



Submission to the

Public Accounts Committee

This submission is on behalf of STOP HS2. STOP HS2 was formed as a grassroots campaign to oppose HS2 (High Speed Two). In October 2011 we delivered a petition with 108,000 signatures to Downing Street.

This submission looks into whether the lessons learned from HS1 are being applied in the case of HS2. Our conclusion is that the lessons from HS1 are being ignored.

Penny Gaines,
STOP HS2, 131 Warwick Rd, Kenilworth CV8 1HY

1.0 Like HS1, HS2 will overestimate passenger numbers.

Compared to the original 1995 forecasts for HS1, passenger numbers are a third of the forecast. Even with the Department for Transport's revised passenger forecasts from 1998, actual passenger numbers are 30% lower.

1.1 The HS2 forecasts are unsound.

Each of the three economic cases for HS2, published by the Department for Transport in 2010, 2011 and 2012, have come up with a different date (2033, 2043 and 2037 respectively) for when they expect demand to double. To get such varying forecasts over within a short space time of time demonstrates that the forecasting method is unsound for the timescales involved.

1.2 The Dft are still not using the Passenger Demand Forecasting Handbook version 5.0, even though it has been available to them since 2010.

1.3 The Department for Transport blames the inaccuracy of its HS1 forecast on the rise of low cost airlines. However when HS2 Ltd set up challenge panels "to provide independent expert scrutiny" on the HS2 plans they did not include any aviation representative.¹

¹ The transport Select Committee report into High Speed Rail Nov 2011, vol 2, oral evidence. Also from report:

1.4 Groups like Stop HS2 have raised the issue to the DfT that developments in technology - like telepresence videoconferencing - will reduce the demand for long-distance travel. The growth in teleconferencing is being led by businesses, and taken up by all government departments: it has clear benefits in both time saved and travel costs reduced.

Although the Dft is promoting initiatives like Anywhere Working, to encourage use of technology instead of travel, with respect to HS2, the Dft refuses to acknowledge any possible effect of technology, and does not appear to have made any effort to assess whether it will affect the viability of the HS2 project.

2.0 Value of Time Savings.

As with HS1, a significant proportion of the expected benefits from HS2 are expected to come from reducing the time of the journey.

2.1 Stop HS2 have long argued that measuring the benefit of rail projects in terms of time saved is increasingly irrelevant for rail projects. Many passengers work on trains: modern trains are fitted with power plugs and wi-fi for passenger use.

2.2 Although this is beginning to be acknowledged by the Dft, the HS2 economic case does not take this into account.

2.3 The vast majority of HS2 passengers are expected to be using HS2 instead of conventional speed rail (65%) or to be new passengers (24%)². If people are already working on a train, saving a few minutes in one stage of the journey will lead to no actual time saving benefit.

2.4 In addition the assumption that every minute on a train was wasted has led to premature rejection of options. For instance, HS2 Ltd rejected the idea of stations at Bicester and Milton Keynes because it would increase the journey times for HS2 passengers by a few minutes.

3.0 Unclear Objectives for HS2

The primary objective of HS1 was clear from its original name, Channel Tunnel Rail Link.

3.1 However, there is no such clarity about the objective for HS2. The government has put forward a variety of reasons for building it before

"Of the three groups, currently comprising 22 people (all men), only the Analytical Challenge Panel contains any evident critic of high-speed rail. The Strategic Challenge Panel comprises eight transport and local government experts who are almost all publicly supportive of high-speed rail, including the Director of Yes to HS2, the Director of Greengauge 21 and the Chairman of Network Rail."

² HS2 documents, Jan 2012. With modal shift from other modes, they say transferred from road 8%, and from air 3%.

subsequently dropping them. These range from promoting a low carbon economy, to healing the north-south divide, to reshaping the economic geography of Britain and to providing extra capacity for commuters.

3.2 However HS2 has not been evaluated in comparison with other schemes that could fulfill these policy objectives. So even if Hs2 might fulfill these objectives, it is not clear that spending £33 billion on a new railway is the best value for money method for doing so.

4.0 What HS1 did well, but HS2 is doing badly

4.1 HS1 runs next to motorways and major roads: 85% of the route was in tunnel or next to a railway or trunk road, including the M20 and the M26 and other dual carriageways.

In contrast, Stop HS2 calculations last year showed that only 37% of the HS2 was either in tunnels or next to what the HS2 consultation documents describe as "existing railway or road corridors".³ Typical of these is the A413, which is a single carriageway road and not comparable to a motorway.

4.2 HS1 has intermediate stations at Stratford International, Ebbsfleet and Ashford. HS2 will have no stations between London and Birmingham, even though the distance is greater than with HS1.

5.0 Conclusion

It is our opinion that HS2 is likely to repeat a number of mistakes made by the development of HS1, especially with respect to passenger numbers.

³ We acknowledge that this calculation will have changed slightly with the publication of the revised route in January 2012, but believe that it is still a reasonable representation.