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Chair, Public Accounts Committee
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Dear Chair,

Crossrail progress update: Autumn 2021

Following my last letter, dated 1 October 2021, I am writing to you to provide an update on the Crossrail project.

Crossrail Ltd welcomes the Public Accounts Committee's latest report. The Elizabeth line is on track to open in the first half of 2022. Significant progress has been made across the project with delivery of the Elizabeth line now in its final complex stages.

Since my last quarterly update, the final phase of the programme, Trial Operations, is now underway and is the final stage before passenger services can commence. This phase will continue for several months until it is clear that the railway can operate safely and reliably before the start of passenger services. Only then can we narrow the window for the opening of the railway.

Trial Running of 12 trains per hour has continued to build reliability and flush out issues with our systems and signalling software. In October, we commissioned ELR100, one of the last major software upgrades for the railway before launch. This software has fixed a considerable number of the bugs identified during Trial Running.

The next couple of months will be important for the programme as we progress through Trial Operations but also as we continue to build greater resilience into the railway. There is a real desire from everyone involved in the project to continue to build on the strong performance and deliver this railway for passenger service in the first half of next year.

Safety

With the project in the final complex stages of delivering the railway, the focus remains on ensuring that it is completed safely. Our safety performance this calendar year has been the most positive historically across the programme, with 24 green weeks, where there was no lost time accident or high potential incident, compared to 18 in 2020.

As we moved into Trial Operations, the last Safety Executive Leadership Team (SHELT) meeting was held in November 2021. Safety performance will now be monitored through other forums such as the Elizabeth line Health and Safety Executive Contractor Performance meeting. Over the years the SHELT team, including our supply chain partners, have implemented significant initiatives such as Stepping Up Week and our Target Zero

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Improvement Plan; all of which have been integral to the safety and well-being of our workforce.

The project remains vigilant to the recent COVID-19 developments and will continue to closely monitor the situation across the programme.

Trial Operations

The first phase of Trial Operations commenced on 20 November, in line with the earliest forecast dates. A phased approach to Trial Operations has been adopted to build greater resilience into the railway and to allow for the earliest commencement of passenger services next year.

The phased approach will allow for the commissioning of the remaining tunnel ventilation system software upgrades prior to Christmas, the ELR110 signalling software update, the commissioning of the latest control and communications software (CMS28.0) and the replacement of voltage transformers over the New Year. All of these upgrades provide further increases in operational reliability of the routeway and signalling systems. Alstom will also be uploading the Alstom train fleet software update, providing improved fleet reliability. These final fixes are supporting a pivot to reliability and a focus on wider system issues which are important in the final completion of the railway for revenue service.

The first phase of Trial Operations has already begun with scenarios such as testing the response to an unwell passenger or an obstruction on the line. These will generally take place on four days each week with reliability running and any remaining system testing on the other days. The first week saw some days of high reliability and successful exercises but also some disruption caused by technical failures, notably in parts of the signalling system, which caused some exercises to be curtailed. The process of managing and reporting Trial Operations exercises has begun well.

The success of the commissioning of the software over Christmas and the transfer of Canary Wharf station is critical to commencing phase 2 of Trial Operations. Final modifications to the safety systems are being carried out at Canary Wharf station and it is now forecast to be transferred in the coming weeks. As mentioned previously, Bond Street has been decoupled from the opening of the railway and the team are working on a plan to get the earliest opening date for the station.

The programme is currently expecting to commence the second phase of Trial Operations in the new year. This will involve a series of more complex exercises, including evacuations of trains and stations. This will then be followed by a period of shadow running, operating timetabled services ahead of the Elizabeth line opening.

Operational Readiness

The TfL Rail Public Performance Measure in Period 8 (17 October - 13 November) was 92.3 per cent, with performance impacted by several large service affecting incidents. Despite the disruption it is still one of the highest scores delivered across the industry. The east section of the line achieved 94.6 per cent and the west section achieved 89.4 per cent. The overall Moving Annual Average trend continues to better the target, recording 95.1 per cent.

Passenger services from Paddington are now being operated by nine-car (to Heathrow and Reading) and seven-car (to Reading) Class 345 trains. The seven car trains will be progressively converted to nine-car trains for the commencement of services from the east and west through the central section. The transition of the Liverpool Street to Shenfield service to a full nine-car Class 345 operation, will complete by the end of this year.

Surface Stations

On the west, all Network Rail station enhancement works have been successfully completed with the new station buildings and step-free access bringing benefits to customers. The completion of the remaining construction activities and snagging works are also on track for early 2022.

On the east, the focus is on the enhanced station upgrade works at Ilford and Romford. Delivery continues to progress at both sites. However, there is a structural issue at Ilford, which Network Rail and their contractor are working through. The target for entry into service and step-free access at both stations is the first quarter of 2022. This is of course dependent on the resolution of the issue at Ilford.

Cost

The current P50 Anticipated Final Crossrail Direct Cost (AFCDC), which represents the median value scenario, remains unchanged at £15.94bn. This is £151m above the additional funding of £825m which was made available to the programme in December 2020. The requirement for up to an additional £1.1bn in funding, as declared by the outgoing Crossrail Board in August 2020, remains consistent with current estimates at higher levels of probability.

On average, the programme has seen an underspend of £8m per four-weekly period over the past year. This average has reduced to £5m since the Delivery Control Schedule 1.2 (DCS1.2) was set in the summer.

Governance / Scrutiny

The Elizabeth Line Committee and Elizabeth Line Delivery Group continue to meet on a regular basis in order to provide oversight of the project and ensure that decision-making between Crossrail Ltd and TfL is seamless and fully aligned during the critical final phases of the programme. Quarterly updates are also provided to the DfT's Investment Portfolio and Delivery Committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary.

Crossrail Ltd continues to provide regular project updates to the Mayor of London, Deputy Mayor for Transport and the Mayor's Chief of Staff as well as the London Assembly and the DfT minister responsible for Crossrail.

Despite the significant progress made throughout 2021, challenges remain, and our teams continue to work hard to deliver a reliable Elizabeth line as safely as possible. 2022 will be pivotal for the Crossrail programme as we launch the Elizabeth line and we look forward to providing further updates for you in the new year.

If you require any further information about the project, please do not hesitate to contact us, or Crossrail's Public Affairs Manager, on 07597 190045 or by email at rossgarrod@crossrail.tfl.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Wild
CEO, Crossrail Ltd

CC: Andy Byford, Commissioner at Transport for London
Bernadette Kelly CB, Permanent Secretary at the Department for Transport
Gareth Davies, Comptroller & Auditor General at the National Audit Office