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## Business as usual for transport sector at party conferences

Written by Ben Rayner, Political Consultant on 22 September 2017



With the completion of Crossrail near, demands for a Crossrail 2 ramp up, as the capital seeks to satisfy the relentlessly increasing appetite for added capacity in its transport network. The project received a boost in July when the Transport Secretary and London Mayor issued a joint statement giving their backing. Backers argue time is running out, arguing the Government needs to give its sign off soon, in order that a Bill could achieve Royal Assent during this Parliament. Sticking points exist around Transport for London's funding arrangements for the project, though suggests are that sign off could be impending.

The Transport Secretary's backing for the Crossrail 2 stoked outrage in the regions, with MPs and local politicians bemoaning what they perceived as another example of the Government's favouritism for the capital. The Government's case wasn't helped by their cancelling of several electrification projects just prior to Parliament's breaking for summer recess. Loathe to add any further to this perception, any sign off for Crossrail 2, could mean that the Government feels compelled to back projects in the north, in tandem, with Northern Powerhouse Rail being an obvious vehicle.

With a new Bill for HS2 already laid in Parliament, and its second reading soon to be announced, the project proceeds on course, despite vehement opposition. Though, the route to Crewe is unlikely to see the level of opposition seen during Phase 1 of the project. Instead battle lines are being drawn at

Phase 2b of the project, the routes to Leeds and Manchester. Recent debates in Parliament have seen MPs in Cheshire, and perhaps more significantly, in south Yorkshire, over the siting of the proposed station for the region. Much of the debate has the distinct feeling of déjà vu, with criticism being levelled at the project's supposed poor engagement and lack of transparency.

Efforts to improve air quality have seen countries, and companies alike, competing on announcements to end the sale of petrol and diesel cars and vans. Following their French counterparts, the Government announced a ban on their sale by 2040, with the Scottish Government subsequently stating they would seek a phase out by 2032. Car manufacturers have made their own unilateral announcements, with Volvo and Jaguar Land Rover proposing only to manufacture electric cars by 2020. The Government's Autonomous and Electric Vehicles Bill could be crucial in accelerating the uptake of electric cars, particularly through promoting the construction of the necessary charging infrastructure.

In the world of aviation, proposals for a third runway at Heathrow continue, a vote in Parliament is expected in the first half of 2018. With the composition of Parliament more fractious since the General Election, media reports have suggested Labour could oppose the Government's proposals. If true, due to the level opposition to Heathrow expansion in the Conservative Party itself, the Government would almost certainly lose a vote. This suggests a third runway at Heathrow is by no means a foregone conclusion.

Transport and investing in the regions is often a key theme at conference though with much policy already underway, it could be unlikely that we see any key announcements presented during the season ahead.

[Transport](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

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