The Tube: City on the Move [C1]

La mobilità è un fattore determinante nella vita quotidiana dei londinesi: vediamo come il sistema dei trasporti si è evoluto e ha cambiato il paesaggio urbano all'inizio del XX secolo.

Until the end of 2023, London is celebrating the history, heritage and innovation of the Tube with a series of activities and events. Some of these are organised by the London Transport Museum in Covent Garden. Here you can discover how the evolution of the British capital has been shaped from the 19th century on by its transport system. Also on show are historic vehicles and other exhibits, including **the very first** Tube map design. To find out more, Speak Up contacted Sam Mullins, director and chief executive of the London Transport Museum. We began by asking him about the Tube's long history. **Sam Mullins**(English accent): From 1800 to the First World War, London grew six times in population, from 1 million to 6.5 million. So it's kind of the biggest city in the world at that date. And **keeping the city on the move, the wheels of commerce turning**, governance, industry **and so forth**, moving around the capital is always a **big issue** because it's **crowded**. It's a big, **busy** imperial city. In the early 19th century, people began to be concerned that something new was needed to

move around. They couldn't predict how long it would take to get from one place to another. Is it a thirty-minute journey or is it an hour and a half? So the idea was conceived of... building a railway beneath the ground. A pretty conventional railway, with wooden carriages and **pulled** by **steam engines**. But for the first time, it was built just underneath the street. They **dug up** big main streets through the city, **roofed** them over and put tracks in the bottom of the cutting below. So, 1863, the Metropolitan Railway is the, it's actually the world's first underground railway. It ran for three and a half miles, from Paddington to Farringdon.

DEEP DOWN

The Metropolitan Railway had its limitations: smoke and steam would gather in the tunnels, **posing** a huge health and safety risk. As the 20th century approached, new technologies were used to build a unique electric railway deep underground. **Sam Mullins**: Later in the century, London continues to grow and traffic continues to block it up. They realise that something else is needed. And three technologies come together in 1890 to make the world's first deep tube railway, so deep underground, not just beneath the street, like the subway in New York, but deep down, 60, 70 feet down. And so, by then you have safe methods of tunnelling, so you can dig tunnels through the London **clay** without losing **loads** of tunnel miners, electric traction has been pioneered by a man called Frank Sprague in Chicago, who developed it for the Chicago L, which of course was not underground it was above the ground. And then **lifts**, elevators for getting up and down big buildings. So those three technologies get used together for the first time in 1890, and the world's first electric-powered deep tube railway is built in London. Again, a bit like the Metropolitan Railway, is just the first step in the development of a much bigger network.

ECONOMY OF LIFE

As the Tube expanded its network, the city of London evolved with it, and vice-versa. **Sam Mullins**: Well, cause what the Tube does is **enable** people to move around more predictably so, life and the economy works better. But it

also **enable**s people to live out of the city centre. So it **enable**s the growth of the suburbs. Very soon those green fields were covered in houses, and people bought their season tickets to go into work in town every day. So it becomes a shaper of London and still is, to a **large extent**, today Londoners define whole neighbourhoods by their relationship to the Tube and where the Tube station is **and so forth** as well.

GHOST STATIONS

The London Transport Museum provides visitors with a comprehensive history of London through the lens of transport. It also offers some unique experiences. **Sam Mullins**: They can come and visit us in London, in Covent Garden, we're in the centre of the West End, where everybody wants to be. London has a long and complicated history and often I think that the easiest way to understand it is just to look at it through one lens or another. And we think the lens of transport is a pretty good way to get a sense of the city. It's a **multi-layered** city. So we do some **ticketed tours** around **disused** Tube stations, which is always really interesting. You're often in **disused** tunnels and **shafts**. You see the trains going by. And so, there's always that sense that London moves on pretty fast, but it always leaves something in the record, behind, a ghost station, a lift shaft or whatever. So… that's the thing that floats my boat about London.

Glossary

- **busy** = frenetica
- **pulled** = tirare
- **roofed** = ricoprire
- **enable** = rendere possibile
- **and so forth** = eccetera
- **big issue** = gran problema
- **crowded** = affollata
- **the very first** = il primissimo
- **large extent** = in grande misura
- **disused** = in disuso
- **loads** = grandi quantità
- **multi-layered** = multistrato
- **ticketed tours** = visite a pagamento
- **shafts** = condotti, vani
- **keeping the city on the move, the wheels of commerce turning** = mantenere le ruote in movimento
- **steam engines** = motori a vapore
- **dug up** = scavare
- **posing** = costituire
- **clay** = argilla
- **lifts** = ascensori