

The truth of Boris Johnson's transport legacy

40% Increase in cost of public
transport fares since 2008

Only 1% The percentage of Londoners who
think public transport costs are too low

76% The percentage of Londoners who think
public transport costs are too high

Cost to the taxpayer of the
Thames Cable car **£46m**

Cost to the taxpayer of the
aborted Estuary Airport **£5m**

**Val Shawcross CBE is the Labour
London Assembly
Transport Spokesperson.**



Contact: Val.Shawcross@london.gov.uk

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THE COST OF BORIS

***London Transport:
A Legacy Derailed***

Val Shawcross AM CBE

LONDONASSEMBLYLABOUR

London Transport: A Legacy Derailed

Boris Johnson's transport legacy has well and truly come off the tracks.

For Londoners, forced to witness increasingly large amounts of their pay cheques frittered away on travel costs and to struggle on to the capital's overcrowded tubes and buses, the last seven years with Boris Johnson have been anything but a smooth ride.

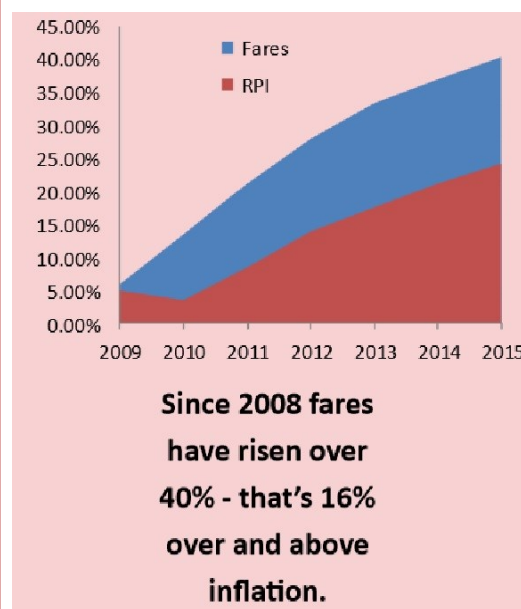
The Mayor once boldly claimed "Londoners deserve honesty and openness over fare setting. My approach will ensure that fares will be lower in the long term." These were very warm words indeed. But those who have seen their fares rise year after year, the very same people who have witnessed little action taken to deliver the important transport projects the capital desperately needs, will testify that's all there is to Boris Johnson's pledge – warm words.

Fare payers ripped off

Last Christmas the Mayor had ample opportunity to salvage his ailing transport legacy. Had he responded to calls to utilise £98m of Transport for London (TfL) underspends to freeze fares at 2014 levels, Boris Johnson could have saved the average commuter, travelling on a zone 1-6 Annual Travelcard, as much as £56 a year. It was a solid proposal. With TfL consistently overestimating its operating costs and underestimating income from fares, the Mayor had the capacity to provide Londoners with some much needed respite from spiralling travel costs, without impinging on TfL's capital expenditure or reserves.

Instead Boris Johnson bumped up fares by another 2.5% taking the not-so-grand total of fare hikes across his mayoralty to a staggering 40%.

For many Londoners, already struggling to cope with the capital's high cost of living, the cumulative impact of Boris' annual increases has simply become too much to bear. A woman in Barnet recently told me that rising transport costs had meant that living and working in the capital was 'nearly impossible'. Sadly, she's not alone. 76% of Londoners now say that their fares are 'too high'; with less than 1% stating that they are 'too low'.



Tube upgrades delayed, cancelled and neglected

The salt in the wounds for those unable to avoid the Mayor's perennial fare hikes, is the fact that very little has been done to deliver the vital projects needed to ensure London's transport infrastructure meets the needs of its burgeoning population and global city status.

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As part of his Vision 2020, the Mayor vowed that he would deliver essential upgrades to the Circle, District, Hammersmith and City, and Metropolitan Lines by 2018. But in August, with just months of Boris Johnson's mayoral term remaining, TfL announced that this work will be delayed by five years, after a failed contract for the work cost the taxpayer over £80m.

With rush hour tubes operating at full capacity and those on the daily commute forced to endure uncomfortably overcrowded services, upgrading the tube is, without doubt, the single most important transport project in London aside from Crossrail. The Mayor's botched attempt at delivering this project is amongst his most significant failures.

Buses undermined

For bus passengers, it's not much better. Boris Johnson's failure to address bus overcrowding is nothing new. Whilst the previous Mayor boosted capacity on the network by 34% - resulting in reduced overcrowding, shorter waiting times and more routes to serve a growing populous – the predicted increase under Boris Johnson stands at a measly 4.39%. Bus capacity is being outstripped by population growth.

When you compare Boris' abysmal record with his decision to send bus fares soaring by 47% since 2008 it is not an exaggeration to say that London bus users are being well and truly ripped off.

Indeed there's a real injustice beneath Boris' blunder-ridden handling of his transport responsibilities. Consider, for example, that whilst passengers have been grappling with increasingly unaffordable transport costs, the Mayor has simultaneously whittled away vast sums by cancelling some projects such as the Thames Gateway Bridge, only to reintroduce them at a later date.

Whilst the Mayor's record of delaying, cancelling or simply neglecting vital transport projects has served Londoners so poorly, it has allowed him to allocate greater priority to other projects, however ill-judged they may be.

For the next Mayor there will be little to salvage from the ashes of Boris' derailed legacy.

The much lauded Thames Cable Car project in East London, meant to cost the taxpayer no money, has actually cost £46m thus far, returning disappointing passenger numbers in the process. The new Routemaster buses have been widely criticised as 'Roastmasters' after soaring temperatures left passengers sweltering. All of these pursued whilst Londoners have been forced to shell out ever greater amounts in fares.

Cyclists left disappointed

For the many disappointed Londoners there is perhaps one saving grace to be found amongst the debris of Boris' transport legacy – the Cycle Superhighway. But this project, intended to make our capital safer for its growing number of cyclists, took too long to conjure up. London's cyclists were left to wait seven years before the Mayor displayed any real commitment to delivering the type of cycle infrastructure that befits a capital city. Even on the promise to improve the 33 most dangerous junctions for cyclists, by the time he leaves City Hall only 9 of the 33 will be completed.

Boris Johnson took up the mayoralty amongst great fanfare, but his transport legacy very quickly slipped off the rails, leaving already hard pressed Londoners to pay the price.