

A Light Railway for Docklands?



GLC
Working for London



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It is widely recognised that there is an urgent need for improvements both to the road system and to public transport within Docklands. The Greater London Council and the London Docklands Development Corporation, bearing this in mind, have agreed jointly to promote a package of proposals designed to achieve such improvements. Some of the schemes for road modernisation and reorganisation of local bus services are already well defined and have moved towards the implementation phase. This includes, where appropriate, proper public consultation.

Specific proposals for completely new public transport services, possibly including light railway links, have been developed more recently. These require detailed assessment in terms of technical suitability and commercial viability. It is vital that public consultation should now take place before a decision is taken by the GLC and the LDDC over the workability of such schemes and by the Government on the issue of whether it should support them.

This leaflet explains which public transport proposals could be included in the package and in particular seeks the views of the community and interested parties on the schemes that have been prepared for a light railway system. It sets out the programme for public consultation and explains how further information can be obtained.

Background

The main road schemes included in the package are as follows:

the Docklands Northern Relief Road;
the Docks Cut Route;
Isle of Dogs Loop Road;
Lower Road and Evelyn Street,

all of which have been, or will be, the subject of public consultation and/or inquiry as appropriate.

The bus proposals include a wide range of increases in services and priorities and also an

express bus route from the Isle of Dogs to Mile End. However, as is well known, the reliability of buses is uncertain because of traffic congestion, human factors and the vagaries of weather. It could be that a rail link would offer a more reliable alternative, shorter journey times and also be effective in attracting jobs and industrial development.

The difficulty has been finding a scheme which meets these major needs and is also affordable. The Jubilee Line extension would have met many of the objectives, but its cost, now estimated at £450m, rules out its construction in the foreseeable future.

The GLC and the LDDC, together with the Docklands Boroughs, have put their heads together with London Transport and British Rail to see what other possibilities there are and what can be achieved. The proposal to electrify the North Woolwich Line is well advanced, and consideration is being given to a branch line from Custom House to Beckton. But there is also a need for a relatively quick, reliable link with central London, the existing Underground system and into the Docklands area itself.

A light railway system would seem to be the only form of rail link that could achieve this at a reasonable cost on the north side of the Thames. Improvements to the East London line services would probably be the most feasible rail option for the Surrey Docks area.

What is a light railway?

It is basically a system of short, one, two or three car trains operating on steel rails. The trains can run alongside road traffic, like trams, or on completely segregated track where speeds of up to 50 mph would be possible. There would be stops at quarter to half mile intervals in areas of high demand. With small vehicles a high service frequency can be maintained and because the track would be segregated over much of its length, it can achieve the reliability of a railway.

The short, lightweight trains reduce the cost of structures and the size of stations. The trains can also cope with steeper gradients and tighter bends than normal railways. A number of European and American cities have already introduced the system in various forms.

The alternative routes

There is an urgent need for better public transport in the Isle of Dogs area both to serve the existing housing and to encourage new developments.

Here are the options open to us:

Option 1

A light railway link from Tower Hill (or Aldgate East) to the Isle of Dogs.

This would use part of BR's existing viaduct between Fenchurch Street and Poplar. Then it would run down through the Isle of Dogs (see map), partly elevated and partly at ground level. There could be a branch line to Beckton as a second phase. The cost is estimated at £50m for the first phase with a terminal at the Minories. A realistic opening date would be 1987.

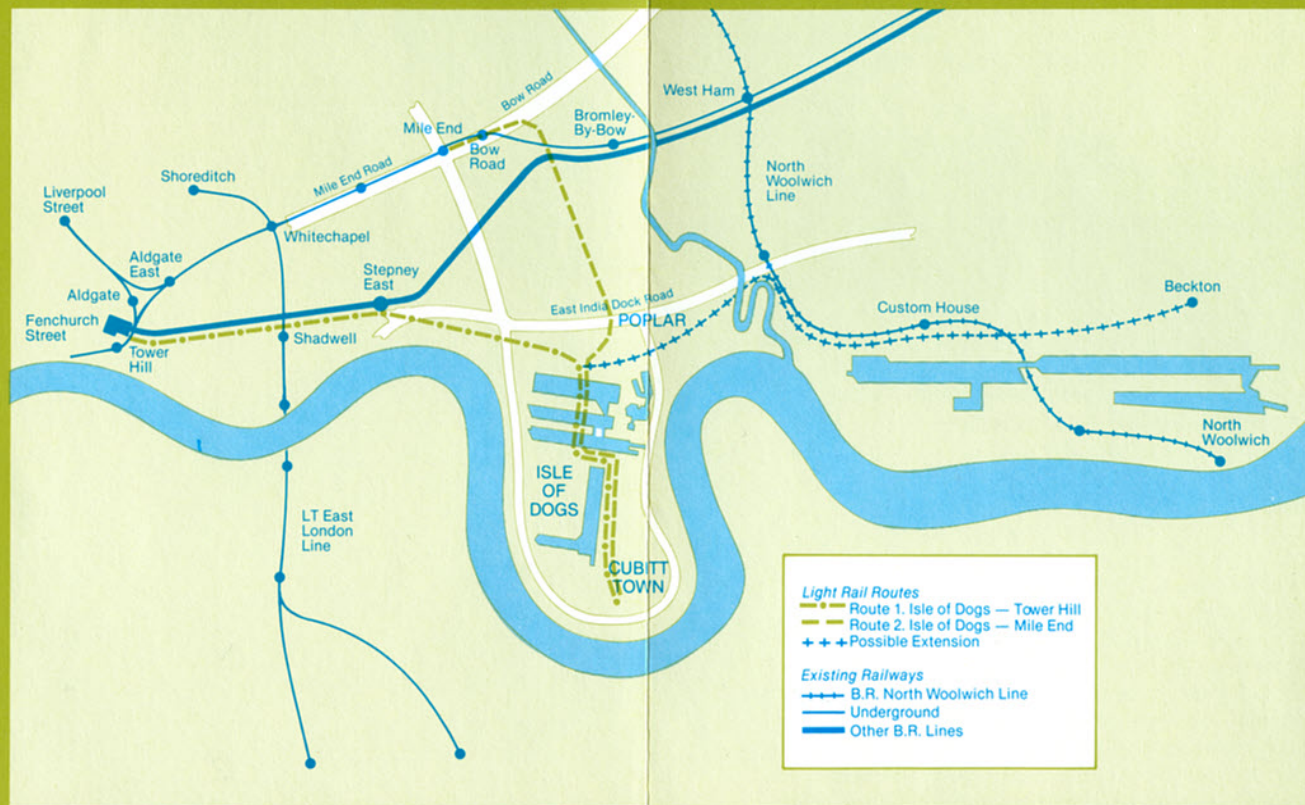
If this option was adopted it would be necessary to relocate the western section of the proposed Docklands Northern Relief Road scheme.

Option 2

A light railway link from Mile End Underground Station to the Isle of Dogs.

This would run along Mile End Road and Bow Road at ground level, then along the former BR freight line to Poplar and on, via the same route down the Isle of Dogs as Option 1 (see map).

The cost of this is some £30m, and it could open in 1986.



Either of these options could provide a fast and reliable service for the area. Journey times from Cubitt Town to Tower Hill would be about 20-25 minutes. It may, of course, be possible to implement both the light railway options as they complement each other.

Option 3

However, if neither of these proposals was pursued then an express bus service could be provided from the Isle of Dogs to Mile End. This would have a low capital cost of about £2m. But this would probably be less reliable and it would not have such a strong impact in attracting new development.

These schemes would serve Docklands north of the river. Avoiding a river crossing is critical to keeping the cost down. We have also considered ways of improving public transport links to Surrey Docks and we will be consulting on these separately. One proposal was to build two new branches to the existing East London Underground line. One from just north of Wapping Station to Tower Hill Station and the other from just south of Rotherhithe Station through Surrey Docks and under the river to the Isle of Dogs. But the cost at £110m seemed to be impractically high.

The more likely practical alternative in the short-term is to improve the service frequency on the line, and the interchange at Whitechapel. If Option 1 were built, there could be an interchange with the East London Line at Shadwell.

Public consultation

From 8 May to 29 May inclusive, we intend to display plans of the options in several local venues, together with photographs of typical light railway systems already in use elsewhere. We hope you will visit one of these displays and pick up a copy of the more detailed information which will be available there.

The plans will be on display as follows during normal opening hours:

Cubitt Town Library, Strattondale Street, E14
Lansbury Library, Market Way, Poplar, E14
Limehouse Library, 638 Commercial Road, E14
St George's Library, Library Place
(off Cable Street), E1
Tiller Road Baths, Tiller Road, E14

We also intend to hold public meetings, if there is sufficient demand. Details of these would be announced in local newspapers.

Please let us know what you think about the idea of a light railway in Docklands and about the

options described above. You could either write to us now or you might prefer to look at one of the displays first.

Either way please let us have your comments by 2 June 1982.

Please write to:

Greater London Council
(TD/A/PR)
County Hall
FREEPOST
SE1 1BP (no postage is required)

During the summer the GLC and the LDDC hope to make a firm decision about the options. If all goes well, the plans of the approved scheme will be put on display in the autumn.

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জন্ম নিগুন।

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