



## Road versus rail: Facts sheet No 7: Capital costs of track

This facts sheet compares the unit costs of upgrading the West Coast Main Line and the unit cost of the proposed East Coast Main Line upgrade with the cost of rebuilding the M1 from scratch and with the A43 dualling south of Northampton.

- 1 During the Public Inquiry into the WCMLM the cost of the project had the range 6.3 billion to £9 billion for modernisation plus essential renewal. Simon Maple for Railtrack said that the expenditure was concentrated on the core 1000 km of track. Hence the cost per track-km was between £6.3 million and £9 million. Now the cost is said to be £10 billion, excluding enhancements, so the cost per track-km is £10 million.
- 2 The East Coast high speed rail proposal is to cost £36 billion. That is to provide 4 tracks over 495 miles providing a unit cost of £11 million per track km. The cheaper alternative costs £8 billion and provides 200 miles of double track, yielding a unit cost of £12.5 million per track km. (Source is the SRA)
- 3 In contrast to those rail costs:
  - (a) The Independent of 17th February 1999 reported a Treasury study which estimated the replacement cost of the M1 as £2.1 billion for all works and land. The lane length, assuming 3 lanes all the way from the M25 to Leeds, is 1800 km. Hence the unit cost is £1.12 million per lane-km, about one tenth the value for rail track
  - (b) The recently completed A43 dualling south of Northampton consists of Siverstone bypass, Syresham bypass and sundry other lengths. In total the construction provided 18.9 km of dual 2-lane carriageway along with many overbridges several two level junctions plus and 7 km of side roads etc. The contract price was £56.6 million yielding 0.74 million per lane-km, close to 15 times less than required for rail track
- 4 However the product of building a road or a railway is not the track but the passenger and freight flow. Here we note that the density of use achieved by Motorways and Trunk roads is 3 to 5 times that achieved by rail, reference previous facts sheet.

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