Management at Oxford University studied 258 infrastructure projects in 20 countries and found the average overestimation of rail passengers was 105.6%. The Public Accounts Committee also agrees that the Government assumptions on demand are exaggerated, with Chris Heaton-Harris MP stating the DfT had:

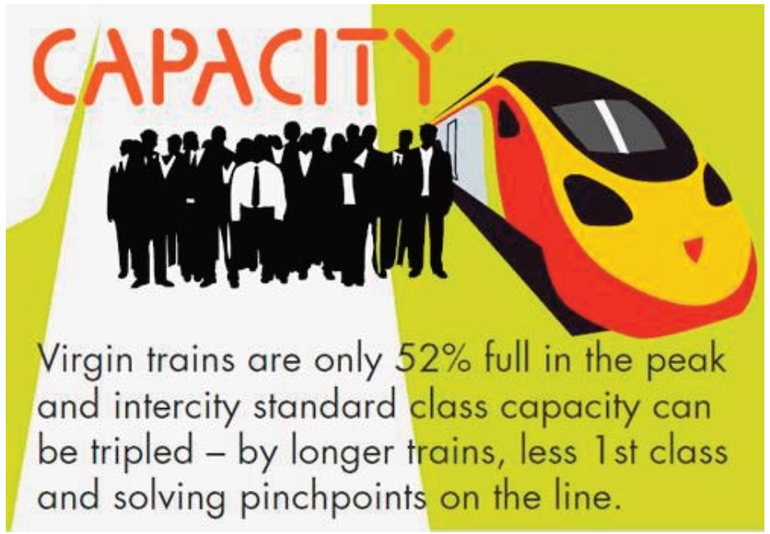
“Knowingly used out of date models for forecasting passengers.”

The West Coast Main Line is not full.

“The West Coast Mainline is full” is an oft-repeated imperative for building HS2, however this is far from the truth. Euston is the least busy domestic long distance service station in London, at just 60% of capacity in the morning peak and 52% in the evening, compared to Paddington, Waterloo and others which are at over 100% capacity during peak hours.

London Midland commuter services from Euston being in the top 10 busiest trains in the UK has been used as an argument for HS2. So has the fact that passenger loading is only half the story, but it is the number of train paths which are the problem,. But again, these points don’t hold water.

In 2014, London Midland invested in trains and rejigged their timetable. Having more trains in the peak period coupled with some longer trains means their services no longer appear in the list of shame. Even more can be done as in the evening peak, only a third of London Midland Euston trains run at full length of 12 carriages and more capacity could be released if Virgin altered their timetable. When bidding for the WCML franchise, First Group stated there is ‘considerable unused capacity’ on the WCML.



On top of this, according to HS2 Ltd themselves, only half of the freight paths on the West Coast Mainline are currently used, and during the 2015 Harbury Landslip which closed the Chiltern Line, freight trains were diverted to the West Coast Mainline, without any noticeable impact.

The Office of Rail and Road recently gave Great North Western Railways permission to run new London-Blackpool services from 2018, but these would have to terminate at Queens Park because of the disruption at Euston which would be caused by HS2 construction work. However, the real issue is that at a cost of £50bn in 2011 prices, HS2 would deliver capacity where it is least needed. According to ORR data on overcrowding, HS2 comes in near the bottom of the national priority table for investment (at 39th and 49th out of 53 priorities. HS2 is simply the wrong priority and it will starve the rest of the rail network of investment for two decades and require a massive ongoing subsidy.

There is a credible alternative.

According to Government, the alternatives to HS2 ‘come up short’ and are dismissed as ‘patch and mend’, despite the fact the same sort of upgrades are what were planned, and apparently now cannot be afforded, for the rest of the rail network. Again, there is no substance in this claim.

The ‘Optimised Alternative’ (OA), drawn up by former BR and the Strategic Rail Authority board member Chris Stokes, enables a tripling in standard class capacity from the 2008 base, comfortably accommodating the Government forecast of doubling in demand to 2037. The Transport Select Committee, Atkins (for DfT) and National Rail have all accepted the OA can deliver this intercity capacity, which far outstrips the DfT forecasts.

Eliminating the non-grade separated junction at Ledburn, works between Brinklow and Nuneaton and at Colwich junction would increase the number of intercity and freight services on the West Coast Mainline, with reconfiguration of trains adding further additional capacity. All this could be delivered for a fraction of the costs of HS2. And there are other options too!