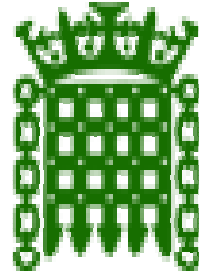




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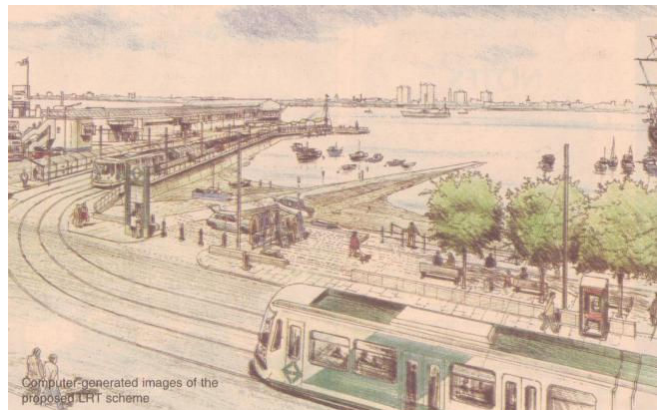
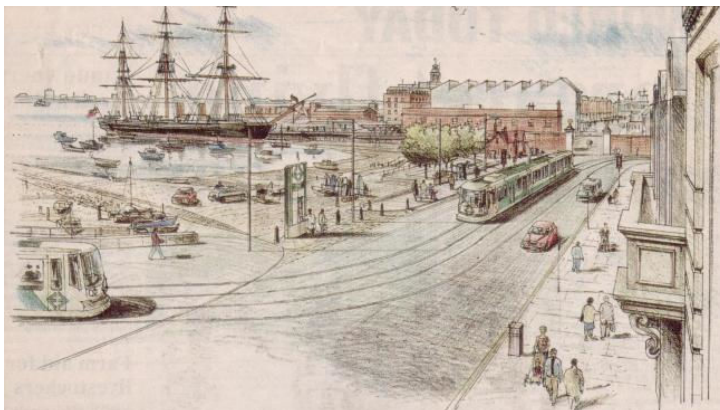
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"The past we inherit, the future we build ourselves"



"TramTrain does it Greener and Cheaper on lightly used railway lines and in the streets"

Transport chiefs want to build a multi-million-pound scheme to link Southampton and Portsmouth



Computer generated images of the proposed LRT scheme

A MULTI-MILLION pound 21st century scheme to link Hampshire's two biggest cities can be revealed today.

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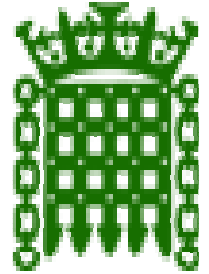
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"TramTrain does it Greener and Cheaper on lightly used railway lines and in the streets"

Transport chiefs believe that Southampton and Portsmouth should be linked with a hi-tech tram system. And they say that the ambitious plans could be kick-started as part of the ongoing Solent devolution deal to hand over millions of pounds in funding to the South.

A deal is expected to be announced by the Government in the summer, and it could see £1bn in funding for transport, skills and housing handed over to the Solent area.

Much of the funding would come from borrowing, but it would allow for major transport schemes to be designed and approved by a new Solent Combined Authority made up of a new mayor and eight council leaders.

Several schemes to improve transport in the South have been suggested, with one such project being a new tram line operating between Southampton and Portsmouth and serving communities between the two cities.

Wider Benefits of Tramway

- reliable
- convenient
- facilitate interchange
- connect and develop Cities
- environmental friendly
- modern Urban developer generator
- well integrated
- Optimal investment
- reduces traffic
- safe
- specific identity
- fast
- Carbon reduction
- develop tourism
- fully accessible

The line could see a tram service operating throughout Southampton, connecting St Mary's, the civic centre, West Quay, Ocean Village and Woolston, as well as other places. It would then head down the coast to Portsmouth city centre.

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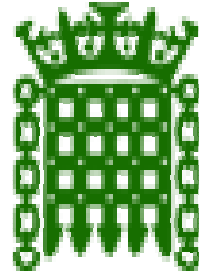




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Labour Southampton City Council leader Simon Letts says the South could take inspiration from the likes of Nottingham, which has had a tram since 2004, with a new phase opening last year.

Southampton used to have its own tram system, Southampton Corporation Tramways, which launched a service in 1898, but it closed in 1948.

And plans for another "Supertram" in Hampshire were eventually abandoned in the early 2000s. Cllr Letts says the proposed tram line could be built alongside the main heavy rail line between Southampton and Portsmouth.

He said: "We need an alternative to the M27 for getting between the two cities.

"Commuter and rail lines can take between 15 minutes and an hour and five minutes to do a journey of under 30 miles.

"People don't use the trains because it takes too long and goes to the wrong places.

"We need to put our stamp down and say we are a modern European city and we need a modern European way of getting around.

"We have to have an alternative to sitting in queues in your car and this is probably the best one - I have spoken to the leader of Portsmouth City Council and she is enthusiastic."



A Sheffield Tram

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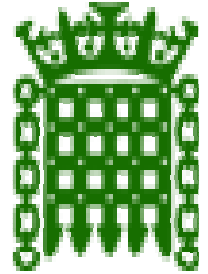
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CLlr Jacqui Rayment, the cabinet member for environment and transport, said:

"There are a whole range of projects we would want to look at and investigate and the tram line is one that has been suggested.

"As the devolution plan develops we will look to see if it is possible, we have been looking for ways we could speed up accessibility between the two cities and this is one idea that might do that.

"It would really need to be looked into, it sounds like a good idea but there are other good ideas that might trump it."

Plans for a new tram system in Hampshire have been on the cards before - almost 30-years-ago. A tram link between Fareham, Gosport and Portsmouth, with the potential to link up with Southampton, go back as far as 1987.

During its development the project's budget more than quadrupled from £35million to £148million, and millions was spent on gauging support for the scheme and consulting experts on how Fareham, Gosport and Portsmouth could be connected via a multi million pound tunnel under Portsmouth Harbour.

The plans spent more than a decade in the development stage but were eventually deferred by the then Labour Government and the dream of a new tram line came to nothing.

Martin Petch, the Solent area representative for the Light Rail Transit Association, which played a key role in the "Supertram" development, said: "When the plans for a tram were dropped it was extremely disappointing because people had put 15 years' worth of work into the project.

"If you have a tram line that is segregated from traffic it gives you a much more reliable and faster service which is key to getting people out of their cars.

"Southampton would definitely benefit from a modern tram system that was properly integrated.

"Tram services in other parts of the country have reduced car traffic, increased property values and generally improved people's quality of life, there is no question about it."

The plans for a Southampton to Portsmouth tram line come as part of a devolution deal for the Solent region which will see a Boris Johnson-style mayor elected for the area next year.

The new combined authority would cover Southampton and Portsmouth city councils, as well as Eastleigh, Gosport, Fareham and Havant borough councils, East Hampshire District Council and the Isle of Wight Council.

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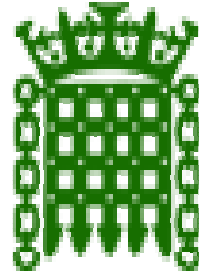
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The history of Hampshire's doomed "Supertram"

November 1987 - Plans put forward for a Light Rail Transit system in Southampton.

June 1989 - Hampshire County Council put forward plans for £35million tram link between Fareham, Gosport and Portsmouth, with the potential to include Southampton.

July 1989 - The company South Hants Metro Ltd formed to provide the Light Rail Transit system.

July 1990 - The tram scheme from South Hants Metro Ltd now costs £65million and will see a tunnel under Portsmouth Harbour.

April 1991 - The company South Hants Metro Ltd is shelved after its major shareholder Farr plc folded, although the plans will still go ahead.

September 1995 - The preferred route connecting Fareham, Gosport and Portsmouth is chosen, with plans now costing £105million, having already spent £2million developing the scheme.

March 1998 - Plans submitted to Transport Minister John Prescott.

May 1998 - Hampshire County Council unanimously support the tram, which will now cost £148million.

December 1999 - Central Government deal a major blow for the tram, deferring the plans for a year over serious question marks around the project.

Early 2000s - Despite support, the plans were eventually abandoned. Concerns were raised over how deep the tunnel under Portsmouth Harbour would need to be to accommodate the massive Navy vessels that use it.

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