

1 London Infrastructure Plan 2050

Transport

Q: Are there any other strategic projects we have not considered?

GB Railfreight welcomes the Mayor of London's assessment of London's infrastructure needs up to 2050. As the fastest growing rail freight operator in the UK, we recognise the impact transport infrastructure limitations can have, not just on our business, but on wider UK Plc and its ability to keep the economy moving.

In order to sustain growth across various markets, specifically aggregates and its role in supporting UK manufacturing and construction, it is vital that London possesses strategically effective rail connectivity and freight facilities. As such, we are going to detail additional areas that we believe need to be considered in the 2050 Plan.

The consultation document affirms the importance of rail freight in "bringing products to London, such as aggregates, and removing waste such as Crossrail spoil." While it cites the need for transformation of the rail network to facilitate freight movements, it needs to also address specific freight routes that are in need of attention, along with freight terminals.

Aggregate rail freight terminals

In the Greater London Authority's Local Aggregate Assessment for London 2013, it was concluded that, with two years left to run on the Capital's landbank of permitted aggregate reserves, rail heads would be crucial in sustaining high levels of imports into London.

GB Railfreight supports the development of existing strategically effective aggregates terminals across London, as well as the creation of new terminals, in order to deal with actual and prospective growing demand.

The key to adjusting to this demand and not wasting spend on the wrong developments is focusing on sites that have economies to support them.

Despite being intermodal terminals, both Stratford and Willesden freight terminals are prime examples of speculative builds subsequently closed, that suffered significant losses because, along with delay risks and road congestion costs, had a limited market to drive business.

On the other hand, if we assess Lafarge Tarmac & Hanson Aggregates' Kings Cross Concrete facility, it has been able to grow into the second largest concrete site in the UK as a result of its strategic location. This growth has been supported by infrastructure at the facility, which allows it to accept large trains and offer significant storage space, as well as high levels of operational competitiveness.

GB Railfreight recommends that the Mayor of London works with the industry in evaluating markets across the Capital that require support, or further support, from an aggregates rail freight terminal.

The role these terminals play in supporting a more sustainable mode of freight transport should also not be understated. With new EU targets calling for a 40% cut in greenhouse

gas emissions by 2030, compared with 1990 levels, infrastructure needs to be put in place that supports the facilitation of a freight modal shift from road to rail.

These infrastructure developments can be accompanied by a regulatory system that encourages the use of rail freight into these terminals, such as the conditions in place at Tarmac Ltd.'s Westbourne Park facility. At present, it is being used to support the Crossrail project, but once this is completed, it will once again require all goods to be brought in via rail.

GB Railfreight recommends that the Mayor of London considers the benefits of imposing similar rail-use requirements on freight being brought in to existing and possible future aggregates terminals.

Intermodal rail freight terminals

Network Rail's *Freight Market Study*, published last year, forecasted that the intermodal sector would grow by 6% per annum, in both tonnes and tonne kilometres, to 2043. With important traffic flows from Southampton, Essex Thameside, the Haven Ports and the Channel Tunnel, it is often argued that the expansion of intermodal facilities in London is needed for this growth to take place.

While GB Railfreight's position on the potential for intermodal market expansion depends, to a large extent, on supporting funding mechanisms and the operator market, its arguments for or against intermodal rail freight terminal facilities in London rest on a different issue – capacity.

Intermodal rail freight terminals require large geographical spaces and infrastructure to deal with container traffic, the former of which is not available in London. To put it into perspective, it would be incredibly difficult to find an 850-acre location for a new terminal, the size of the extension that has recently been approved at Daventry intermodal freight terminal.

GB Railfreight, therefore, recommends that the Mayor of London steers away from projects that look at expanding intermodal interchange and terminal capacity in London.

Freight route investment

In order to support proposals around aggregate freight capacity in London, we need to address the problems of bottlenecks on key lines in and out of the Capital. These bottlenecks often occur on sections of two-track with flat junctions, such as on the North London Line and South London Line.

Further capacity problems also exist on the Midland Main Line north of St Pancras. With the three-tier service operating over two pairs of track, timetabling is crucial to limit delay. However, with the second stage of Thameslink opening in 2019, this will become a lot more difficult.

GB Railfreight recommends that the Mayor of London evaluates various opportunities for improving infrastructure capacity on the North London Line, South London Line and Midland Main Line.