

Caroline Pidgeon AM, Chair of the Transport Committee

Rt Hon George Osborne MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
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London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London, SE1 2AA

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Dear Chancellor

Funding for electrification of the Gospel Oak to Barking line

I am writing on behalf of the London Assembly Transport Committee to urge you to provide funding for electrification of the Gospel Oak to Barking railway line in the Government's Budget Report on 20 March. We believe there is a strong case for Government to fund this electrification programme as part of Network Rail's 2014-19 Strategic Business Plan.

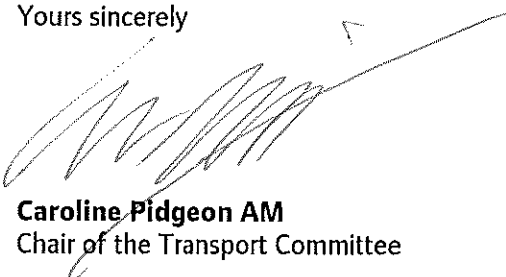
London requires investment in electrification of the Gospel Oak to Barking Line to relieve significant overcrowding on this strategic route for both passenger travel and freight traffic. Electrification is necessary to improve connectivity with the rest of London's rail network and would deliver a much-needed increase in passenger and freight capacity. The programme would enable longer trains to run on the route, and the removal of diesel-car trains would help to improve local air quality. The current lack of funding is stopping Transport for London (TfL) from introducing longer trains on the route, and further delays to the scheme will exacerbate overcrowding on a route where demand already far outstrips capacity. Furthermore, at our meeting last week we heard from Network Rail that it is essential that full funding is made available in 2013 to enable electric trains to run on the line before the opening of Crossrail in 2018. Access will become more difficult after the opening of Crossrail, thereby increasing the costs of the programme. The electrification programme has the full support of the Mayor, TfL, and rail industry and passenger stakeholder groups.

Despite widespread support for electrification of the Gospel Oak to Barking Line, Government support for investment in this programme appears to have stalled. The Transport Commissioner, Sir Peter Hendy CBE, told the Committee in December that TfL had engaged in renewed discussions with the Department and Network Rail over the scheme. It is therefore our understanding that funding for the electrification of the Gospel Oak to Barking Line was included within the Treasury's 2012 Autumn Budget plans only to be withdrawn.

We hope that the Treasury will now provide funding to Network Rail via the Department for Transport to facilitate the long overdue electrification of the Gospel Oak to Barking Line. We note that TfL has offered to contribute £25m towards the £90 million cost of the scheme. The benefits of the programme and the need for it to be completed in advance of Crossrail mean that a funding commitment should be made now to avoid more delays and the additional costs these would incur.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely



Caroline Pidgeon AM
Chair of the Transport Committee

Copied to:
Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin MP, Department for Transport