



Picture: NETWORK RAIL

STATION OF THE FUTURE: Work at Farringdon, London, to build a station for Thameslink services to connect with Crossrail. Smithfield market is the green roof, bottom. A red Underground train is leaving the existing Farringdon station which can be seen in the centre. The construction site, foreground, is where the new station will be and where the tunnel boring machines will meet

Where Crossrail meets Thameslink

This will be a crucial rail interchange for London when Crossrail opens in seven years time.

Farringdon station already allows connections between Thameslink and Underground services.

But the new station currently taking shape will put it right at the heart of the London rail network with 140 trains an hour and an expected 140,000 passengers a day.

It will be where north-south Thameslink meets east-west Crossrail and will allow direct connections to three of London's five airports. Thirteen buildings have been demolished to make way for two integrated ticket halls.

The Thameslink facility will open in December this year but the station will be complete by 2018. The major tunnelling work for the £15 billion Crossrail project begins next year with one boring machine starting off 4.4 miles away at Limmo peninsula in Docklands and another at Royal Oak in west London. The two boring machines will meet at

Farringdon. Crossrail is likely to take on extra importance as the plan for a high-speed rail line from London develops.

It looks likely that Crossrail and HS2 will interchange at Old Oak Common, from where there will also be services to London Heathrow airport.

A Railfuture team met Labour's transport spokesman Maria Eagle in January to put a whole range of points to her, especially the importance of electrification.

We also suggested that Crossrail could serve a wider function by being extended to Southend, Colchester and Clacton in the east and Oxford, Newbury and Basingstoke in the west.

Crossrail is one of many positive projects under way on the railway. A new London Southend Airport station is expected to open this year.

Many other projects are listed in a new 223-page document produced by Network Rail in December outlining the "enhancements" programme. But will the Government be able

to resist demands from its road lobby friends to cut rail spending especially if Sir Roy McNulty in his "Value for Money" report gives them the excuse to do so?

We are still waiting for the Bedford to Oxford service which Chris Green was preparing to implement 20 years ago.

Pre-privatisation cutbacks put paid to that, although campaigners are still fighting hard for the East West rail link.

And Lewes-Uckfield in Sussex is still waiting. Labour peer Lord Steve Bassam of Brighton has renewed calls for the line to be reopened to reduce overcrowding and link the two towns.

Lord Bassam, former spokesman for the Department for Transport, said the investment would pay for itself and would ease pressure on the congested Brighton main line.

Demands for rail reopenings are popping up everywhere as more and more people recognise that rail is needed for both business and leisure. Road expansion, with its wasteful use of fuel and

nightmare environmental consequences, is no longer credible.

Towns that allowed their railway heritage to be destroyed are now reaping the bitter harvest.

In north Shropshire campaigners are hoping to get the once-thriving Baschurch station reopened to serve the rapidly growing population in the area.

In Yorkshire the Minsters Rail Campaign is calling for the reopening of the Beverley-York line which closed in 1965. Dangerous and overcrowded roads nearby make the rail reopening an obvious case. More information: www.minstersrail.org.uk

In Bristol, campaigners have been told that reopening the line to Portishead is feasible and would cost £37 million.

A Network Rail study says that if the line were to open, trains could travel between Portishead and Bristol Temple Meads in 17 minutes, slashing the current journey time by car. If funding can be secured, work on the line could start in 2015 and passenger trains start running early in 2018.