

1801 a rosy future for horse railways

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"The modern improvement of Iron Railways is very generally adopting through the whole country, and several Bills are coming through Parliament this Session for establishing roads on this principle of very considerable extent. One of 23 miles in length is to be made in Monmouthshire, which is taken up and patronized even by the proprietors of a canal already established. There is also to be one in Staffordshire, where the ascent is to be 300 feet in less than four miles; and it is said that the Surrey Railway is likely to be extended through all that county, as well as Sussex, so as to make an easy conveyance to the coast. It is impossible to calculate the benefits which may result from this plan of carriage. In every respects it is superior to canals; and is accomplished at one-third of the expence. It neither inundates the country through which it passes, nor prevents drainage. It stops the flow of no rivers; it damages no mills and manufactories. Carriage on a railway is interrupted by no stoppages, neither by frosts or dry weather, or by locks. By three or four outlets in the course of each mile, a single horse might convey thirty or forty passengers fifty miles in six hours. It is by works of this kind that Great Britain has a superiority over every rival infinitely beyond its numerical force; and by which, if we obtain a commercial treaty upon reasonable terms, we may hope to carry our commerce to an astonishing degree of success."