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RAPID RAIL SYSTEM FOR DOCKLANDS

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On October 7th the Government gave the Greater London Council and the London Docklands Development Corporation the go-ahead for an exciting new Light Rail Transport system (LRT). This will bring high quality and reliable public transport to docklands and improves the linkages with the existing London Underground and BR network.

This November, a Private Bill is to be introduced in the House of Commons by London Transport. The Bill will seek the necessary approvals, so that work can begin speedily. Detailed design proposals are to be commissioned immediately and construction should start in late 1983, with passenger services fully operational in 1987.

All the authorities concerned with the redevelopment of docklands agree that new public transport links are critical in attracting *new businesses, jobs, housing and people to the area*. Hitherto, support funds have just not been available. Proposals for the development of docklands and the provision of transport have been the subject of many studies and reviews over the last decade.

The challenge was to find the best system which could be implemented with the funds available. The extension of the Jubilee Line was a proposal which perhaps best met the needs of the area, but the very high costs of construction meant that successive governments have failed to give this project their backing.

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Chairman Nigel Brookes  
Vice Chairman Bob Mellish MP  
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In July 1981, the LDDC and GLC agreed that it would only be possible to finance an effective scheme if there were a programme initiated jointly and amounting to approximately £15m. p.a. over the next decade covering new road schemes, public transport improvements and the LRT scheme which has been selected to fit in with that general constraint.

Earlier this year, local residents and interest groups were consulted. The docklands communities have warmly welcomed the plans to improve their transportation facilities.

The system will comprise light-rail vehicles most probably operating on standard tracks. These vehicles will incorporate the latest technology and build on the advances made by Continental, Canadian and North American cities, where such systems are already operating successfully and more are being planned.

These systems are highly efficient, reliable and comfortable and can be run very frequently to provide easy access to the new developments planned for docklands. The rail proposals complement improvements to existing bus and road networks already being implemented.

Two routes are planned, one running from the Minories (for Tower Hill; District and Circle lines) and the other from Mile End (for District, Metropolitan and Central lines) both to the site of the old North Greenwich station at the foot of the Isle of Dogs overlooking Greenwich. They will cost in the region of £65m, compared with an estimated bill of £500m. for the proposed Jubilee Line extension.

The new line from the Minories will extend for 6.6 kilometres, largely along existing, both used and disused, railway viaducts. The north/south route from Mile End would follow the alignment of Bow Road and then an existing rail cutting for 3.4 kilometres. There will be scarcely any demolition, as both routes follow disused railway lines and rights of way.

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