# London’s new DLR trains highlight ongoing transport failures despite superficial upgrades



The rollout of London’s new Docklands Light Railway trains might seem like a step forward for commuters, but it masks a deeper failure to deliver real improvements for the average passenger. Promoted as “state-of-the-art”, these trains are more a testament to flashy spending than genuine transport reform—designed to give an illusion of progress while the core problems remain unaddressed.

Despite claims that the fleet upgrade will enhance reliability and capacity, critics argue that TfL’s reliance on a patchwork of government funds—over £260 million from the Housing Infrastructure Fund, combined with loans from national wealth funds and contributions from airport authorities—exposes a flawed model of public transport investment. It’s a costly attempt to justify continued high fares and mounting debts, under the guise of “sustainable growth”. Meanwhile, the promised capacity increase of over 50%, with the goal to reach 60%, is simply a band-aid on aging infrastructure that for years has been neglected under Labour’s tenure.

The so-called “modernisation” is riddled with delays and technical issues, with the new Spanish-produced trains — boasting walk-through carriages and high-tech features — largely delivered after years of setbacks and logistical errors. First, a Spanish company responsible for storage depot facilities went under, causing delays that kept trains in Spain well into 2025. Testing hiccups and integration problems with existing signaling systems further undermined confidence in TfL’s ability to deliver on its promises. The fact that these issues persisted into an era of supposed “modern infrastructure” highlights the mismanagement and lack of strategic planning that has marred decades of London transport development.

Far from being a genuine improvement for London’s commuters, this overhaul serves more as political window dressing than a solution for everyday transportation needs. While new stations and upgraded escalator facilities are touted as enhancements, they pale in comparison to the ongoing chaos, fare hikes, and chronic underfunding that plague London’s public transport system. The government’s involvement continues to be a patchwork of short-term fixes rather than a sustainable plan for the capital’s transit future.

The focus on creating “opportunities” for zones like the Royal Docks and Isle of Dogs—areas earmarked for regeneration—raises questions about who truly benefits. It’s clear that these investments serve urban development agendas aligned with economic elites, not the key workers and everyday Londoners who rely on reliable, affordable transport. As the city’s population continues to grow, TfL’s inability to deliver consistent and dependable service underscores a broader failure of leadership—one that prioritizes spectacle over substance.

This latest “upgrade” does little to hide the fact that London’s transport system remains fundamentally broken, burdened by inefficiency, high costs, and bureaucratic stagnation. It’s more proof that taxpayers are footing the bill for ineffective policies that fail to address the root causes of transportation misery, under a government more interested in PR than practical solutions. The recent election results, with Labour’s limited gains amid widespread dissatisfaction, reflect a city craving real change—not rehashed projects that merely mask decades of systemic failure.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/new-dlr-trains-london-b2838635.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2023/june/order-placed-for-additional-11-new-state-of-the-art-dlr-trains> - In June 2023, Transport for London (TfL) announced an order for 11 additional state-of-the-art Docklands Light Railway (DLR) trains, supplementing the original order of 43 trains. These new trains are designed to enhance capacity and support the development of thousands of new homes and jobs in areas like the Royal Docks and the Isle of Dogs. The trains feature a walk-through design, air conditioning, real-time travel information, and mobile device charging points. All 54 new trains are expected to be operational by the end of 2026, increasing overall capacity on the network by more than 60%.
3. <https://tfl-newsroom.prgloo.com/news/new-state-of-the-art-dlr-trains-begin-to-roll-into-service> - In October 2025, the first of 54 new DLR trains entered service in London. These modern trains are designed to improve reliability, capacity, and comfort for passengers. Key features include spacious walk-through carriages with 10% more capacity, air conditioning, live travel information, mobile device charging points, and dedicated spaces for pushchairs, bicycles, luggage, and wheelchair users. The full replacement of the older fleet is expected by the end of 2026, with the new trains gradually rolling out over the coming months.
4. <https://londonist.com/london/transport/new-dlr-trains> - Londonist reported in October 2025 that new DLR trains are being rolled out across the network, a year and a half later than initially anticipated. Produced by Spanish company CAF, these trains feature walk-through carriages, real-time travel information, air conditioning, and phone charging points. The 54 new trains will gradually replace the existing DLR stock, some of which are over 30 years old. The new trains are expected to increase overall capacity on the network by over 50%.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tfl-new-dlr-trains-delayed-spain-b1210508.html> - In February 2025, it was reported that 36 of TfL’s new DLR trains remained stuck in Spain after the collapse of a company responsible for a depot required to store the trains in London. The trains were ordered to replace existing DLR trains, some of which are more than three decades old. The delays were attributed to difficulties integrating the braking system on the driverless trains with the track signalling system, while enabling the existing DLR trains to keep running.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/docklands-light-railway-dlr-tfl-transport-for-london-delay-b1162815.html> - In June 2024, it was reported that a new fleet of Docklands Light Railway (DLR) trains had been delayed after encountering 'challenges' during testing. The Transport for London (TfL) commissioner's June report revealed that 30 new DLR trains had been constructed but faced difficulties during the trial phase. Over the next three years, 54 new trains were set to enter service, with some replacing models that have been in operation since the 1990s. TfL confirmed it remained on schedule to introduce all 54 new DLR trains by 2026.
7. <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/dlr/improving-the-dlr> - Transport for London's 'Improving the DLR' page outlines ongoing efforts to enhance the Docklands Light Railway network. The DLR is the busiest light railway in the UK, operating across six opportunity areas in London with the potential to provide more than 124,000 homes and 200,000 jobs. TfL is introducing new DLR trains to offer more comfortable journeys, with plans to replace the existing fleet by the end of 2026. The page also mentions escalator replacements at Cutty Sark station and other improvements to the network.