

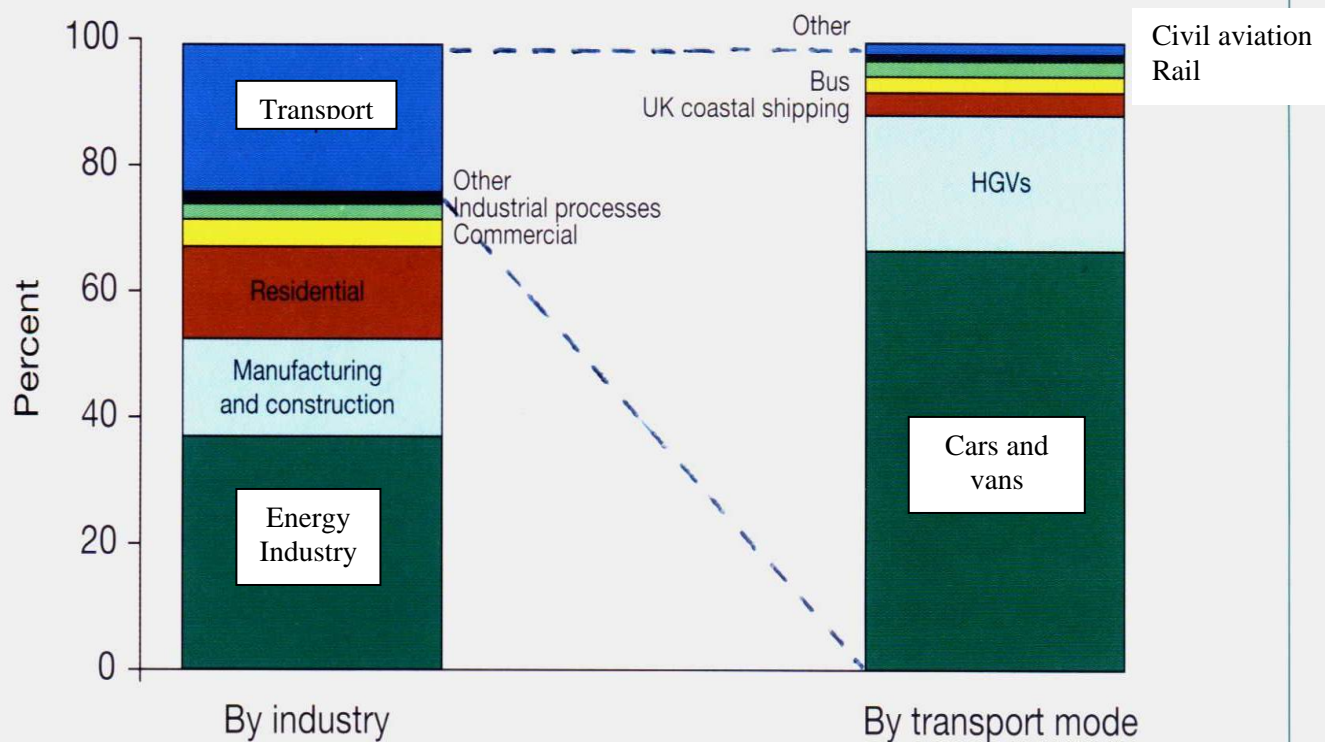
High Speed rail: Comment on Fast Forward - the Greengauge 21 note of 16th Sept 2009.

- (1) The text and presentation within Fast Forward suggests to us that the authors are the victims of the intense desire, suffered by many grown men, to play with a full sized train set.
- (2) Greengauge 21 is effectively part of Network Rail. At any rate it draws much of its funding from that source. It was founded by in 2006 by Jim Steer after he had completed three years with the Strategic Rail Authority when he was in charge of all strategic planning.
- (3) The Fast Forward passenger forecast of 590,000 passengers per day by 2055 looks wildly optimistic. It exceeds the 500,000 crushed surface rail passengers who enter central London in the morning peak period (7 am to 10 am) (Transport Statistics Great Britain). The trains carrying those passengers require at least 25 inbound tracks. See <http://www.transport-watch.co.uk/transport-fact-sheet-1.htm> and <http://www.transport-watch.co.uk/londons-rail-network.htm> and the pictures therein.
- (4) The capital cost of the proposals is set to £68 billion at 2008 prices. If repaid at the Treasury discount rate of 3.5% over 30 years £3.7 billion per year would be required. Hence if, as with nearly all rail systems, this one does not cover its operating costs the drain on the taxpayer will amount to close to £4 billion annually or to over £150 per year for every household in the land. Possibly that should be doubled to allow for maintenance costs.

That at a time when half of us use a train of any sort (let alone a high speed one) less than once a year and when the better off travel 5 times as far annually by rail as do the poor.

- (5) The carbon argument flaunted by rail enthusiasts should be summarily ignored. The diagram below is copied from the White Paper Delivering a Sustainable railway. The fact that the Committee did not blink suggests that it had no idea what the diagram means, namely that the emissions from rail or domestic air are a vanishingly small proportion of the nation's emissions as a whole. Consequently the transfer of a few passengers from one mode to the other is likely to have an even more vanishingly small effect.

Figure 1.4: Sources of UK carbon dioxide emissions



Source: DEFRA Transport and rail carbon emissions (DS00135)

- (6) Secondly, it is far from certain that rail has the lower carbon emissions. The sums depend critically on the seat occupancies and the emissions from the generating industry that are assumed. As of today, if a large scale increase in electricity demand extended the life of coal fired power stations then probably the plane should be represented as emitting less than the high-speed train. <http://www.transport-watch.co.uk/high-speed-rail-complaint.htm> and <http://www.transport-watch.co.uk/transport-fact-sheet-5b.htm>
- (7) Worse still, most UK emission data relates to the tailpipe values. If those are to be converted to whole of life values then the value for rail should be increased by 155% compared with 31% for air, ref. Mikhail V Chester¹ and Arpad Horvath. See: <http://www.iop.org/EJ/abstract/1748-9326/4/2/024008/> . (In contrast to the 155% Greengauge 21 suggests only 25%).
- (8) The economic analysis for this project covers 60 years. Probably most of us will be dead before the supposed benefits exceed the costs. Probably they never will, see <http://www.transport-watch.co.uk/nata-refresh-consultation.htm>
- (9) Fast Forward calls on the French experience. However, the data provided by the SNCF should be treated with scepticism. For example Professor Rémy Prud'homme of University Paris XII provided a short paper dated 17.11.2000 entitled Tales from the SNCF. He pointed out that, whereas the authorities and media claimed that the SNCF was returning to profit, the hidden subsidy amounted to nearly 1% of GDP. The professor is highly critical of the schemes used to hide the subsidy believing that it made sensible debate about the railways impossible. <http://www.transport-watch.co.uk/french-railways.htm>
- (10) Why are we being encouraged to spend tens of billions of pounds on high-speed rail when half of all rail journeys are less than 20 miles long and when 90% are less than 80 miles long?
- (11) As for railway propaganda, consider this. Industry bigwigs told the Transport Committee of the House of Common that every day more people die on the roads than passengers in a year on the railways. That statement (a) exaggerated in favour of rail by a factor of 18 by ignoring usage and (b) compares passengers killed as a result of a train crashing with all those killed on the road network including pedestrians, cyclists and people on motorbikes. In contrast we found that the deaths per passenger-mile by rail, excluding suicides and suspected suicides, were higher than those on the motorway and trunk road system. <http://www.transport-watch.co.uk/transport-fact-sheet-2.htm>

We comment, if accountants behaved as has the railway lobby over this issue then those accountants would soon be in prison. Similarly in all other vectors - the difference between the railway myth and reality is so large as to beggar belief.

- (12) Against that background why should we believe a word that the railway lobby says?

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In 1974 Frances Caincross, previously managing director of the Economist, now Rector of Exeter College Oxford, wrote; "When trains are still the theme of nursery rhymes and children's stories, it is small wonder that the railways have a romantic fascination for most adults. Only years of nursery conditioning can explain the calm with which the public has accepted a bill of £3,000 millions (**£33bn at 2007 prices**) to subsidise British Rail over the last decade". See item 25 at <http://www.transport-watch.co.uk/transport-quotes-1974.htm>

In his book "The Train that Ran away" Stewart Joy, chief economist to British Railways during the 1960's, wrote "there were those in British Transport Commission and the railways who were prepared, cynically, to accept the rewards of high office in return for the unpalatable task of tricking the Government on a mammoth scale. Those men", Joy wrote, "were either fools or knaves". There were no libel actions

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