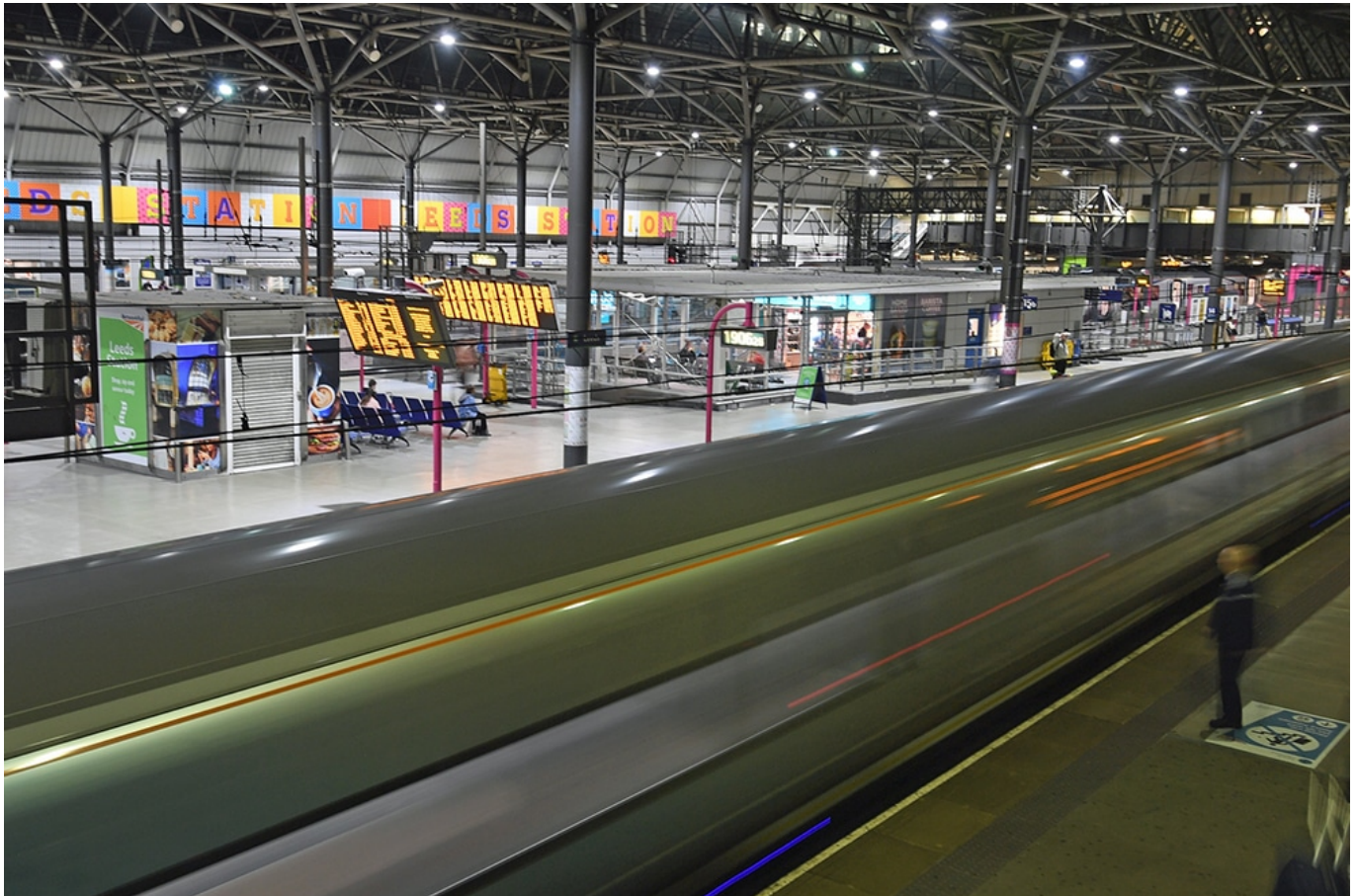


Cutting air passenger duty on domestic flights could put 1,000 extra planes in the air, warns rail industry

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The Rail Delivery Group (RDG), which represents train companies, has warned that a cut in taxes on domestic flights would see thousands of passengers shift from rail to air and undermine Britain's carbon reduction targets.

In its response to the government's consultation on aviation tax reform, which proposes reducing the levy passengers pay on domestic flights, the RDG says that its research shows that a 50% cut in APD could result in 222,000 fewer rail journeys a year as people shift to flying with air fares becoming cheaper – equivalent to putting an extra 1,000 flights in the air each year. It estimates that these extra journeys would equate to 27,000 tonnes of extra carbon emissions.

In its response to the consultation, RDG is calling on the government to:

- Make rail the mode of choice for long distance journeys under five hours by not reducing APD where a journey can be made by rail in that time
- Level the playing field on transport taxes so that travellers are encouraged to use greener modes of transport. Taxes now make up almost 40% of the total electricity costs for train operators to power trains whereas studies have shown that compared to other modes of transport air passengers pay a much smaller proportion of the climate costs associated with their travel
- Make it easier for people to choose the train for long distance journeys by making fares simpler so that passengers have a wider range of walk up prices and it's easier for people to get a seat as demand is spread more evenly throughout the day
- Conduct a study to fully understand the impact on other transport modes and climate change by decreasing domestic ADP

Train companies say that while aviation has an important role to play in connecting places where rail or other types of transport aren't a realistic option, rail is the greenest way to get large numbers of people from A to B, accounting for 10% of journeys but only 1% of emissions. To reach its legal commitment of net zero by 2050, government should therefore take steps to make rail travel a better option for people than air where trains are a viable choice, not making taking the plane cheaper.

Robert Nisbet, Director of Nations and Regions at RDG, said: "Rail companies support the government's goal of enhancing connectivity across the UK to drive economic growth and want clean, green trains to be the mode of choice for as many travellers as possible.

"Choosing to go by train is one simple way people can help cut carbon emissions. It's vital that government does not discourage people from making green choices about how to get from A to B by using the lever of taxes to make more polluting modes of transport even cheaper."

Photo credit: Rail Delivery Group