# London DLR unveils new trains amidst ongoing failure to modernise reliably



The London Docklands Light Railway (DLR) has taken a tentative step forward in its so-called "modernisation," unveiling the first of 54 new trains this week. While Transport for London (TfL) boasts about improvements in reliability, capacity, and passenger comfort, this development merely glosses over the deeper failures of the current administration’s approach. After years of neglect and mismanagement, these trains are being heralded as a milestone—yet they remain a symbol of how little progress has been made in actually delivering value or genuine upgrades for commuters plagued by unreliable service and overcrowding.

Funding for the project is patchy at best, drawing from a mishmash of government grants, loans, and contributions from London City Airport—hardly a sustainable or visionary investment in working-class Londoners. The so-called state-of-the-art walk-through carriages promised to offer amenities like air conditioning and mobile charging points, but these superficial improvements cannot hide the underlying issues: TfL’s failure to prioritise core service reliability and affordability. For the people who rely on this network daily, these upgrades are more propaganda than progress—a bandage over decades of underinvestment and misallocation.

The ambitious plan to increase capacity by over 50 percent and reduce congestion sounds impressive in propaganda material, yet the rollout has been riddled with delays, technical difficulties, and cost overruns. Originally scheduled to launch earlier, the project now lags by approximately 18 months, hampered by botched integration of technology and a collapsed contractor responsible for critical depot infrastructure. Many trains remain stuck in Spain, another reminder of TfL’s inability to manage projects effectively and deliver tangible results for London’s commuters.

Despite promises to modernise and replace old rolling stock—some trains over 30 years old—the current fleet remains on track for a prolonged existence, in part due to the delays and spiralling costs. These trains now serve as uncomfortable placeholders, with short-term compromises like reduced carriage lengths simply patchwork fixes that do little to address the real issues of overcrowding and service frequency. Meanwhile, the costs have ballooned, pushing total expenditure close to £880 million—a figure that exposes the government’s obsession with spin rather than delivering affordable, reliable transport solutions for everyday Londoners.

Looking ahead, TfL’s focus on station upgrades, such as the planned development at Pontoon Dock, continues to serve as window dressing rather than addressing systemic failures in service quality. These cosmetic improvements are unlikely to alleviate the persistent problems faced by passengers who endure lengthy delays and overcrowding every day. Instead of investing in core expansion and maintenance, the money seems to be spent on superficial enhancements designed to mollify critics and hide the deeper malaise within London’s transport network.

In sum, while the injection of new trains might superficially appear to signal progress, it ultimately underscores a grim reality: decades of missed opportunity, poor management, and a relentless focus on image over substance. True reform requires a fundamental shake-up—one that puts the interests of everyday commuters first and ensures that major projects are delivered on time, within budget, and with tangible benefits. The current trajectory offers little confidence that today’s “modernisation” will bring the genuine, affordable improvements that London’s struggling transport users desperately need.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.aol.com/news/dlr-trains-begin-london-125529469.html?guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9uZXdzLmdvb2dsZS5jb20v&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAIBAce9d0ZJy4ugruZW_NieZw_ybw44ooHHXg28E7lwgbVCxghN4ksFUqGs7RNyCl3ihQ_HDxVkhdNQOauMJyUH-J1Js7pS9nhOQ5f54X_DwBX01MhG6qgTFLcrugOtkrqldZqMdVn9cMg24F5-qo9fVpE9F1WyfOCyZKShORpzH&_guc_consent_skip=1760929101> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2025/june/pontoon-dock-station-set-for-major-upgrade-as-funding-is-secured> - Transport for London (TfL) has secured funding for a major upgrade of Pontoon Dock DLR station, with work starting in summer 2026 and expected to complete in 2028. The upgrade includes the construction of six new escalators and a new mezzanine level, aiming to improve accessibility and capacity for passengers. This development is part of TfL's ongoing efforts to enhance the DLR network and accommodate increasing passenger numbers in the area.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/transport/new-dlr-train-tfl-sadiq-khan-caf-b1250578.html> - The first of 54 new Docklands Light Railway (DLR) trains has entered service in London, approximately 18 months behind schedule. These state-of-the-art trains feature air conditioning, walk-through carriages, and mobile device charging points. The new fleet aims to replace older trains, some over 30 years old, and is expected to increase capacity on the DLR network by more than 50%. The project faced delays due to technical challenges and the collapse of a contractor responsible for a new depot.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/transport/new-dlr-trains-delayed-until-late-2024-after-encountering-challenges-during-testing-b1162815.html> - The introduction of new Docklands Light Railway (DLR) trains has been delayed until late 2024 after encountering 'challenges' during testing. The Transport for London (TfL) commissioner's June report revealed that 30 new DLR trains have been constructed but faced difficulties during the trial phase. Over the next three years, 54 new trains are set to enter service, with some replacing models that have been in operation since the 1990s. TfL admitted facing some 'complex challenges' but confirmed it remains on schedule to introduce all 54 new DLR trains by 2026.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/transport/new-trains-on-the-dlr-61m-over-budget-and-facing-nine-month-delay-b1165927.html> - The £880 million introduction of new air-conditioned trains on the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) has been delayed and is running £61 million over budget. Transport for London had hoped to start introducing the walk-through trains by April, increasing capacity and frequency on the network that carries 99 million passengers a year across south and east London. But the arrival of the first new train into passenger service has been pushed back until 'later this year', meaning it could be six to nine months late. It comes as plans to open a new DLR station at Thames Wharf, south of Canning Town and near City Hall, have been 'paused' due to a lack of cash. The station will only be built if housing developers contribute. The delay in introducing the new trains has been caused by difficulties integrating the braking system on the driverless trains with the track signalling system — while enabling the existing DLR trains to keep running. A new train slid beyond a stopping point during testing. A number of the new trains, which are painted teal, have been seen for months undergoing testing without passengers on board. TfL commissioner Andy Lord said: 'Bringing any new fleet of trains in is always complex, and integrating it with the existing infrastructure and the existing fleet.' The delay means that the DLR’s existing fleet, some of which is 30 years old, is having to remain in service for longer than expected. Some trains only have two rather than three carriages as a result. However, TfL chiefs insist all of the 54 new trains, which are being built by CAF in Spain and will have five carriages, will be running by the end of 'summer 2026'. Eleven of the new trains have been funded by the Government.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/transport/tfl-spends-over-900-million-on-new-dlr-trains-for-london-yet-almost-all-of-them-are-stuck-in-spain-b1210508.html> - Transport for London (TfL) has spent over £900 million on new Docklands Light Railway (DLR) trains, but the majority of them are currently stuck in Spain. The 54 air-conditioned trains were slated to begin entering into service in April, but the project has been hit by difficulties, with 36 of the 40 already built stuck in Spain. Those trains remain in the CAF factory, where they were built, after signalling difficulties and the collapse of a TfL contractor behind a depot required to store the trains in London. They were ordered to replace 33 existing trains on the DLR network, some of which are more than three decades old. A TfL spokesperson attributed the delay to the collapse of Buckingham Group in 2023, the contractor behind a new depot for the trains. The company said at the time it had collapsed due to 'extreme inflation linked to the Ukraine conflict'. The delay was also caused by difficulties integrating the braking system on the driverless trains with the track signalling system — while enabling the existing DLR trains to keep running. The fault was discovered after a new train slid beyond a stopping point during testing. However, TfL chiefs insist the new trains will begin entering service 'as quickly as possible' and that all 54 new trains will be running by summer next year.
7. <https://www.tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2025/june/pontoon-dock-station-set-for-major-upgrade-as-funding-is-secured> - Transport for London (TfL) has secured funding for a major upgrade of Pontoon Dock DLR station, with work starting in summer 2026 and expected to complete in 2028. The upgrade includes the construction of six new escalators and a new mezzanine level, aiming to improve accessibility and capacity for passengers. This development is part of TfL's ongoing efforts to enhance the DLR network and accommodate increasing passenger numbers in the area.