

MORE DETAILED CONSIDERATION OF THE MAIN GROUPS OF TRAFFIC

The foregoing general considerations focus attention upon the extreme unprofitability of some broad classes of traffic, as they are handled at present, and also upon the highly questionable value of much of the lightly loaded route mileage and of many of the small stations. Nevertheless, before firm conclusions can safely be drawn as to the desirability of closing particular routes, or of deliberately rejecting particular types of traffic, it is necessary to examine the mixture of traffics in each broad class in more detail, and to determine what parts of the total traffic mixture are associated with particular routes. It is also necessary to consider the potential effects of improved handling of traffic and the possibilities of attracting more or better traffics.

The extent to which this has been found possible is described in sections which follow.

PASSENGER SERVICES

The distribution of passenger traffic over the routes of British Railways is shown by Map No. 1. Numerous references will be made to this map in following sections, where passenger traffics are considered in the three main groups which have already been referred to, namely:—

- Fast and semi-fast train services.
- Stopping-train services.
- Suburban services.

The characteristics which distinguish these three types of service are clear, even though the groups merge into each other so that sharp boundaries between them can only be drawn arbitrarily.

Fast and Semi-Fast Trains

Fast and semi-fast trains provide inter-city services. They depend, for the attraction of traffic, upon the provision of rapid transits between the centres of population which they serve and upon well-chosen departure and arrival times in relation to the social and business habits of the community. To achieve the speed required they must be limited-stop trains, and to be successful financially they must draw a substantial number of passengers from the cities which they link. In general, the greater the distances covered by such services the more closely the number and timing of trains can be matched to the volume of demand, so that train loadings can be kept high. Also, because such services normally operate over densely loaded routes where the system cost is well covered by the total traffic, there is less reason to run lightly loaded trains which yield very little margin over their own direct costs, since they may displace more profitable traffic.

With a few minor exceptions, fast and semi-fast services are located upon only those routes shown as full lines on the traffic density map (Map No. 1), and on those lines, away from the urban areas, they carry a high proportion of the total passenger flow.

To date, receipts from fast and semi-fast inter-city trains have been fairly stable and may be expected to remain so. They have not, however, kept pace with rising costs and the margin of receipts over direct costs does not make the contribution to the system which it should.

Inter-city distances in Britain are such that the squeezing out of rail traffic by the combined assault of air over the longer distances and the private car over the shorter distances is far less serious here than in larger and less densely populated countries such as the United States, where the process is almost complete.

Even though main road congestion is being reduced in many places, urban congestion remains at such a level as to discourage use of private cars for even medium distance journeys between large centres of population on grounds of speed and comfort, and on cost for the individual traveller. On longer journeys, the adverse effect of terminal congestion is relatively less important, but the wear and tear of a long road journey then becomes an important deterrent. Therefore, for most of those passengers who make up the steady, year round, component of long distance travel, i.e. people travelling on business who rate their convenience and comfort highly, rail will remain preferable to road transport, provided that continuing attention is given to the speed, reliability and comfort of trains.

Air transport is not competitive in terms of speed for inter-city distances of less than about 200 miles, nor is it competitive in terms of cost except while operating as the minority carrier able to keep a high load factor by creaming from the total flow. This restricts the routes over which air competes seriously with rail to the London-Manchester, London-Newcastle and London-Scotland routes.

On the Scottish routes, air makes quite serious inroads into the loading of day trains, and will continue to do so. Even though trains may be speeded up, they will not match city-to-city transit times by air over such a distance, and erosion of daytime rail traffics between London and Scotland will probably continue to the point where some trains will have to be withdrawn. On the other hand, sleeper trains between London and Scotland continue to attract a satisfactory level of traffic, and there is good reason to suppose that they can be improved and increased.

On the Manchester route, rail and air are more nearly matched on time, and the difference will be reduced to a negligible level when rail times are reduced to 2 3/4 hours, as they will be with the completion of electrification of the route. Comfort will then become a predominant factor in rail/air competition, with the balance of advantage potentially in favour of rail for the journey as a whole.

For the reasons outlined, the general level of traffic on fast and semi-fast trains is expected to hold up well. As a group, these services make a substantial contribution to system cost, and their profitability can certainly be improved by detailed attention to individual services and trains. There is, therefore, no doubt about the continuation of the railways' inter-city passenger services on substantially the present broad pattern, so long as the main line network remains in being, adequately supported by other traffics. For this reason, it was thought unnecessary to include a rapid detailed examination of all the fast train services among the special studies connected with reshaping of the railways.

This does not mean that British Railways feel complacent about their intercity services, nor that services will not be studied with a view to improving them. Improvements have and are being made, and will continue.

Some patterns for the future have already been set. The introduction of the Blue Pullman services between London and Birmingham, London and Manchester, and London and

Swansea, with journey times of 1 hr 55 min, 3 hrs 10 min, and 3 hrs 35 min. respectively, heralded the luxury train of the future.

The diesel-worked hourly day service between King's Cross and Newcastle, including trains in each direction which cover the 268 ½ miles in four hours, compares favourably with the oft-quoted pre-war service in both frequency and capacity.

Where a demand capable of supporting quality services covered by supplementary charges is seen to exist, they will be introduced.

Competitive railway building in the past led not only to duplication of main arteries between some of the principal cities, but also to duplication of passenger stations and all the ancillary facilities such as carriage and cleaning sidings, motive power depots, buildings and equipment, which go with large terminals. Very little has been done, so far, to rationalise the main line passenger services which use alternative routes and terminals, but it is clear, in many cases, that concentration on selected routes and stations would provide equal or better services and permit substantial economies.

For example, studies of the possibilities at Leeds and Bradford, each of which has two large stations, are in an advanced stage. The need to retain separate main line services to Exeter and the West via both the Southern and Western routes is being examined. The Caledonian, the Glasgow and South Western, and the North British Companies left a legacy of four large terminals in Glasgow. The London and North Western and Midland Companies provided duplicate routes into Carlisle. Birmingham is served today by two Regions' services from London. The future of all these, and other comparable parallel routes and duplicate facilities, is being determined, and in some cases discussions are already taking place with civic authorities who are most anxious to collaborate in the development of sites which will be released by concentration schemes

Before leaving the subject of fast and semi-fast services, it is necessary to comment upon seasonal variations. What has been said so far relates to the steady inter-city traffics, not to the summer holiday and public holiday peaks.

This peak traffic differs from the steady traffic in two important respects :— (a) much of it is far less profitable than "the steady traffic, and (b) it is being eroded much more by the growth of private transport.

Total passenger traffic during the months of June to September, in 1961, exceeded the average for the remaining eight months of the year by 18 per cent. in June, 47 per cent. in July, 43 per cent. in August, and 21 per cent. in September. Ten years earlier, corresponding figures were 48 per cent. in June, 96 per cent. in July, 87 per cent. in August and 44 per cent. in September, which shows how the summer peak has diminished, in spite of developments of holidays with pay, greater general affluence, and overwhelming evidence of greater holiday travel. There can be no doubt that the decline in the rail peak is almost entirely due to the growth of family motoring, and the trend is likely to continue. There has been a similar decline in the public holiday weekend peaks, for the same reason, but these peaks remain very sharp.

Although the figures quoted relate to British Railways passenger traffic as a whole, a predominant part of the total additional traffic in holiday periods falls upon fast and semi-fast

train services and the actual peak on some trains, particularly at weekends, may be very many times the normal level of loading.

In so far as the increased traffic arising in a peak period can be carried by the regular time-tabled trains, the yield from it is almost all net revenue. Up to that level it is very welcome financially, but the situation changes as soon as the traffic rises to a level necessitating extra trains. Moreover, because the capacity of many fast train services is well matched to the steady traffic, they are not able to absorb very large additional loads unless extra trains are put on.

Extra trains are very expensive to run, and may easily cause a loss which more than offsets any gain from increased traffic on the regular *trains*, especially if the extras are themselves only part filled and if there is no balancing return working for engines, vehicles and men. Such trains give rise to a high proportion of overtime working and they depend upon the availability of reserve coaching stock *which is* expensive to supply, maintain, and assemble, and which is idle for most of the year. The extent to which reserve stock has been held to cover peak demands in the past, and its gross under-utilisation, is shown by the following table, which relates to 1959:-

Total number of gangwayed coaches allocated to fast and semi-fast services	18,500
Number in year-round service	5,500
Additional vehicles for regular summer service	2,000
Available for high peak service	8,900
Under repair	2,100

A large number of the coaches available for high peak traffic were only required on a limited number of occasions as the following table, relating to the last 6,000 vehicles in the fleet, shows:-

<i>Number of Coaches</i>	<i>Required on not more than:</i>
2,000	10 occasions
2,000	14 occasions
2,000	18 occasions

The annual cost of providing the 6,000 coaches was £3-4m. Against this it was estimated that they only earned £0- 5m. after allowing for all other costs of the movements concerned.

Since the beginning of 1959 the number of passenger-carrying gangway coaches has been reduced by 5,584 and by the end of 1965 stock will not be available for use at high peak periods. Efforts will be made to control these peaks by seat reservation schemes and by fares policy, as is the custom with airline services.

Stopping-Train Services

As a group, stopping-trains serve the more rural communities by linking small towns and villages with each other and, sometimes rather indirectly, with one or more major towns.

They merge into semi-fast services at one end of the range, where some semi-fast services could equally well be defined as stopping services, having regard to the traffic potential of the

places where they stop as well as to their spacing. At the other end of the range, they merge very much further into suburban services. A suburban service has many of the characteristics of a stopping service, and is distinguished mainly by the intensity of its daily commuter peaks.

Railway stopping services developed as the predominant form of rural public transport service in the last century, when the only alternative was the horse-drawn vehicle and when the availability of private transport of any kind was very limited. Even in those days, when there was no satisfactory alternative and when fares were the present-day equivalent of 4 ½d. per mile third class, many of these services failed to pay.

Today, rail stopping services and bus services serve the same basic purpose. Buses carry the greater part of the passengers moving by public transport in rural areas, and, as well as competing with each other, both forms of public transport are fighting a losing battle against private transport.

Immediately prior to the war, in 1938, the number of private cars registered was 1,944,000. In 1954 there were 3,100,000, and in 1961 there were 6,000,000. By 1970 it is expected that there will be a total of 13,000,000 cars registered, equivalent to 24.3 per 100 of the population or 76 per 100 families. In addition, in 1961 there were 1,900,000 power-driven cycles of one kind or another.

Ownership of private transport is as common in rural areas as in towns. For example, the ownership of cars in the north of Scotland is 11.7 per 100 of the population, which equals the national average.

It is questionable whether British Railways meet as much as 10 per cent of the total and declining demand for public rural transport. To do so, they provide services accounting for about 40 per cent. of the total passenger train mileage of the railways as a whole, and most of the trains carry an average of less than a bus-load and lose nearly twice as much as they collect in fares.

A high proportion of stopping-train services run over routes on which they provide the only form of rail passenger service, and on which the total traffic density is very low. Almost without exception, lines shown dotted or dashed in the passenger density map, i.e. lines carrying less than 5,000 or 10,000 passengers per week, are used for a single stopping service of passenger trains and for light flows of freight.

The economics of these lightly loaded passenger services can best be illustrated by an example.

Consider a single track route with small stations at intervals of 2 ½ miles carrying a stopping passenger service of one train per hour in each direction from 7.0 a.m. to 10.0 p.m. Irrespective of the number of passengers carried, typical costs will be:-

	Per mile per annum £	Per mile per week £
<i>System cost</i>		
Route maintenance and signalling cost	3,000	58
Cost of stations (£2,500 per annum per station)	1,000	19
		77
<i>Movement cost</i>		
224 trains per week		
Steam locomotive hauled trains—about 15s. 0d per train mile		168
Diesel multiple units — 4s. 0d. - 6s. 0d. per train mile according to density of traffic		45-67
Total cost of diesel multiple unit service		122-144
Revenue at 2d. per passenger mile		
1,000 passengers per week		8
2,500 passengers per week		21
5,000 passengers per week		42
7,500 passengers per week		63
10,000 passengers per week		83
15,000 passengers per week		125
20,000 passengers per week		167

Even with relatively low cost diesel multiple unit trains there will be losses up to quite high levels of traffic. This is illustrated in the following table which also includes a comparison with a bus service:-

Margins of Revenue over Costs for Low Density Passenger Flows

Traffic density passenger miles per route mile	DIESEL MULTIPLE UNIT TRAINS				BUS SERVICE	
	Margin over movement cost per mile		Margin over total cost (A) per mile	Margin over total cost (B) per mile	Margin over cost per mile (C)	
	Per week	Per annum	Per annum	Per annum	Hourly service	Two-hourly service
	£	£	£	£	£	£
1,000	-37	-1,900	-3,700	-5,900	-1,000	-300
2,000	-28	-1,500	-3,300	-5,500	-600	+100
3,000	-20	-1,000	-2,800	-5,000	-200	+600
4,000	-12	-600	-2,400	-4,600	+300	
5,000	-8	-400	-2,200	-4,400	+700	
6,000			-1,800	-4,000		
7,000	+8	+400	-1,400	-3,600		
8,000	+17	+900	-900	-3,100		
9,000	+25	+1,300	-500	-2,700		
10,000	+33	+1,700	-100	-2,300		
15,000	+66	+3,400	+1,600	-600		
20,000	+100	+5,200	+3,400	+1,200		

(A) System cost attributable to passenger operation only charged assuming profitable freight absorbs the rest.

(B) Whole system cost charged assuming passenger traffic only on the route.

(C) This relates to a bus service receiving the same revenue as on rail, and bus operation at 2s. 6d. per mile.

These figures serve to show that the revenue earned from up to 6,000 passengers per week is unlikely to be sufficient to cover movement costs alone. This means that money would be saved by discontinuing such a service, even if the route continued to be maintained at its full level of cost for the sake of other traffic. In general, however, the presence of passenger traffic on even a single track branch line adds about £1,750 per mile per annum to the cost of maintaining and signalling the route, and of manning stations. Therefore, even where there is freight traffic capable of absorbing a share of the route cost, stopping passenger services cannot be regarded as paying their full cost below a passenger density of about 10,000. Where there is no other traffic, routes carrying up to 17,000 passengers per week may barely pay their way.

Although a high proportion of passenger services operate over lines of low total traffic density, there are also a considerable number of similar services operating over more densely loaded routes. In most cases, these services are just as unsound, financially, as those operating over branch lines. Below about 6,000 passenger miles per mile per week they do not pay for their own movement costs, even with short diesel multiple unit trains. Also, just as on branch lines, the presence of a stopping passenger service on a main line adds appreciably to the system cost, by complicating the signalling, and by necessitating the provision and manning of small stations. To be truly self-supporting, therefore, they must be capable of covering system costs amounting to £1,000/2,000 per mile, and must carry around 10,000 passengers per week if they are to do so. Confronted with evidence that a rail service does not pay, many people ask:-

- (a) Why not decrease fares and attract more traffic ?
- (b) Why not give people the opportunity to pay higher fares and preserve the service ?
- (c) Why not substitute rail buses for trains and decrease the cost of the service ?
- (d) Why not run fewer trains ?
- (e) Why not close some stations ?

Common-sense considerations, and all experience, go to show that the problem cannot be solved either by decreasing or increasing fares.

If fares were halved, traffic would have to increase at least fourfold to cover the direct costs of stopping services as a group, and sixfold to make them pay their whole costs. Nobody can seriously suppose that this would happen. People without their own transport, at present, are not so seriously deterred by the rail fares for short journeys that they would use trains many times as often if fares were halved.

To cover the costs of many services, fares would have to be increased to about eight or ten times their present level, even if traffic remained at its present density. It would, of course, disappear completely.

The third suggestion, that rail buses should be substituted for trains, ignores the high cost of providing the route itself, and also ignores the fact that rail buses are more expensive vehicles than road buses. The extent to which the economics remain unsound can readily be seen by inserting a Movement cost of three shillings per mile in the table on page 17. It would still be necessary to have a passenger density of 14,000 per week, to cover the total cost of the service, as compared with 17,000 per week with diesel multiple units. It is not immediately

apparent either, why it is thought that rail buses would give a better standard of service than a road bus in most rural areas.

Similarly, consideration of the cost figures will show that thinning out the trains, or thinning out the stations, would not make a service self-supporting even if it had no adverse effect on revenue.

These points have been mentioned, to dispose of any idea that stopping-train services could be preserved, as an economic alternative to buses or private transport, if only some ingenuity were shown by railway operators. This really is not so, and it is obvious that a high proportion of stopping passenger train services ought to be discontinued as soon as possible, and that many of the lightly loaded lines over which they operate ought to close as well unless they carry exceptional freight traffic. For this reason, all stopping services have been examined individually, and so have all lengths of lightly loaded route.

So far as the services themselves are concerned, closure proposals have been determined by the inability of the services to produce revenue sufficient to cover the direct costs of operating them. Examples illustrative of this financial test are given in Appendix 2.

There can be no doubt about the financial desirability of closing those services which do not meet this test, and it is the Railways' wish to close them as soon as the procedure permits. Questions of hardships will be considered by the Transport Users Consultative Committees.

A list of services included in this group is given in Appendix 2. They account for an annual train mileage of 68 m. and the route mileage to be closed to passenger traffic will be about 5,000.

The savings expected to result from these withdrawals are £33 m. per annum and the loss of revenue is expected to be £15 m. per annum (£12 m. in earnings on the services concerned and £3 m. in contributory revenue), yielding a net improvement of £18 m. per annum excluding track and signalling. There will also be further savings, when lines are completely closed after withdrawal of passenger services and when alternative arrangements have been made to deal with any desirable freight. In large part, these savings are attributable to passenger service withdrawals. So also are the economies which will follow as the administrative and service departments are contracted and reorganised.

The stations affected by the closure of passenger services are listed in Appendix 2 and details of rolling stock which will be rendered redundant are given in Appendix 3.

Decision with regard to the remaining stopping services will be reserved for the present, until the most hopelessly uneconomic ones have been dealt with, but they will then be reviewed and should they be found to be uneconomic they will be dealt with similarly.

Hardship

It would be folly to suggest that widespread closure of stopping train services will cause no hardship anywhere or to anybody, and the Transport Act, 1962 makes the consideration of hardship the special responsibility of Transport Users Consultative Committees, where objections to closures are lodged. For (the purpose of judging the closure proposals as a whole, however, it is necessary to have some idea of the scale and degree of hardship which they are likely to cause.

With the exception of northern Scotland, and parts of central Wales, most areas of the country are already served by a network of bus services more dense than the network of rail services which will be withdrawn, and in the majority of cases these buses already carry the major proportion of local traffic. With minor exceptions, these bus services cater for the same traffic flows as the railways, on routes which are roughly parallel. Taken as a whole, they have enough spare capacity to absorb the traffic which will be displaced from the railways, which will do no more than replace the bus traffic which has been lost over the last decade, and which will provide a very welcome addition to the revenue of the bus operators. The network of bus services is shown on Map No. 12.

In all these areas, cases of special difficulty will be rare, but there may be localities where there is not already a bus service connecting places at present served by rail. If the traffic displaced from rail has a density of over 1,000 passengers per week it provides the basis for an economic bus service of about eight buses each way. Where the traffic displaced is less than 1,000 passengers per week, and where a bus service does not exist already, some special arrangements may be necessary. Roughly a quarter of the services proposed for closure have a traffic density below 1,000 but it is estimated that only 122 miles of these routes are not already paralleled by bus services. In most areas of the country, therefore, it appears that hardship will arise on only a very limited scale.

In parts of Scotland, in particular, and to a lesser degree in Wales and the West country, road improvement or road construction may be necessary before adequate road services can be provided as full alternatives to the rail services which exist at present. Some of these road improvements are required, in any case, for development of the motor tourist trade, on which the future of these areas so greatly depends.

Suburban Services

The feature which distinguishes suburban services from a railway point of view, apart from the obvious fact that they are in suburban areas, is the intensity of the peaks caused by the daily movement of population in and out of focal cities. The other feature which distinguishes them in practice, though not of necessity, is a sub-normal level of fares.

The location of suburban services is made readily visible on the passenger traffic density map by the thickening of the lines in the vicinity of a few of the larger cities. London is the centre of a preponderant proportion of all such services in the country, and the characteristic morning and evening peaking of traffic intensity is more pronounced there than anywhere else. Outside London, there are only eight areas in which rail services are major contributors to the total daily flux of people in and out of the focal cities, these being Glasgow, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham and Cardiff.

To a greater or lesser degree, the pattern of life in all these areas is dependent upon continued operation of the suburban rail services, and to the life of London they are essential. It is, therefore, unthinkable to most people that these services might be closed, but that is no reason why they should be provided below cost.

In 1961, suburban services as a whole produced a gross revenue of £39.8 m. which was just less than their direct costs, and fell short of covering their total costs by £25 m. It is, however, misleading to consider all the services together, because conditions vary appreciably from

area to area, and the London group of services is not only predominant in size but also presents problems of a distinctive kind.

London Services

London services, which earned £33 m. in 1961, or 86 per cent. of the total suburban services revenue, came near to covering their full cost. Nevertheless, their financial position, and the fares structure which gives rise to it, are highly unsatisfactory in relation to the traffic and operating problems which confront them. Strenuous efforts are being made to reduce the operating costs of these services, but it is abundantly clear that the scope for such reduction is inadequate to allow the matter to be put right by cost savings alone.

In essence, the problem is this. The capacity of the system carrying these services is limited by physical restrictions, particularly at the London end where so many services converge, and these restrictions could be removed only at very high cost. Many services are already saturated at peak hours, to the point where passengers suffer extreme discomfort, and the volume of traffic continues to rise. The level of fares is too low to finance costly increases in system capacity, but the demand goes on getting heavier.

This is a situation which must be of very real concern to the public, as well as to the railways, and it cannot be in the best interests of either to restrict fares to the low levels at which they are at present controlled.

There is also another feature which is important from a commercial point of view. The rail system is capable of drawing passengers travelling daily to London from distances up to a hundred miles, and has ample spare capacity for doing so beyond a radius of about 20 miles. It is, therefore, in the railways' interest to foster growth of this longer distance traffic to achieve higher utilisation of the route system as a whole, but this development is itself restricted by the congestion of shorter distance traffic at the London end.

The magnitude of the morning and evening traffic peaks is illustrated by figures showing the flow through some of the main London terminals at various hours of the day.

The peak load, measured over half an hour, is about 10 times the average level over the hours from 6 a.m. to midnight, and 12 times the average over 24 hours. The route and rolling stock capacity provided to deal with the peak is used to only 10 per cent. of its capacity during the hours over which it might normally be expected to carry passengers, and to 81/2 per cent. capacity over the whole day. In spite of this, practically the whole peak traffic is carried at reduced rates. Also, and more logically, cheap fares are offered during off-peak periods in an effort to attract traffic when it can be carried at low marginal cost, so that nearly all the traffic is carried at low rates for one reason or another.

The effective level of fares for London suburban service traffic, and the growth of traffic over the years is demonstrated by the following table: -

BRITISH RAILWAYS—LONDON LINES

Estimated average receipt per mile, passenger journeys and passenger miles

Year	Estimated average receipt per mile		Estimated passenger journeys		Estimated passenger miles	
	All	Season tickets only	All	Season tickets only	All	Season tickets only
	<i>d.</i>	<i>d.</i>	<i>m.</i>	<i>m.</i>	<i>m.</i>	<i>m.</i>
1949	1.01	0.77	N.A.	N.A.	4,643	N.A.
1954	1.17	0.94	493	175	4,579	2,083
1955	1.26	1.00	478	170	4,437	2,027
1956	1.31	1.03	491	190	4,677	2,280
1957	1.33	1.06	504	203	4,875	2,435
1958	1.43	1.14	527	201	4,865	2,385
1959	1.44	1.16	507	206	4,836	2,437
1960	1.63	1.33	497 *	202	4,731	2,384
1961	1.74	1.39	501	206	4,880	2,550

1955 A.S.L.E. & F. strike from 20th May to 14th June.

End of 1956 and early 1957 Suez crisis.

1958 L.T.E. bus strike 5th May to 20th June.

It should be clearly recognised that the problem presented by the London suburban rail services is not one which the railways can solve alone. Their problem is part of the whole problem of London congestion, and measures which would improve their situation, such as staggering of hours and dispersal of employment to the periphery of the metropolitan area, are beyond their power and responsibility. Also, unless the control of fares in the London Traffic Area is exercised with more regard to the true nature of the problem, the position will be further worsened by the continued suppression of normal economic forces.

Suburban Services Outside London

No city other than London is nearly so predominantly dependent upon suburban train services. All of them are served by public road transport which carries a high proportion of the total daily flow, and the movement and parking of private transport is still sufficiently free to make it a possible alternative to rail. Also, none of the services is loaded as heavily as many London services.

As in the case of London, fares on these services feeding other cities are low, sometimes very low, and none of them pays its way. There is no possibility of a solution being found, however, merely by increasing or by reducing fares. Increases in fares on rail services alone would drive traffic to available alternative modes of travel and yield little increase in revenue, if any. Decreases would increase traffic, but short peak periods of traffic at even saturation level would not support the services with fares lower than at present. Therefore, if the services are to be regarded as essential, the municipalities concerned must join with the railways and bus interests to evolve a co-ordinated system of services, with due regard to the economics of both forms of transport. It is, for example, illogical to operate subsidised municipal bus services in competition with unprofitable railway services, without any attempt to co-ordinate them.

If, on the other hand, the services are not regarded as essential and coordination is not found possible, the sound commercial course is for the railways to risk pricing themselves out of the business and then, if necessary, close the services.

The right solution is most likely to be found by 'Total Social Benefit Studies' of the kind which are now being explored by the Ministry of Transport and British Railways jointly. In cases of the type under consideration it may be cheaper to subsidise the railways than to bear the other cost burdens which will arise if they are closed. If this happens, however, there should be no feeling that the railways are being propped up by such a subsidy because of a commercial failure.

Mails and Parcels

The regular passenger train services are the principal means of conveyance for Post Office parcels and letter mails, as well as for the railways' own parcels service.

Schedules of services, agreed with the Post Office, are laid down for the conveyance of the majority of letter mails, and extend over seven days of *the* week. Also, Post Office letter sorting vehicles run nightly on some routes, the average number per week being 80. Letter mails are loaded into and unloaded from train vans by Post Office staff, and are transferred by them at intermediate stations if necessary. Post Office parcels are mainly carried on passenger trains, but are loaded and unloaded by railway staff.

The railway itself accepts, collects and delivers parcels for carriage by passenger trains, or by booked special parcels trains, during normal business hours on six days of the week. A countrywide service is available to and from all stations open to passengers, and also to some stations which were formerly served by passenger trains but are no longer. No extra charge is normally made for collection and delivery, although extra charges are now raised in a few areas where conditions are exceptional.

Facilities for trunk conveyance of parcels and mails will improve with the improvement of main line services, but withdrawals of stopping services will reduce the number of places which can be served by rail movement throughout. No great volume of traffic will be affected, and the problems which will arise are being considered with the Post Office.

Another, and very important problem which concerns both the Post Office and British Railways is the overlapping of their parcels services, on which both organisations lose money.

The Post Office gives a nation-wide service for parcels up to 22 lb. in weight, and with fairly tight restriction on size. They do not collect parcels, except for their own convenience, but they do deliver.

The railways accept parcels up to 2 cwt. in weight, without any limitation on size or shape. They collect and deliver the parcels, provide evidence of delivery if necessary, and compensate for loss or damage.

In 1961 the railways handled 50 m. bags of parcels post for the Post Office, estimated to contain 255 m. parcels of average weight 5 lb., and yielding receipts of £30 m. to the Post Office, of which the railways received £12 m.

The railways carried 84 m. consignments in their own parcels service in 1961, with receipts of £27 m. This traffic, like Post Office parcels traffic, has shown a rising trend in recent years.

An analysis of the railways' service in 1960 shows that 3,368 of the smaller stations produced only 4 per cent. of the receipts from parcels and miscellaneous traffic by coaching train. At the other end of the scale, 22 stations accounted for 45 per cent. of the total receipts. As might be expected, this railways parcels traffic, and Post Office parcels traffic, is distributed over the country in much the same pattern as wagon load and sundries freight traffic.

The Post Office are reported to lose £8-4 m. on their parcels service, and the railways passenger parcels traffic makes an inadequate contribution to system cost. To a considerable degree the two forms of service compete for traffic which is not favourable to either, and render it even less so by the duplication of facilities where both are little used. In addition, they also compete with road parcels services, in particular with British Road Services, but road operators limit their coverage to the more remunerative areas.

Co-ordination of services and charging scales are the subject of active discussions between the Post Office and the railways, and problems arising from railway closures will be treated as part of the broader problem. These discussions will also embrace consideration of better means of handling mails and parcels at terminals.

Reference will be made to possible amalgamation of some parts of the parcel service with freight sundries traffic in a later section.