

STOP HS2

**No business case.
No environmental case.
No money to pay for it.**

www.stophs2.org

IS THERE AN ALTERNATIVE TO HIGH SPEED 2?

That depends what you think HS2 is supposed to achieve. Some have said HS2 is a solution looking for a problem.

Better alternatives for the environment

If the goal is to **get cars off the road**, the better alternative to HS2 is to speed up cross country rail routes not routes to London where rail already has the dominant market share. Further electrification and improved connection times will do much more.

If the goal is to **cut domestic flights**, the better alternative to HS2 is to invest in in-cab signalling and cut journey times on East Coast to Scotland. Alstom say they can cut 50 minutes off times to Scotland.

If the goal is **environmental**, the better alternative to HS2 is to use existing lines rather than destroy precious countryside and aim for 80 – 140mph across the network. 400 kph speed is not green.

Better alternatives for jobs

If the goal is to **create jobs** and reduce the North / South divide there are thousands of alternatives to HS2 that are better than spending over £400,000 per job on a scheme that most experts (and the DfT) say will mainly create jobs in London. And some have calculated that HS2 costs more jobs than it creates.¹

Better alternatives for speed

If the goal is about **reducing journey time**, many will have longer journey times because HS2 offers poor connectivity. But HS2 does not connect directly to Heathrow, Birmingham Airport, or Birmingham New Street Station. So when connection time is included, the potential benefits for those travelling from say Birmingham suburbs are lost. HS2 will only save time for those living close to the proposed HS2 stations and able to afford the fare, albeit at a cost of at least £1½bn per minute saved. A better alternative is to improve speeds on existing slow lines and use in-cab signalling to further improve times on existing high speed intercity lines.

Better alternatives for capacity

Finally... **capacity**. In the absence of other problems to solve, those in favour of HS2 claim we face a capacity crunch. Hmmm. First Group, who have won the new WCML contract, say they can double capacity by 2026 with 11-car Pendolino trains that will be just 35% occupied. And Virgin conjured up half a million extra seats on the WCML for the Olympics.

The truth is that long distance services into Euston are at just 60% of capacity for the three hours of peak morning demand and just 64% in the busiest hour². This makes Euston the least busy long distance service; Paddington and Waterloo are both over 100% in the peak hour. Furthermore, Euston utilisation will fall as new carriages are added. And as the 51m alternative delivers more capacity than the DfT forecast, there is no capacity crunch on the West Coast Mainline for many decades, if at all³.

Of course there are some specific capacity problems on the West Coast Mainline. Trains to Milton Keynes are full and this needs to be dealt with now, not in 2026. We can. Dealing with Ledburn junction bottleneck at a cost of £243m would enable capacity to double. And the 'fare cliff' at 7pm leaves the first off peak trains overcrowded. That's a pricing issue not a capacity issue.

The 51m alternative trebles the number of standard class seats on the West Coast Mainline. This kind of solution is relatively low cost (£2bn not £33bn) and incremental, therefore low risk, whereas HS2 is all or nothing. And it generates over £5 of benefit for every £1 invested. By comparison, HS2 costs exceed all calculated benefits.

Better alternatives for the future

Much **faster, greener digital communication** will cut into the business rail travel growth on which the HS2 case is based. PC based video conferencing and webinars will develop into 3D telepresence (already demonstrated by Cisco⁴), significantly reducing the number of physical meetings and cutting into demand for all forms of travel. **This is the 21st century alternative.**

So whatever the claims for HS2, there are better alternatives to meet our transport and communication needs. We don't need a vanity project. We need a **socially just national transport infrastructure plan** starting with the 'shovel-ready' projects that will have an immediate impact on jobs.

¹ <http://bit.ly/g6sNX2>

² July 2011 Rail Utilisation Strategy

³ <http://bit.ly/pmdPER>

⁴ http://www.musion.co.uk/Cisco_TelePresence.html

