

Hs2: arguments for and against the high- speed rail lines



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

- Georgiana Raluca Andrei

Introduction

With the rapid growth of the economy and rapid expansion of technology, there is the need for a development of infrastructure. HS2 is a proposed infrastructure project to build a high speed rail line from London to Manchester and Leeds, via Birmingham, to begin operation in 2026 and be completed in 2032. It was supported by the Labour Government after 2009 and has had the support of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government since May 2010 (Butcher in Parliament, 2015).

HS2 will be constructed in two separate phases:

- Phase 1 from London Euston to Birmingham Curzon Street and Lichfield with intermediate stations in West London (at old Oak Common) and at Birmingham Airport;
- Phase 2 from the West Midlands, splitting into two legs: an eastern leg to Leeds New Lane with intermediate stations in the East Midlands and South Yorkshire; and a western leg to Manchester with intermediate stations at Crewe and Manchester Airport.

In total, the scheme is estimated to cost £42.6 billion for the infrastructure, with a further £7.5 billion for rolling stock. The information presented by Louise Butcher on (Parliament, 2015) offers a clear report about HS2 Phase 1 of the scheme. Supporters claim that construction of HS2 is urgently needed in order to deliver wider economic and regional benefits and to meet future demands. Opponents maintain that these demands are overstated and the same outcome can be achieved with other, cheaper means.

<https://assignbuster.com/hs2-arguments-for-and-against-the-high-speed-rail-lines/>

Arguments for and against HS2 are based on competing ideas not only about what the country needs in terms of new or improved rail infrastructure, but about how (if needed at all) it should be delivered and what the benefits and costs are of the ideas put forward. The two sides fundamentally disagree with the other's interpretation of the 'facts and figures' about the scheme.

The case for

The government believes that creating a high-speed rail line between London and North of England will produce numerous advantages to society.

→Travel time

One of the most important benefits is the time saving. It is expected that once the project finished, it will make a difference in the time spent travelling. For example, Leeds to Birmingham is slashed from 1 hour 58 minutes to just 57 minutes. The East Midlands hub at Toton is 19 minutes from Birmingham. Manchester to Birmingham more than halves from 88 to 41 minutes (BBC News Magazine, 2015). Also, it will improve productivity through savings to journey time.

→Crowds

Creating a high-speed rail line would provide less crowded trains and make the journey more comfortable. This will protect the economy growth and the quality of life, and although cheaper measures might be easier (such as upgrading existing lines), that would provide a short-term fix and it's not suitable for long-term.

→Punctuality

The government argue that the HS2 trains will “ stick more reliably to their timetables than the average train.” (BBC News, 2013). This is an important issue because the passengers value being on time .

→Boosting UK economy

Creating the HS2 will provide various ways to boost the economy, offering the prospect of a sustainable growth and allowing prosperity to expand beyond south east England, rebalancing UK economy. It will generate 22, 000 construction jobs in the next five years and once the entire line is running create 100, 000 jobs (BBC News Magazine, 2015). It will improve the access to employment, will make relocation of business easier and will create opportunities for increased business, tourism and leisure activities. The wider economic benefits of a UK HSR network to wider West Midlands cities, towns and shire counties is expected to be £5. 3 billion over 60 years, while the London to Birmingham route alone is expected to boost Birmingham’s economy by £1. 23 billion, and towns and cities in surrounding counties by £2. 5 billion (GO-HS2, 2015) .

→Good for the environment

HS2 will reduce dependency on air and car travel, this way reducing CO2 emissions. High speed trains are powered by electricity, so their environmental performance will improve over time as more electricity comes from renewable sources. By reducing the time travel between cities in the north of England and Scotland, it will encourage people to switch from air to

rail. The construction of HS2 requires less land than building a new motorway. Also, it has the potential to stimulate further the ongoing regeneration of Birmingham city centre and boost growth around Birmingham Airport and NEC.

The case against

→The final bill - wrong investment?

The expected cost of HS2 from London to Manchester and Leeds was originally £33bn, in 2009 prices, but earlier this year, at the time of the High Speed Rail (Preparation) Bill debate, the cost leapt to £50bn, in 2011 prices. This excludes such things as localised infrastructure to connect with HS2, foot bridges and farm bridges to cross it. In addition, this does not include the Heathrow Link or any provision for changes to the scheme (Stop HS2, 2015). There are cheaper alternatives that would have the same effect as HS2 and will not cost as much, would be ready earlier and be better balanced in meeting needs across the whole country.

→Demolition of homes and damage to rural England

The most affected area will be the north of London's Euston station. More than half of the homes affected are in or around Camden. Across the entire line more than 600 homes will be bulldozed and another 340 homes will be cut off from their wider neighbourhood. Homeowners will get the market value of their property, plus 10% and moving costs. Infrastructure supporting the line will be built on 250 acres of green belt land (BBC News Magazine, 2015). HS2 threatens 350 unique habitats, 67 irreplaceable ancient woods,

<https://assignbuster.com/hs2-arguments-for-and-against-the-high-speed-rail-lines/>

30 river corridors, 24 Sites of Special Scientific Interest plus hundreds of other sensitive areas (Stop HS2, 2015). About 60 properties on the proposed phase 1 route are likely to experience levels of noise which will qualify for noise insulation under the Noise Insulation Regulations. The number of properties that may experience a noticeable increase in noise on the phase 1 route has been reduced since consultation by a third from 4, 700 to around 3, 100 (BBC News Magazine, 2015).

→Increased carbon emissions

Opponents claim that few high-speed train passengers will transfer from air so the carbon emissions will not be reduced. Also, HS2 proposes to run trains at high speed which will need more energy than the existing Eurostar London-Paris trains – pushing up electricity and carbon consumption. It will use three times more energy than a normal inter-city train (HS2 Action Alliance, 2015).

→Illusion of creating new jobs

It's been argued that HS2 will not actually create that many new jobs, most of them being associated with existing jobs within retail activity that have simply moved from other areas towards the new station. Over 70% of the jobs will be created in London, making London the central city.

→HS2 will not benefit the ordinary traveller

Building such an expensive train line would mean an increase in the train tickets. HS2 will only serve to increase the price of train fares as train

companies have to redistribute the costs associated with running on a line such as this (YouGov, 2015)

Conclusion

The Government is proposing to provide the capacity desperately needed across the UK through a new High Speed Rail Network. The new route will link London to Birmingham, then on to Manchester and Leeds forming what is known as the Y-Network. Eventually HSR trains will run to Newcastle, Glasgow and Edinburgh. Construction of such an important project brings together people who support the cause and people who don't. Both sides have important arguments to take into consideration when deciding which side to take.

It remains a hotly contested public issue because particular individuals, groups and industries believe they benefit from HS2 while others consider that they lose out.

Reference list

1. Butcher , L. (2015) *Railways: HS2 Phase 1 – Commons Library Standard Note* [online]. Available at <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/SN00316/railways-hs2-phase-1>(accessed 1st of March 2015).
2. BBC News Magazine (2013) *HS2: 12 arguments for and against* [online]. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-24159571>(accessed 1st of March 2015).

3. BBC News (2013) *Quantifying the benefits of HS2* [online]. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22551178> (accessed 1st of March 2015).
4. GO-HS2 (2015) *GO HS2 High speed rail* [online]. Available at <http://www.go-hs2.com/BenefitsOfHS2/EconomicImprovements.aspx> (accessed 1st of March 2015).
5. Stop HS2 (2015) *Stop HS2* [online]. Available at <http://stophs2.org/facts> (accessed 1st of March 2015).
6. HS2 Action Alliance (2015) *Environment – carbon journeys* [online]. Available at <http://www.hs2actionalliance.org/case-against-hs2/environment/carbon-journeys/> (accessed 1st of March 2015).
7. YouGov (2015) *For and against: High speed rail* [online]. Available at <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2012/01/20/for-against-high-speed-rail/> (accessed 1st of March 2015).