

Liberal Democrats pledge biggest rail expansion since the Victorians

The Liberal Democrats have set out radical plans to revitalise the railways by improving and reopening rail lines and stations.

The party will set up a Rail Expansion Fund of nearly £3bn from which councils and transport authorities can bid for money to pay for rail improvement and expansion projects.

This fund will come from cuts to the major roads budget.

Commenting, **Liberal Democrat Shadow Transport Secretary, Norman Baker** said:

“The Liberal Democrats will transform the railways with the biggest expansion since the Victorian age.

“Labour has allowed the railways to wither on the vine and punished passengers with huge fare hikes while more polluting forms of transport have got cheaper. All the while, the Tories have been sharpening the axe they will take to the transport budget.

“High speed rail is hugely important, but it is only part of the 21st century rail network Britain needs. Our plans will reopen thousands of miles of track across the country and make our railway great again.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

The policy in brief

Liberal Democrats will set up a £2.94bn Rail Expansion Fund from which councils and transport authorities can bid for money to pay for rail improvement and expansion projects. This is paid for by cutting part of the Major Roads budget.

Why it is necessary

Despite often stating that it is impossible to build your way out of congestion, Labour continues to pour billions of pounds into overspent major road schemes. Government analysis shows that new road schemes can increase traffic by 8-10% in a year.

At the same time, greener alternatives to driving are becoming less viable. Rail fares have increased by 13% in real terms since 1997 while the cost of motoring has declined by 14%.

Policy detail

In July 2008, the Government re-announced a £6bn programme to go ahead between 2008/9 and 2013/14, 'Britain's Transport Infrastructure – Motorways and Major Trunk Roads'. This is in addition to the £3bn allocated through Regional Funding Allocations for regional priorities. We will reduce the former: the £6bn programme which has mostly been used for motorway widening and hard shoulder running projects.

The schemes funded out of the £6bn budget which are already under construction or are due to begin construction before the 2010/11 General Election will be fully funded. We will cut the remaining budget by 90%, and set aside £480m for our policy to cut rail fares. The remaining £2.95bn will be redirected into a Rail Expansion Fund. There will still be a residual pot for roads of around £380m; other schemes in the programme will have to be reassessed under stricter environmental and social criteria in order to receive funding.

Local authorities and integrated transport authorities will bid for money from the Rail Expansion Fund and bids will be assessed under a number of criteria, such as how much money the bidder proposes to contribute and the carbon reductions which would be achieved. We have drawn up a list of rail improvements that would be suitable for receiving money from the fund; these have been divided into an 'A' list of projects that are most desirable and/or ready to go and a 'B' list of longer term investments. The lists are not definitive and some projects that are currently not priorities may be given priority depending on details of bids received. Not every single one of these projects will turn out to be financially viable but we will aim to do as many of the listed projects as possible. The rail improvements are listed in the attached appendix.

Costs/savings

The schemes already under construction or beginning construction before 2010/2011 have had £2.2bn allocated to them, which leaves £3.8bn of the £6bn major roads budget still available over a Parliament. We will cut this budget by 90% and allocate £480m of this for cutting rail fares by RPI-1, which leaves £2.9bn for investing in rail improvements over a Parliament. As this is a spending switch entirely within a department, these figures do not appear in our main manifesto costing. As this switch does not change overall departmental spending limits there is no impact on devolved administration budgets.

Published and promoted by Chris Fox on behalf of the Liberal Democrats, both at 4 Cowley Street, London, SW1P 3NB
<<Rail.Appendix.doc>>

Phil Reilly | Press Officer: Education, Home Affairs, Justice and Transport
t: 020 7227 1244 | m: 07859 808 811 | out of hours: 020 7340 4949 | 4 Cowley Street,
Westminster, SW1P 3NB

Appendix

1. Priority Improvements

a) Re-opened lines

Bletchley - Oxford
Matlock - Buxton
Crewe - Northwich
Galashiels - Carlisle (part of Waverley route)
Penrith - Keswick
Upgrade to Leam Valley line and Stillington - Ferryhill to provide a diversionary route between Northallerton - Newcastle
Barnstaple - Bideford
Lewes - Uckfield
Exeter - Okehampton
Plymouth - Tavistock (with developer contributions)
Colne - Skipton
Reopening Bentley line to Whitehall - Bordon
Using former freight line to link a new station at Wisbech
Using civil engineering depot track and a current heritage railway to provide services to existing stations at Heywood, Bury (Bolton Street), Summerseat, Ramsbottom, Irwell Vale and Rawtenstall.
Extending network services onto existing heritage line

b) New lines

Southport, Wigan Ormskirk Preston link (Burscough curves)
Todmorden curve
Connect the Medway Valley line from Strood to Ebbsfleet
Linking the Midland mainline with the Birmingham-Derby line using existing freight line with stations at Kirby Muxloe, Bagworth, Coalville, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Moira and Gresley (for Swadlincote).
New line on former railway linking Bournemouth to a new station at Ringwood

c) Re-opened stations

Ilkeston
Kidlington
Wantage
Corsham
Tavistock
Middlewich
reopen original station at Ashington on existing freight line
Reopened stations at Cranleigh and Bramley and new track laid on former Horsham -Guildford line

d) New stations

Build new passenger station at Blyth
Using abandoned Leamside route to a new station at Washington
New single line track along former to new stations at Thornton and Fleetwood,
Using former Ormskirk to Rainford Junction line to connect to a new station at Skelmersdale
New station at Bordon on former military railway
Use existing freight line for passenger services to a new station connecting Hythe to Waterloo-Weymouth line
Build new passenger station at Aldridge on existing freight line
New stations at Pelshall and Brownhills, laying track on former railway from Walsall to Brownhills, and then taking over disused

freight route to Lichfield

e) Electrification

Ipswich to Felixstowe
Liverpool to Manchester via Warrington Central
St Helens to Wigan
Preston to Manchester via Bolton
Crewe to Chester
Manchester to Leeds via Huddersfield
Basingstoke / Reading to Birmingham via Oxford and Leamington / Coventry
Swindon to Cheltenham
Birmingham to Bristol via Cheltenham (including Gloucester)
Leeds to York

2. Longer-term improvements

a) Station re-developments

Region	Work & Station
East of England	Extra platform at Cambridge
North West	Relocate Salford Crescent
South West	Reinstate platform at Salisbury

b) Electrification

Region	Line
East Midlands	Midland Main Line to Kettering (Corby) as Stage 1. To Leicester as Stage 2.
East of England	Felixstowe - Ipswich
East of England	Hitchin-Cambridge line power supply upgrade (starting with Hitchin Flyover)
Greater London	Barking - Gospel Oak
North East	East Coast Main Line diversionary routes
North West	Trans-Pennine routes including Manchester, Liverpool (via Chat Moss) and Blackpool via Preston
North West	Wrexham - Bidston (Merseyrail)
South East	OreHastings-Ashford
South East	Eastleigh-Romsey
South East	Romsey-Redbridge
West Midlands	Barnt Green to Bromsgrove on Midland Line

c) Line re-openings

Region	Line
South East	Reconnect Medway Valley line to Gatwick
South East	Reopening Sturt Road 'chord' to improve rail services around Camberley
South East	Eridge to Tunbridge Wells

d) New lines

Region	Line
South East	Connect the Medway Valley Line from Strood to Ebbsfleet
Yorkshire	York to Holgate Junction

e) Line doublings

Region	Line
East Midlands	Reinstate third track between Leicester and Wigston

	Junction on Midland Main Line
East of England	Four tracks between Huntingdon and Fletton (Peterborough) on the East Coast Main Line
South East	Quadrupling of Broxbourne to Cheshunt
North West	Reinstate four tracks between Aldwarke and Swinton junctions on the Transpennine line
South East	Oxford-Worcester (Hereford)
South East	Eastleigh - Romsey
South West	Exeter-Salisbury (Yeovil)
South West	Swindon-Kemble (Gloucester, Cheltenham, and South Wales via the Severn Tunnel)
West Midlands	Reinstate four tracks between Tyseley and Lapworth on the Chiltern Line to separate stopping and non-stopping trains
Yorkshire and the Humber	Reinstatement of double track from Dore West Junction to Dore Station Junction on Midland Main Line and doubling towards Sheffield
East of England	Extra track from Colchester to Stratford to allow separation of passenger and goods traffic. This twin track has a high traffic density, no alternative routes, few passing loops or crossovers. There are frequently delays to passenger services as they are trapped behind slow freight services and absolute chaos if anything breaks down.
East of England	Passing loop between Witham and Braintree to allow more frequent service on this line.

g) New Stations

Region	Station
East Midlands	East Midlands Parkway
West Midlands	Castle Vale

h) Urban Developments

Region	
Greater London	Accessibility works Clapham Junction
North West	Kirkby (Headbolt Lane)
North West	Merseyside Rail Strategy including electrification of Wrexham - Bidston and about 20 new stations in the Merseyside area and around
South East	Provision of a fully signalled turnback facility in down platform Wokingham
South West	Bristol area - the wholesale revitalisation of local services in the Bristol areas including the introduction of Tram Trains and extra tracks
West Midlands	Centro scheme for Birmingham area including re-opening Moor Street and the Camp Hill Chords together with 16 stations, many with Park and Ride
Yorkshire and the Humber	Leeds area plan including the electrification of many lines and the opening of 4 new stations

i) Mainly Freight

Region	
Greater London	Barking - Gospel Oak - Willesden: increase capacity and electrification
Greater London	Upgrade goods lines between Finsbury Park and Alexandra Palace on the East Coast Main Line and reinstate platform at Finsbury Park
Various	Increase the loading gauge from ports to inland freight terminals

j) Signalling/Infrastructure

Region	
East Midlands	Signalling improvements on route from Peterborough via Lincoln to Doncaster on the East Coast Main Line (Diversionary Route)
East Midlands	High speed crossovers at Chesterfield
Greater London	A grade separated junction between Clapham Junction and West London Junction to allow more trains to use former international station
Greater London	Construct single flyover at Croydon (Windmill Hill) to separate London Bridge and Victoria Services
North West	Additional line from Platform 0 at Stockport to Hazel Grove line at Edgeley Junction No. 1 on West Coast Main Line
North West	Turnback facility at Todmorden allowing extension of Rochdale trains
South West	Turnback facility at Yate Station