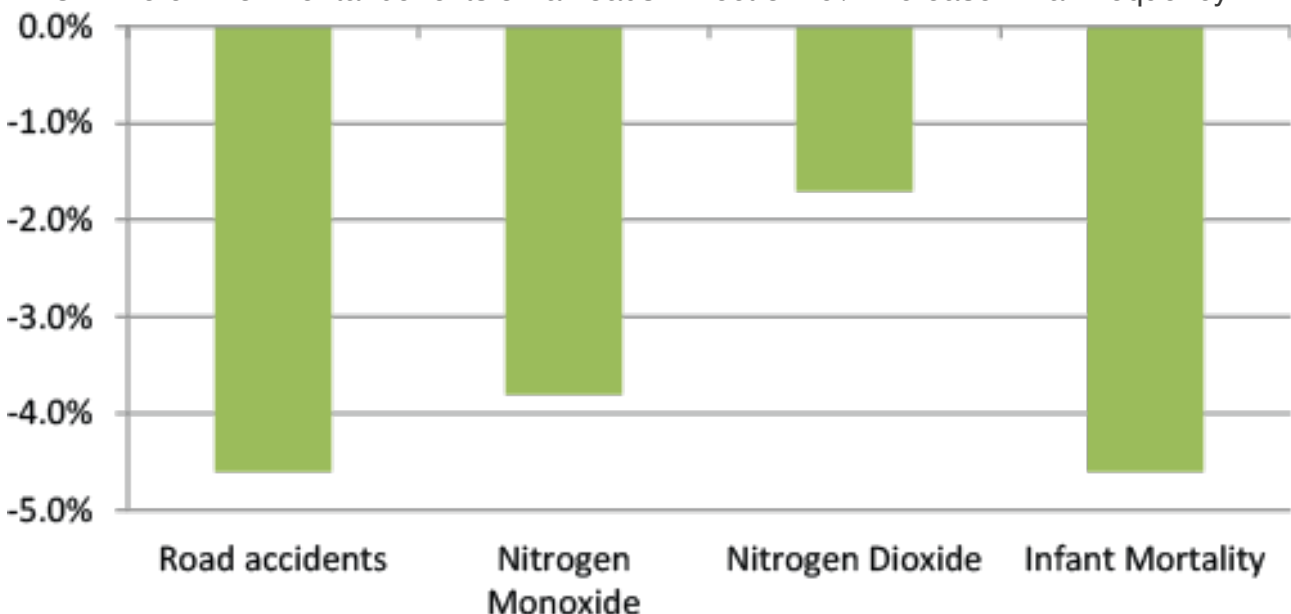


PROS AND CONS OF HS2 RAIL LINKS

Pros of HS2

1. The road system is becoming crowded with limited ability to keep increasing capacity. Offering high-speed rail will encourage more people to travel by train relieving gridlock in city centres. Therefore, it is not just rail travellers who will benefit, but those who gain from lower congestion on the roads.
2. HS2 will free up capacity on the existing lines, enabling more local commuter services and more freight services – more freight trains will help take lorries off the road and provide environmental benefits.
3. If extra capacity is not met by HS2 it could lead to large ticket prices on existing services to prevent overcrowding on peak services.
4. Investment will provide jobs for those involved in building and running the new HS2
5. Journey times from London to Birmingham will be less than one hour. There will also be quick rail links to Manchester and Leeds.
6. Despite objections, HS1 has proved successful. Demand for HS1 rail travel to the Continent has proved to meet expectations; this has enabled more people to easily travel to Europe. A new service has created additional demand – not just taking from previous forms of transport
7. The cost of HS2 will be spread out over 15-20 years. Therefore we can afford it.
8. The £2-£3bn annual capital investment will help create jobs, stimulate economic activity and give a decent rate of return.
9. As of January 2020, the project has already spent £9 billion on preparation. To cancel the project now, would mean this investment is lost. Industry figures claim scrapping project would cost as much as £12bn
10. High-speed rail will take travel away from short distance air-travel, leaving a lower carbon footprint.
11. The environmental impact will be mitigated by 'green tunnels' and planting of trees.
12. Empirical results show that increased train frequency can have significant external benefits in terms of lower pollution, fewer road accidents and drops in infant mortality.
13. The environmental benefits of railroads: Effect of 10% increase in rail frequency



14. Trains have a better safety record than the roads. Passenger death rates (2008)
 - By car 1.9 per billion Km
 - By train 0.3 per billion Km

Cons of HS2

1. There are other alternatives such as increasing train length on existing routes.
2. HS2 may only benefit a small section of the population who use trains between major cities.
3. Benefits of improved speed are debatable given that many people can now work on laptops away from the office.
4. Environmental costs of building a new line through the Chilterns and Midlands are high. Ancient woodlands, wetlands and wildlife sites will be destroyed, the impact on local habitats, ecosystems, flora and fauna will be great.
5. Residents are unhappy at impact on living standards and home values which will decline.
6. In an era of austerity, spending on train service is not the highest priority. There is a high opportunity cost of spending on HS2 as the £88bn could be spent elsewhere (e.g. fixing potholes, reducing congestion on roads, decarbonising economy)
7. Forecasts for passenger numbers are uncertain, there is no guarantee the demand will be there. In recent years, rail traffic growth has dipped. The scheme may not be finished until 2035.
8. Rather than reduce the north-south divide, it may encourage people to live further away from London and use HS2 as a fast commute to London.
9. The costs of HS2 continue to rise. Initially, in 2015, the project was forecast to cost £56bn but could now the total cost could soar to over £100bn. The higher cost is partly due to more expensive tunnelling to keep down noise to residents near the track.
10. There are cheaper and more effective ways to increase capacity, such as digital signalling, investment in local commuting routes. HS3 would link Manchester with Leeds and could be a better way to reinvigorate the northern economy.
11. Rail-future a campaigning group for rail travel criticised the need for ultra high speed trains, there may be a bigger overall benefit from running slightly slower trains over different routes.
12. Although £8bn has been spent on preparation – this is a sunk cost – we shouldn't go ahead with a bad scheme just because of sunk costs – which are spent no matter what choice we make. It is better to write off bad spending – than compound it and make it worse.

