

# Construction starts on Britain's high-speed rail project

September 4 2020

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Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson, center left, greets a worker during a visit to the HS2 Solihull Interchange building site in Solihull, England, Friday, Sept. 4, 2020. Construction is set to formally begin on Britain's 106 billion-pound (\$140 billion) high-speed railway project, aiming to forge better connections between cities for decades to come. Transport Secretary Grant Shapps defended the project, which has its "shovels in the ground" moment just as the country is wondering whether the over-budget and often-delayed project offers good value at a time when the the COVID-19 pandemic has enshrined the idea of working

from home. (Andrew Fox/Pool Photo via AP)

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"We're building this ... for 150 years and still going strong," he told the BBC. "So I think the idea that—unless we work out a way of tele-transporting people—we won't want a system to get people around the country ... is wrong."

Rail travel has collapsed amid the pandemic, with commuters padding to their kitchen tables for teleworking rather than getting on a train. In the meantime, all revenue and cost risks from existing rail franchises were transferred to the U.K., Scottish and Welsh governments in March to ensure services stayed afloat—costing taxpayers at least 3.5 billion pounds.

Construction on the new high-speed railway was given the final go-ahead by Prime Minister Boris Johnson in February, despite the [project](#) being chronically over budget. Work will begin with stations and tunnels, followed by the main viaducts and bridges.

"Transport connectivity is at the heart of the build back better, build back faster and build back greener recovery," Johnson said as he

attended the opening event.



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