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## TfL considers options for 'Crossrail 2'

By Mark Odell, Transport Correspondent

Planning is set to start on a new multibillion pound north-south rail link for London that backers say is essential to stop the capital "grinding to a halt" by 2030.

Transport for London said on Tuesday it would start initial consultations in the spring on the Crossrail 2 project to build a new underground line linking southwest London to the north and northeast of the capital.



A diagram of the £12bn Crossrail scheme favoured by the London First business lobby group

London's public transport system will come under growing pressure, with the population expected to grow 1.5m to almost 10m by 2030.

This population expansion is forecast to create an extra 700,000 jobs, pushing more passengers on to an already overcrowded network.

It will also more than soak up a planned increase in capacity of more than 30 per cent over the next 10 years from improvements already under way, including a multibillion pound upgrade of most of the Tube network, the north-south Thameslink line and the £16bn Crossrail project.

Michèle Dix, head of planning at TfL, said two schemes were under consideration. The cheaper option, priced at about £9.5bn, would see the building of an underground line connecting Wimbledon in the southwest to Alexandra Palace in the north of the city, via central London.

A more expensive option, which would cost at least £12bn and follow the same route, would replicate aspects of the existing Crossrail project.

It would, for example, involve digging bigger tunnels under the capital to allow full-sized commuter trains to run from the mainline network into central London, connecting to services from stations including Shepperton and Epsom, in the southwest, and Cheshunt and the Lee Valley region in the northeast of the capital. It could also extend to Stansted airport.

The announcement by TfL coincided with the release of a report by London First, a business lobby group, calling for TfL and the government to commit to the second option.

Lord Adonis, the former Labour transport secretary, who chaired the London First working group, warned that without the project London “would grind to a halt. He said the bigger suburban scheme was by far the most cost-effective method of delivering the extra capacity.

“It is vital to avoid the classic mistake of patch and mend,” he said, adding that without the scheme, TfL would still have to spend £6bn on improving existing infrastructure which would not provide the extra capacity needed.

Stephen Hammond, a transport minister said: “As London grows we’ll need continued investment in its transport network to accommodate this additional demand and support continued economic growth. Crossrail 2 is certainly one of the options for doing this. I welcome the work done by TfL and the publication of London First’s report and will now consider the points it raises.”

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