# London Underground strike escalates as union demands lead to renewed disruption



The ongoing industrial action by London Underground workers has brought significant disruption to the capital’s transport network, with the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) striking over pay and working conditions. The week-long strike, which began in early September, has effectively crippled Tube services, causing widespread travel chaos affecting millions of commuters. The union is demanding a reduction in the standard 35-hour workweek and better fatigue management, alongside improved pay, while Transport for London (TfL) has offered a 3.4% pay rise but maintains that the union’s workweek reduction proposal is financially unviable.

Eddie Dempsey, general secretary of the RMT, has called for a direct summit with London Mayor Sir Sadiq Khan, urging him to intervene as chair of TfL and engage with the union to resolve the disputes. Speaking at the Trades Union Congress in Brighton, Dempsey criticised Khan’s public statements on social media, calling for a concrete invitation to negotiations. He warned of further strikes if the dispute remains unresolved, asserting that while the union regrets the disruption, it is committed to fighting for its members’ rights.

The dispute revolves around longstanding grievances, including shift patterns that have left staff facing extreme fatigue, a consequence of significant workforce reductions—TfL has cut around 2,000 employees since 2018, increasing the burden on remaining workers. The RMT insists the current 35-hour contract needs to be cut to 32 hours to safeguard staff wellbeing. According to TfL, salaries for Tube staff vary from £35,270 for trainees to upwards of £71,160 for drivers, with mechanical and track workers earning between £52,000 and £58,000. Despite these figures, the union argues that better conditions and workload management are imperative.

The impact of the strike has extended beyond commuter inconvenience. With significant reductions in London Overground and Elizabeth Line disruptions largely avoided, passengers still face overcrowding and delays at interchange stations where these services connect to the Underground. The strike has also disrupted events in the city, compelling artists such as Coldplay and Post Malone to reschedule concerts due to travel unreliability. Public advisory warnings recommended that Londoners complete travel plans by early evening on the strike’s initial days, underscoring the expected severity of the disruption.

TfL’s response has emphasised the offered 3.4% pay increase, aligned with inflation indicators, and highlighted the financial challenges posed by the union’s demands for reduced hours. Claire Mann, TfL’s Chief Operating Officer, has appealed publicly for the RMT to reconsider and put the proposed pay offer to a member vote, stressing the importance of finding a balanced solution. Meanwhile, services such as the Docklands Light Railway have been closed intermittently during the strike period, exacerbating connectivity issues.

This dispute follows a notable pay negotiation success in early 2024, when then-Mayor Khan secured an additional £30 million to fund pay rises that helped avert a strike by 10,000 RMT members. That agreement included a basic 5% salary increase plus a £1,000 lump sum for lower-paid workers, with total pay boosts up to 10%, reflecting greater investment in frontline staff wages. The RMT also achieved key protections against pay structure changes, enhanced benefits, and protections for medically displaced workers in a late 2024 deal, which the union hailed as a landmark victory.

Despite these prior gains, the current standoff underscores persisting tensions over fatigue, workload, and working conditions in London’s transport system. As negotiations remain stalled, with no immediate movement from either side on the workweek reduction, calls for mayoral mediation are intensifying. With major travel disruption ongoing, all parties appear under pressure to find a resolution that addresses both workers’ welfare and the financial sustainability of London’s public transport network.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/sadiq-khan-rmt-tube-london-london-underground-b2823990.html), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/business/world-at-work/londons-tube-network-shuts-workers-begin-week-strikes-2025-09-08/), [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/6062013cf41162b04e5dcbe199c39270), [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/business/world-at-work/london-underground-workers-set-start-week-strike-action-2025-09-07/), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/9a619b27-c2a9-4bf2-9613-636f8be0165e)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/sadiq-khan-rmt-tube-london-london-underground-b2823990.html), [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/6062013cf41162b04e5dcbe199c39270)
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* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/9a619b27-c2a9-4bf2-9613-636f8be0165e), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/business/world-at-work/londons-tube-network-shuts-workers-begin-week-strikes-2025-09-08/), [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/business/world-at-work/london-underground-workers-set-start-week-strike-action-2025-09-07/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/9a619b27-c2a9-4bf2-9613-636f8be0165e), [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/sadiq-khan-rmt-tube-london-london-underground-b2823990.html)
* Paragraph 7 – [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/london-underground-tube-staff-pay-rise-strikes-sadiq-khan-b1139372.html), [[7]](https://www.rmt.org.uk/news/rmt-secures-pay-win-on-london-underground/)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/sadiq-khan-rmt-tube-london-london-underground-b2823990.html), [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/6062013cf41162b04e5dcbe199c39270), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/9a619b27-c2a9-4bf2-9613-636f8be0165e), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/london-underground-tube-staff-pay-rise-strikes-sadiq-khan-b1139372.html), [[7]](https://www.rmt.org.uk/news/rmt-secures-pay-win-on-london-underground/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/sadiq-khan-rmt-tube-london-london-underground-b2823990.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/business/world-at-work/londons-tube-network-shuts-workers-begin-week-strikes-2025-09-08/> - On 8 September 2025, London's Tube network was nearly halted as workers began a week-long strike over pay and working conditions. The strike, led by the RMT union, caused significant travel disruptions, with minimal underground trains expected to run from Monday to Thursday. The industrial action focused on issues such as pay, shift patterns, fatigue, and a proposed reduction in the working week. The RMT argued that staff faced extreme fatigue due to current shift rotations, while Transport for London offered a 3.4% pay rise but noted the union insisted on reducing the standard 35-hour workweek. Despite the disruption, the Elizabeth Line and London Overground continued to operate with minor delays. The strike's impact extended beyond daily commutes, prompting musicians like Coldplay and Post Malone to reschedule concerts in London. Efforts to resolve the dispute were ongoing.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/6062013cf41162b04e5dcbe199c39270> - Starting on 7 September 2025, thousands of London Underground staff initiated a strike over pay and working conditions, significantly disrupting the city's subway system relied upon by millions daily. The Rail, Maritime and Transport Union stated that drivers, signalers, and maintenance workers would strike through Thursday. Transport for London (TfL) acknowledged that services were already heavily impacted, with minimal or no trains expected over the coming days. The dispute centered around the union's demand for a reduction in the working week from 35 to 32 hours, whereas TfL had offered only a 3.4% pay increase and claimed it could not meet the union's request. The union also highlighted that staff cuts of 2,000 since 2018 had burdened remaining employees with demanding shifts. No negotiations were currently underway, and the union urged Mayor Sadiq Khan to step in to help resolve the standoff.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/business/world-at-work/london-underground-workers-set-start-week-strike-action-2025-09-07/> - On 7 September 2025, London Underground workers began a week of rolling strikes, leading to significant disruptions across the city's transit network. Passengers were advised to complete their journeys by 6 p.m. on Sunday, as minimal Tube service was expected from Monday through Thursday due to staggered walkouts. Additionally, the Docklands Light Railway (DLR), crucial for connecting financial hubs like Canary Wharf and the City of London, was non-operational on Tuesday and Thursday. The RMT union attributed the strike to unresolved issues over pay, fatigue management, shift patterns, and a demand for a shorter working week. RMT General Secretary Eddie Dempsey emphasized the toll of extreme shift rotations on workers' health. Transport for London (TfL) stated that employees currently work around 35 hours per week and had been offered a 3.4% pay rise. While major disruption was expected, some services like the Elizabeth Line and rail overground continued operating, though with likely overcrowding.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/9a619b27-c2a9-4bf2-9613-636f8be0165e> - Transport for London (TfL) issued a warning of major transport disruptions in London due to strikes by the RMT union over pay and working conditions. The strikes began on Sunday and were expected to cause limited Underground service that day, followed by "little to no service" from Monday through Thursday. Normal services were anticipated to resume by late Friday morning. This marked the first full-network Underground strike since March 2023. Additionally, Docklands Light Railway services were expected to be shut on Tuesday and Thursday, and First Bus strikes might disrupt bus routes in various areas between 12 and 14 September. TfL had offered a 3.4% annual pay increase aligned with retail price inflation, but the RMT criticized management's reluctance to seriously engage in discussions on issues like fatigue, difficult shifts, and reducing the workweek. TfL’s COO Claire Mann urged the union to reconsider and hold a vote among members. Other services such as the Elizabeth Line, London Overground, and Croydon Tramlink were expected to operate normally, though crowding and minor disruptions were possible where they shared stations with the Underground. Mainline rail services were not expected to be affected.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/london-underground-tube-staff-pay-rise-strikes-sadiq-khan-b1139372.html> - In early January 2024, London Mayor Sadiq Khan found an additional £30 million to boost salaries on the London Underground, preventing a planned week-long strike by 10,000 members of the RMT union. The deal negotiated between Transport for London and the four Tube unions included a basic five percent pay increase, backdated to the start of the 2023 pay year, plus an additional £1,000 lump sum. This meant the total increase for the lowest-paid workers—normally those on frontline duties in stations and platforms—was between eight and ten percent.
7. <https://www.rmt.org.uk/news/rmt-secures-pay-win-on-london-underground/> - On 27 November 2024, the RMT announced a substantial victory on London Underground after issuing strike dates and pursuing strong negotiations with tube management. The union accepted London Underground’s latest pay offer, delivering notable improvements for members' terms and conditions, including pay increases: lower-paid members received raises between 5% and 6.6%, with an average increase of 4.6%. Protection of pay structures: management's attempts to freeze pay bands and introduce detrimental 'job family' structures were scrapped. Enhanced benefits: improvements such as harmonised paternity leave extended to three weeks, three years' protection of earnings for medically displaced staff, and expanded eligibility for retired travel benefits were all secured. RMT General Secretary Mick Lynch stated, "This agreement is a landmark victory for our members and a vindication of RMT's determination to fight for fair pay and conditions."