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Second Crossrail line seen as vital for HS2

By Mark Odell, Transport Correspondent

London's transport system would not be able to cope with extra traffic from the planned high-speed rail link with the north if the government fails to back a new Crossrail line for the capital, the head of London Underground has warned.

Mike Brown, managing director of the Tube, said that without extra rail capacity within the capital, the terminus for the so-called High Speed 2 line at London's Euston station would "fall apart" because of the volume of passengers.

Transport for London forecasts that passenger arrivals at Euston in the three-hour morning peak would jump from 23,500 in 2009 to 57,000 in 2033 when HS2 is due to be fully open.

Late last month, the government revealed its preferred route for the second stage of HS2. The line is due to be built in two stages, between London and Birmingham before splitting into two lines to Manchester and Leeds.

Earlier this month, TfL announced it was set to start planning for a new multibillion pound north-south rail link for London, dubbed Crossrail 2.

"The second phase of High Speed 2 is the bit that really makes Crossrail 2 an imperative," Mr Brown said. "You have to build Crossrail 2 or else Euston falls apart."

The projected growth in London's population of 1.5m over the next two decades is another reason Crossrail 2 is crucial, said Mr Brown.

The capacity of London's tube and rail network is already set to grow by more than 30 per cent over the next 10 years through a multibillion pound upgrade of most of the underground network and the north-south Thameslink line, as well as the construction of the £16bn Crossrail project, which is due to open in 2018.

TfL is spending about £1.2bn a year upgrading the tube network funded by central government. Mr Brown believes it will need to sustain that level of investment through the 2020s to get Crossrail 2 built.

"The one mistake you mustn't make is that [Crossrail 2] is somehow a substitute for the remaining bit of the tube upgrade," he said. Despite a decade of investment, work is still to start on three of the network's busiest lines: the Bakerloo, Piccadilly and Central.

He said the special levy on London businesses that is funding a quarter of the cost of the ongoing Crossrail project could be extended to Crossrail 2.

A report by London First, a business lobby group, this month urged the government to commit to the more expensive option for Crossrail 2 – a £12bn line that would allow full-sized commuter trains to run from the mainline network into central London.

Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London and a strong supporter of Crossrail 2, was due to start talks with central government this year over the next five-year spending round beyond 2014. But It is widely expected that this will be limited to a comprehensive spending review that will cover expenditure early into the next parliament.

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