# London Underground strike causes shift to cycling and economic disruption



Commuters in London are enduring significant travel disruption as the London Underground has been suspended for a fifth consecutive day amid ongoing strikes by members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union. The widespread walkouts, involving drivers, signalers, and maintenance workers, have brought much of the city's subway network to a halt, with no underground trains running and a separate suspension affecting the Docklands Light Railway. The strikes are rooted in a pay and working hours dispute that remains deadlocked, with no face-to-face negotiations held since the previous week.

RMT General Secretary Eddie Dempsey has persistently called on London Mayor Sadiq Khan, who chairs Transport for London (TfL), to meet with the union to try to resolve the standoff. Dempsey criticised Khan for opting to communicate via social media instead of engaging directly, highlighting a "total collapse of industrial relations" and warning that further strike action is likely if talks do not advance. The union's demands centre on reducing the standard 35-hour workweek to 32 hours, alongside rejecting a 3.4 percent pay rise offered by TfL as inadequate. Dempsey emphasised that despite the claimed salary of around £72,000 for many workers, it remains insufficient to afford housing in London, with many needing salaries over £100,000 to do so. Although he later described £72,000 as a "good wage," he maintained that improved pay and conditions are justified.

TfL has maintained that the union's demand to cut working hours is unaffordable given budget constraints, with the employer keen to address fatigue concerns raised by staff while balancing operational and financial realities. The mayor's office stated that TfL is prepared to restart negotiations, but progress remains stalled amid mutual distrust. The strike has caused severe disruption across London’s transport network, with alternative services like the Elizabeth Line and London Overground operating with limited delays, but buses and river boats have been heavily burdened by the displaced passenger demand.

The travel chaos has driven a surge in alternative transport modes, particularly cycling and electric bike usage. Companies such as Lime and Forest reported spikes in bike rentals by up to 75 percent during rush hours, while app downloads for bike-sharing soared, with some operators experiencing triple the usual morning trip numbers. Santander Cycles also saw a 72 percent increase in hires. This dramatic rise in cycling highlights a broader shift in urban mobility, reinforced by growing cycling infrastructure and the popularity of electrically assisted bikes. However, the influx has stressed existing cycle routes and raised logistical concerns due to scattered dockless bikes in the city centre. Data from an employee benefits provider revealed a 32 percent increase in cycling miles tracked across London during the strike week, demonstrating commuters’ willingness to embrace physical movement amid the disruption.

Economic impacts of the strike are substantial, with direct costs to London’s economy estimated at £230 million and further indirect losses possible as businesses and commuters adapt. The government, led by Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who promised to tackle labor disputes after his recent election, has urged a swift resolution. Despite these pressures, no concrete negotiations are scheduled at present, with both sides signalling a willingness to resume talks but no formal meetings confirmed.

As the strike continues into its final planned day, the potential for additional walkouts remains, should union demands remain unmet. The disruption caused by the standoff reveals both the fragility of London’s transport network to industrial action and the adaptability of its commuters, who are increasingly turning to more sustainable and individual modes of travel.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202509/12/WS68c37549a3108622abca05df.html), [[4]](https://apnews.com/article/6062013cf41162b04e5dcbe199c39270), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/business/world-at-work/londons-tube-network-shuts-workers-begin-week-strikes-2025-09-08/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202509/12/WS68c37549a3108622abca05df.html), [[4]](https://apnews.com/article/6062013cf41162b04e5dcbe199c39270)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202509/12/WS68c37549a3108622abca05df.html), [[4]](https://apnews.com/article/6062013cf41162b04e5dcbe199c39270), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/business/world-at-work/londons-tube-network-shuts-workers-begin-week-strikes-2025-09-08/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/sustainable-finance-reporting/london-commuters-turn-bikes-boats-tube-strike-enters-second-day-2025-09-09/), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/ffa16e07-b83f-40a6-af1d-b9b2902a67db), [[6]](https://www.cyclingweekly.com/news/moments-like-these-reinforce-how-vital-shared-bikes-have-become-lime-forest-and-santander-cycles-record-spike-in-use-amid-london-tube-strikes), [[7]](https://www.itv.com/news/london/2025-09-12/more-commuters-cycling-to-work-because-of-tube-strike-new-figures-suggest)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/sustainable-finance-reporting/london-commuters-turn-bikes-boats-tube-strike-enters-second-day-2025-09-09/), [[1]](https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202509/12/WS68c37549a3108622abca05df.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202509/12/WS68c37549a3108622abca05df.html), [[4]](https://apnews.com/article/6062013cf41162b04e5dcbe199c39270), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/business/world-at-work/londons-tube-network-shuts-workers-begin-week-strikes-2025-09-08/), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/sustainable-finance-reporting/london-commuters-turn-bikes-boats-tube-strike-enters-second-day-2025-09-09/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202509/12/WS68c37549a3108622abca05df.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/sustainable-finance-reporting/london-commuters-turn-bikes-boats-tube-strike-enters-second-day-2025-09-09/> - As the London Underground strike entered its second day, commuters sought alternative transportation methods, turning to bikes, buses, and boats due to the near-total shutdown of the underground network, which was expected to persist until Friday. The increased demand significantly strained other transport modes: electric bike-sharing services such as Lime and Forest reported large spikes in usage—Lime saw a 58% increase in Monday morning trips, while Forest recorded a 300% rise on Tuesday morning. River transport services, like Uber Boat by Thames Clippers, also experienced heightened demand, adding extra routes to accommodate passengers. The strike, organized by the RMT union, is driven by disputes over pay, working hours, and shift patterns. Transport for London has proposed a 3.4% pay increase, but the union is pushing for fewer working hours. The disruption is expected to cost the London economy £230 million ($310 million) directly, with further indirect losses. Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government, elected in July with promises to resolve such labor actions, has called for a resolution.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/business/world-at-work/londons-tube-network-shuts-workers-begin-week-strikes-2025-09-08/> - London's Tube network was brought to a near halt on Monday, September 8, 2025, as workers began a week-long strike over pay and working conditions. The strike, led by the RMT trade union, has caused significant travel disruptions for commuters and tourists, with almost no underground trains expected to run from Monday to Thursday. The Docklands Light Railway will also be shut on Tuesday and Thursday. Many Londoners resorted to cycling or taking alternate routes to work. The industrial action centers on issues such as pay, shift patterns, fatigue, and a proposed reduction in the working week. The RMT argues staff face extreme fatigue due to current shift rotations, while Transport for London offered a 3.4% pay rise but noted the union insists on reducing the standard 35-hour workweek. Despite the disruption, the Elizabeth Line and London Overground continue to run with minor delays.
4. <https://apnews.com/article/6062013cf41162b04e5dcbe199c39270> - Starting Sunday, 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 centers around the union's demand for a reduction in the working week from 35 to 32 hours, whereas TfL has offered only a 3.4% pay increase and claimed it cannot meet the union's request. The union also highlighted that staff cuts of 2,000 since 2018 have burdened remaining employees with demanding shifts. No negotiations are currently underway, and the union has urged Mayor Sadiq Khan to step in to help resolve the standoff.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/ffa16e07-b83f-40a6-af1d-b9b2902a67db> - During a major London Underground strike, dockless bicycles emerged as a key alternative transport solution, significantly mitigating the disruption. Unlike previous strikes, this one coincided with the widespread availability of app-based rental bikes, notably from Lime and Forest, which saw massive surges in demand—Forest experienced a tenfold increase in app downloads, while Lime reported nearly 50% more trips. Transport for London also saw notable increases in bus usage and Elizabeth Line ridership. However, chaotic scenes of scattered dockless bikes in central London raised logistical challenges for providers. The popularity of these bikes, bolstered by the growth of cycling infrastructure and electrically assisted models, reflects a broader shift in urban mobility. Some commuters reportedly preferred bikes over congested and slow traditional modes like buses or taxis. Bike retailer Halfords even saw a 30% spike in sales, suggesting a potential long-term behavioral change. Businesses such as Pret a Manger noted less impact than expected, attributing recovery partly to determined commuters using alternatives like bikes. Experts warn that Transport for London could face lasting revenue impacts if more people permanently abandon the Tube in favor of cycling.
6. <https://www.cyclingweekly.com/news/moments-like-these-reinforce-how-vital-shared-bikes-have-become-lime-forest-and-santander-cycles-record-spike-in-use-amid-london-tube-strikes> - During the week of London Tube strikes organized by the RMT union over pay and working conditions, the city has seen a remarkable surge in the use of shared bikes. Companies like Lime, Forest, and TfL’s Santander Cycles have all reported significant increases in activity. Forest observed a 300% rise in rides and 20,000 app downloads during the morning rush on the first day alone. Lime experienced a 74% jump in peak-hour journeys, with users relying on their bikes for complete commutes rather than short segments. The company deployed extra resources to meet demand. Similarly, Santander Cycles reported a 72% increase in bike hires, totaling 45,898 on a single day. However, the spike in ridership has also highlighted infrastructure issues, with cycling advocates noting that London's existing bike routes are overwhelmed. The Tube strikes are scheduled to end Friday, but further action is possible if demands go unmet, suggesting the boom in shared bike use may continue.
7. <https://www.itv.com/news/london/2025-09-12/more-commuters-cycling-to-work-because-of-tube-strike-new-figures-suggest> - London commuters have increasingly been cycling to work because of this week’s Tube strike, new figures show. Members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) are staging walkouts until Friday in a dispute over pay and hours. Tube services have been crippled since Monday, causing travel chaos for commuters, tourists and other visitors to the capital. New figures from employee benefits provider YuLife showed that cycling miles tracked across London have jumped by 32% this week, from 3,878 to 5,120 miles, as workers turn to their bikes to beat the chaos. What’s encouraging is that so many people are turning to movement as a way to cope. Sammy Rubin, chief executive of YuLife, said: “When strikes disrupt our routines, we’re reminded just how much control we do, or don’t have over our daily lives. “What’s encouraging is that so many people are turning to movement as a way to cope. A 32% rise in cycling shows how willing Londoners are to take their wellbeing into their own hands when given the nudge.” Workers on the Docklands Light Railway were also on strike on Thursday, adding to the disruption to travel in London. No talks are planned between the RMT or London Underground (LU) to discuss the operator’s rejected 3.4% pay offer or union demands for a cut in the working week. RMT leader Eddie Dempsey said industrial relations had “collapsed”, although both sides have expressed a willingness to resume talks. Nick Dent, lead negotiator for LU, said the strikes were in no-one’s interest. He added that LU wanted to discuss the issue of fatigue which has been raised by the union as a reason for wanting a cut in the working week.