

Crossrail stations will welcome first trains in three months'

Crossrail stations will welcome their first trains in three months' time when engineers test tracks - but bosses have insisted the £18.7billion line will open in 2022 despite being £4billion over budget and two years late. Mark Wilde, Chief Executive of Crossrail, reassured the Transport for London (TfL) board members 2020 had been a 'very very strong' year for the project during a meeting over Zoom.

He said: "The challenge ahead remains complex and difficult. We still are confident this railway will open in the first half of 2022. Our passion is getting on the early edge of that."

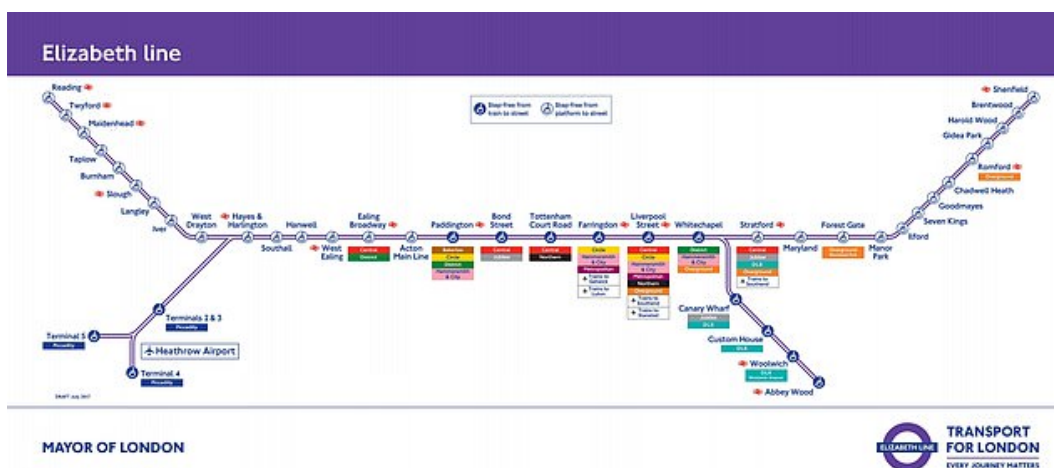
It comes despite the fact the project was close to being mothballed just last month when bosses struggled to pull together the funds to continue the scheme. In this latest meeting, Andy Byford, the Commissioner for TfL, told the board that he was 'passionate' about opening the lines as quickly as possible, despite it being 'very close to being mothballed'.



(The platform at Paddington Crossrail station in February 2020)



Crossrail trains wait for the line's completion at Old Oak Common in West London (January 2020)



(The Crossrail network will run from Berkshire and Heathrow to Essex and South East London)

At the beginning of December, transport Secretary Grant Shapps confirmed a deal with TfL that will see ministers provide a £825million loan in order to complete the crucial middle section of the east-west route under the capital.

During a progress report Mr Wilde said: “All 'shafts and tunnels' will be handed over to TfL by the end of the year and safety testing was now being carried out. All our stations are now at stage completion one so they're ready to accept trial running. The tunnelling system, the track and overhead line are complete. There is just a small amount of work to do over Christmas and New Year.”



(An access corridor within Liverpool Street Crossrail station in February 2020)



(One of the entrances of Farringdon Crossrail station in February 2020)



(The platform area of Liverpool Street Crossrail station in February 2020)

How will the Elizabeth Line operate?

When the central part of the Elizabeth line opens, by the 'first half' of 2022 all going well, it will operate as follows:

- **Paddington** (Elizabeth line station) to **Abbey Wood** via central London
- **Liverpool Street** (main line station) to **Shenfield**
- **Paddington** (main line station) to **Heathrow** and **Reading**

Following the central section opening, full services across the line from Reading and Heathrow in the west to Abbey Wood and Shenfield in the east, should commence at a later date.

Mr Wilde said: "For the last six to eight days, a small number of trains were on the tracks carrying out 'niche' tests that were going 'very well'. Next year means getting from system integration test to trial running. It's all about documentation. This system is built to the highest safety standards. We've got three to four months of detailed safety assurance work. We have to dot every I and cross every t safety wise. Trains will be on the tracks running complex trials of the network in three to four months' time."

Crossrail Ltd chief executive Mark Wild said: 'This is an incredibly important milestone for Crossrail to reach and puts us firmly on the journey to unlocking trial running next year.'

The Elizabeth line



(Crossrail will link up with the existing Tube network at various points through the capital)

'We are doing everything possible to deliver the Elizabeth line as safely and as quickly as we can, and we know that Londoners are relying on the capacity and connectivity the Elizabeth line will bring.'

'This milestone also marks the incorporation of our Romford control room colleagues into the testing process, another sign that we are moving ever closer to our final goal of an operational railway.'

Crossrail Ltd described delivery of the scheme as being 'in its complex final stages', with 'good progress' made on completing infrastructure work.

Its budget was set at £15.9 billion in 2007 but it is now expected to cost around £18 billion.

How plans for a Crossrail network go back 78 years

1941: Railwayman George Dow proposes a new Paddington and Liverpool Street tunnel in the earliest form of Crossrail

1974: The London Rail Study Report proposes linking up the main British Rail terminals in Central London by tunnel

1989: The Central London Rail Study proposes a new tunnel route from Paddington/Marylebone to Liverpool Street

1994: A private bill proposing a new Paddington to Liverpool Street tunnel is rejected by Parliament

2001: The Crossrail scheme is promoted through Cross London Rail Links, a joint venture between Transport for London and the Department for Transport

2008: The Crossrail Act 2008 receives royal assent after being put before Parliament in 2005

2009: Construction work on Crossrail begins at Canary Wharf

2015: The Liverpool Street to Shenfield service operated by Abellio Greater Anglia is transferred to TfL Rail

2017: The first new Crossrail trains are introduced on the Liverpool Street to Shenfield route

2018: Paddington to Heathrow services are transferred from Great Western Railway to TfL Rail

2019: TfL Rail starts operating Paddington to Reading services in December

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Crossrail has doubled its number of test trains and will use them to simulate a full service across the upcoming Elizabeth Line's central section.

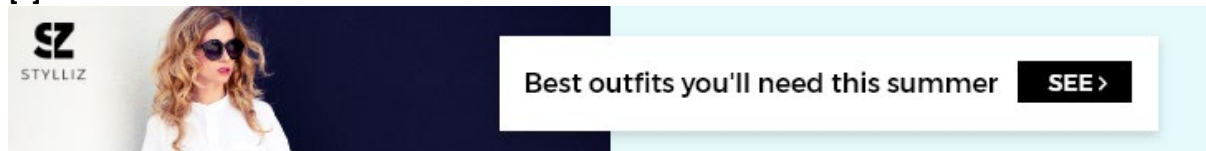
Crossrail now has eight trains available - a twofold increase on the four they were using for previous tests - which will complement the recently completed software testing phase of the programme.

Delivery of the Elizabeth Line is now in its final stages, with the remaining infrastructure being worked on so that Crossrail can begin 'Trial Running' at the "earliest opportunity" in 2021.

Signalling and control of the railway will all take place from the new control centre at Romford. Drivers will be operating a maximum of eight trains, simulating a timetabled service across the Elizabeth Line central section.

The Elizabeth Line was initially due to be completed in December 2018, but has been repeatedly delayed and is significantly over budget. It is now not expected to open until the first half of 2022.

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Last week, Crossrail was given nearly £1bn in additional funding by Transport secretary Grant Shapps to plug the monetary shortfall.

Mark Wild, chief executive, Crossrail Ltd, said: "This is an incredibly important milestone for Crossrail to reach and puts us firmly on the journey to unlocking 'Trial Running' next year. We are doing everything possible to deliver the Elizabeth Line as safely and as quickly as we can and we know that Londoners are relying on the capacity and connectivity the Elizabeth Line will bring.

"This milestone also marks the incorporation of our Romford control room colleagues into the testing process, another sign that we are moving ever closer to our final goal of an operational railway."

Crossrail said that all the central section stations are now certified as ready for Trial Running after Bond Street achieved this in October. Custom House station has already been handed over to TfL and Farringdon station is due to be handed over early in 2021.

When fully open, the Elizabeth Line will increase central London's rail capacity by 10 per cent, able to carry more than half a million passengers per day and will support new journeys through central London out to Essex and Berkshire.