

HS2 fails the Freight Challenge

One of HS2's principal selling points has been the extra capacity that should be released for freight traffic, as intercity passenger flows transfer to the new high speed line. But this 'trickledown' strategy is compromised by:

- HS2's own lack of capacity, and its flawed routeing strategy. *This will leave key routes such as the West Coast Main Line and the Midland Main Line still congested.*
- The lack of any wider vision for a national freight strategy, with freight capacity issues addressed on a nationwide basis and a network of routes created on which freight is 'prime user'. *This requires transfer of express passenger traffic to other lines but slower-speed local/regional passenger traffic would be generally retained.*
- The lack of any vision for an upgraded freight network capable of accommodating larger 'continental' sized rail wagons and 'piggyback' HGV trailers on rail wagons.

The High Speed UK concept for a complementary national freight strategy is illustrated on the opposite page. This shows the existing routes that must be upgraded to achieve a 'continental gauge' freight network extending to all the key conurbations that will be interlinked by HSUK's new high speed lines. These routes generally comprise either:

- underused existing freight lines; or
- main lines (such as the MML from London to Leicester, and the ECML from Newcastle to Edinburgh) that will be paralleled and superseded by HSUK's new high speed lines.

HSUK's establishment of a national continental gauge freight network capable of operating 'piggyback' services will be particularly valuable given its potential to transfer huge volumes of road freight to rail. This should dramatically reduce road congestion and assist in the achievement of step-change road to rail modal shift essential for CO₂ reductions in line with the 80% reduction target of the 2008 Climate Change Act.

HSUK PARALLEL FREIGHT NETWORK

