

RAILFUTURE RESPONSE TO HERT CONSULTATION JANUARY 2022

Introduction

Railfuture is Britain's leading, longest-established, national independent voluntary organisation campaigning for a bigger and better railway network for passenger and freight users. This response draws together the views of two Railfuture branches, the Passenger Group and affiliated Rail User Groups, as authorised by Railfuture's national Board of Directors.

About you

Q1. Are you providing your own response or responding on behalf of an organisation/group?

Responding on behalf of a business, charity, community organisation or statutory body

Q2. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation or group (business, community group, council, residents' association or any other organisation), please provide the following details?

Your role: **Convenor Herts & Beds**

Organisation name: **Railfuture Limited**

Q3. Do you have authority to answer on behalf of the organisation or group? **Yes**

Q4. Please tell us the **first four characters of your postcode** (e.g. AL10). This will help us understand if there are different views from different areas. We will only use your data to inform the analysis of public engagement responses.

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please provide your organisation's postcode. If this is a personal response, please provide your home postcode.

(Required)

AL5

Q5. Please indicate your age range?

Q6. Do you have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

Yes: Some Railfuture members have such conditions

Q7. If you answered yes to the previous question, does your condition or illness reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?

Railfuture members have a range of reductions in ability to carry out day-to-day activities

Travel habits

The following question helps us understand your travel habits.

Q8. Thinking about your typical weekly travel (pre-coronavirus), on average, how often did you use the following methods of transport?

Railfuture members will vary in their use of transport modes. As a pro-rail (but not anti-car) organisation, we believe there will be a bias towards public transport (rail specifically) and active travel.

Please select all modes that are relevant to you

	More than once every day	Every day	3-4 times a week	1-2 times a week	Less frequently	Never use
Walking						
Bicycle						
Motorbike						
Train						
Bus						
Electric scooter						
Wheeling (use of wheelchair or mobility scooter)						
Private car – as a driver						

Private car – as a passenger						
Van or lorry						
Taxi – as a driver						
Taxi – as a passenger						
No travel (e.g. home carer/ work from home)						
Other, please specify						

Q9. Have your travel habits changed since the pandemic?

We do not have empirical data, but are aware that many members have travelled less frequently, worked from home more et al.

Q10. If your travel habits have changed since the pandemic, how often do you use the following methods of transport?

See our response to Q9.

Please select all modes that are relevant to you

	More than once every day	Every day	3-4 times a week	1-2 times a week	Less frequently	Never use
Walking						
Bicycle						
Motorbike						
Train						
Bus						
Electric scooter						
Wheeling (use of wheelchair or mobility scooter)						
Private car – as a driver						
Private car – as a passenger						
Van or lorry						
Taxi – as a driver						
Taxi – as a passenger						
No travel (e.g. home carer/ work from home)						

Q11. What journey purposes did you use public transport for pre-coronavirus (e.g. bus, train)?

You can select more than one option

Commuting for work or business trips | Commuting to school or university | Food shopping | Other shopping | Leisure and entertainment | To visit friends and family | To run personal errands | To go to the airport | To go to a medical appointment | To catch the train | Other, please specify

Q12. What do you consider are the main issues with the current local public transport system?

Note: Individual Railfuture members would opt for different priorities; our top 3 is a collective view.

Please select the top 3 issues

Unreliable journey times | Slow journey times | Infrequent services | Unaffordable | Vehicles are not zero-emission | Feels unsafe to use (i.e. personal safety) | Inconvenient onward links to other passenger transport modes like buses and railway services to enable door to door journeys | Inconvenient onward links to walking and cycling facilities | It does not offer off-peak services (early morning, throughout the day and late evening) | It is not accessible to a wide range of people with different abilities (e.g. have step free access) | It does not have onboard facilities (e.g. wi-fi, mobile charging points, passenger info) | It does not have easy access to live/up to-date passenger information (online and at stops/station) | Other, please specify

Q13. Do you have any other comments about travelling on public transport in Hertfordshire or Essex?

Please write your answer below

Introductory remarks

Railfuture welcomes the HERT concept.

We agree with the aspirations, but believe it is essential that the next stages contemplate extensively the goals for HERT, and conclude whether it is to focus on just one or both of these goals:

1. Supporting longer distance journeys with Hertfordshire and parts of Essex – such as Hemel Hempstead to Hertford.

And/or

2. Supporting shorter distance journeys, such as Hatfield Road (in St Albans) to Smallford.

We believe it essential that these goal(s) are clearly determined and then followed with little compromise.

On Goal '1', we believe insufficient attention has been given to the travel corridor between Rickmansworth and Watford (and specifically within Watford, Watford Junction station) and future work should fully address this – either as a core part of HERT or as part of the HERT Connect concept we mention below.

It is likely that a good portion of HERT journeys will involve more than one vehicle – that might be the HERT vehicle and a non HERT one (such as a bus or a National Rail train) or two HERT vehicles (as might occur on a journey between Rickmansworth and St Albans, where a journey could involve a change at Watford). This in turn leads to a key observation – over and above the core of HERT, other transport options should be included as (eg) HERT Connect – and be themselves subject to separate (and earlier) investment decisions.

HERT must be seen as not just the core HERT infrastructure ^(note 1) but the totality of Hertfordshire's and the relevant parts of Essex's high volume public transportation. The description that the South Wales Metro uses to describe itself is a good aspiration:

The South Wales Metro is an integrated public transport network that will make it easier for people travel across the Cardiff Capital Region, transforming rail and bus services as well as cycling and walking ^(note 2)

Nature of HERT

It is essential that HERT serves existing railway stations; not just “a” station on every route – it has to be the right one for the route, the one with medium distance services. Journeys like Bedford to Hertford by train then HERT are important. There needs to a goal of achieving the maximum number of direct destinations at the chosen railway stations – eg for Gatwick to Smallford, this needs to be the one change at St Albans City ~ as opposed, to (eg) an initiative linked to HERT to create a new station on the Midland Mainline at Napsbury; such a station is likely to only be served by St Albans Wimbledon (and possibly Luton Rainham services); the additional journey time to London and omission of destinations such as Gatwick would reduce passenger volumes).

There should be greater recognition of the need to support part journeys – where a traveller uses HERT and one or more other modes (train, bus etc); at present we don't see this has been given quite enough emphasis. HERT is described as an “east-west transit system”, but there needs to be a wider, indirect goal as well: “HERT is the vital link in a wider public transport system serving Hertfordshire and the wider region”; it should, for example effectively support a SW/NE journey such as St Albans / Stevenage via a mix of HERT and National Rail.

The HERT 'Connect' concept is also important for early delivery – as new housing is built and occupied, the provision of effective public transport can be designed in, and

also embedded into occupier's habits, so they will not need to be persuaded to much reduce their car when the full HERT is delivered, because they have already acquired the habit of using public transport.

It is important that HERT can be highly reliable and not impacted by road congestion and there is a strong need to consider soft factors such as perceptions.

We believe the HERT solution needs to include characteristics such as:

- Perceived by intending travellers as being highly reliable and an attractive option. Rail-based public transport is seen by users (especially potential users if mode shift is to be realised), as more attractive over road-based [even if the rails are set into the road surface] as rail of any sort conveys a greater sense of permanence / certainty / reliability / predictability.
- Appealing to current car users. Light Rail has shown itself to be considerably more appealing to car users than buses – eg it has proven ability to encourage car drivers to switch modes ^(note 3) in a way that buses do not. UK Trams note how trams are more appealing to higher income households ^(note 4).
- A Business Case that focuses not just on the standalone economics of the chosen solution, but also extends to include modal shift benefits, housing enablement, economic growth et al.
- The impact of overlapping passenger journeys. Whilst, for instance, the number of passengers travelling between Rickmansworth and Harlow is likely be small, the justification of a single service (eg a Light Rail system of considerable length) does need full consideration – on a justification of Rickmansworth to St Albans, Watford to Hatfield, St Albans to Welwyn, Hatfield to Hertford and Welwyn to Harlow journeys. Thameslink is such an example – there are relatively few Bedford to Brighton journeys, but the service meets all of Bedford to London Bridge, St Pancras to East Croydon and St Albans to Gatwick (and many others).
- Very low pollution at the point of movement – not just zero carbon emission, but also avoiding consequences such as rubber particles from tyre wear on concrete.
- Carbon efficient – ie using as little carbon as possible per mile travelled; see, for instance, comparators on the UK Tram website ^(note 5); the rolling contact friction between steel rail and steel wheel is considerably lower than rubber on concrete and hence energy consumption will be greatly improved. Whilst this may result in higher capital costs, it is likely to result in lower overall life-cycle costs.
- High-capacity vehicles – eg 150 – 200 passengers per service.
- A perception of little wasted time during the journey. So, HERT needs to deliver an environment where passengers can do other activities during their journey – read, answer emails etc – eg, so, when standing, both hands are not required to hold onto a pole. In a similar vein, the ticketing process must be very fast (eg tapping a smartcard on a reader) and boarding and alighting fast, even for those that are less abled.

Other Public Transport Projects West Herts

West Hertfordshire presents some specific problems as regards interaction of HERT with the future of the Croxley Link / Metropolitan Line extension (and other potential

alternatives) and the tactical improvements for the Abbey line between St Albans and Watford (ie the passing loop with a successful Restoring Your Railway bid).

It is important that these two more developed proposals are not put “on ice” pending the detailing of HERT to the degree needed to allow fully integrated plans to proceed. We believe that independent of HERT, Hertfordshire County Council needs to:

- Continue to champion the Abbey Line passing loop to allow service frequency improvements as a matter of urgency.
- Determine how to best use the Croxley Link, in particular to better connect Watford to Rickmansworth, Metropolitan line destinations including central London, and also East West Rail via the possible Aylesbury link.

Concluding remarks

We believe there is strong element of HERT either being ambitious & effective in operation, or not proceeding at all (other than local initiatives for specific short distance flows). Persuading travellers not to use their cars can offer significant advantages; the return on more money invested credibly can be a lot more than for less money on a less appealing product, as only the bigger, more ambitious product can create something of sufficient appeal to cause the wanted modal shift and the needed passenger numbers. Thus we believe the option of a Light Rail line from Rickmansworth and Hemel Hempstead to St Albans and then on to Harlow deserves a detailed assessment.

There should be early recognition that it will be difficult – eg serving both the centre of St Albans and the Midland Mainline station (St Albans City) and whether to route direct Hatfield Hertford or via Welwyn Garden City ^(note 6) – but without the connectivity, the traffic generating destinations and a customer perception of a “great system”, the business case could be much more challenging – and at real risk of not delivering in practice.

Notes:

(1) Rights of way and on the ground construction and associated vehicles.

(2) <https://tfw.wales/projects/metro/south-wales-metro>

(3) <http://www.railforthevalley.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/LR-UK-LightRailReport-An-investigation-into-the-economic-impacts-on-cities-of-investment-in-light-rail.pdf#page=8> & <https://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/news/articles/140623-light-rail-systems.html>

(4) https://uktram.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Draft_LightRailStrategy_UK.pdf#page=7

(5) https://uktram.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Draft_LightRailStrategy_UK.pdf#page=4

(6) A member local to Hertford has emphasised the importance of Welwyn Garden City as a destination for local residents.

Q14. When planning your journey, do you use an **app** or **online based tool**? Yes, please specify **app** or **online tool**

Members use a variety of Apps and websites. The author of this response uses TOC and Bus company websites and National Rail, together with third party ticket retailers when split ticketing is on offer. Realtimetrains.co.uk is a preferred source for national train running and brfares.com to understand ticket validity.

About the Hertfordshire to Essex rapid transit proposal

The HERT vision

Q15. In general, how much do you support or oppose the vision for the HERT?

Strongly support	Support	Neither support nor oppose	Oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					

If you want to provide more detail for your response to this question, please tell us more here:

Refer to our response to Q13.

Towns and stations the HERT will serve

We have identified settlements that the HERT could serve (*indicated next to the circles in the map below*).

Q16. Within these settlements, what are some of the key locations you think the HERT should serve? *You may select more than one option.*

Harlow: Harlow town centre | Harlow bus station (Terminus Street) | Proposed new hospital | Harlow Town railway station | Water gardens | New proposed Gilston development | Onward connections to Stansted Airport | No preference

Ware: Ware town centre/ high street | Ware railway station | Ware college | No preference

Hertford: Hertford town centre/ high street | Hertford north railway station | Hertford east railway station | Foxholes business park | No preference

Welwyn Garden City: Town centre | Welwyn Garden City railway station | Welwyn Garden City bus station | Campus west | Gosling sports park | Shire park | Mundells business park | No preference

Hatfield: Hatfield town centre | Galleria | Hatfield business park | University of Hertfordshire (De Havilland campus) | University of Hertfordshire (College Lane campus) | Hatfield old town | No preference

St Albans: St Albans town centre (e.g. St Peter's St, Market Place, The Maltings) | Abbey line railway station | City station | Hatfield road | Onward connections to Luton Airport | No preference

Hemel Hempstead: Hemel Hempstead town centre/ high street | Hemel Hempstead Old Town | Hemel Hempstead railway station | Maylands Business Park | No preference

Watford: Watford junction town centre/ high street | Watford junction station | Watford hospital | West Watford business park | No preference

Are there any other key locations you think we should consider? If so please specify the location and settlement.

Hatfield Railway station.

We note that only Watford Hospital and the proposed new hospital in Harlow are listed. We believe the next stage of analysis should consider other hospitals on the route for potential stops (we acknowledge that, compared to Watford, these hospitals are usually smaller, but we further observe that hospitals such those at Hertford and Welwyn Garden City are an important destination for those who do not / cannot drive).

In St Albans, HERT should serve both the Abbey station and the City station.

Note: Other than Railway stations (and the generic comment on hospitals) we have chosen not to select specific locations for HERT locations as we do not have the data to differentiate between them.

Future usage

Q17. Thinking about how you would use public transport in the future, what features would make the HERT most attractive to you?

Please rank from **1 to 10** with 1 being the most attractive/priority feature to you.

3	Reliable journey time
5	Fast journey time
4	Frequent services
2	Affordable fares
1	Convenient onward links to other passenger transport modes (i.e. bus services and railway services)
	Convenient onward links to walking and cycling facilities
9	Off-peak services (early morning, throughout the day and late evening)
	Zero-emission vehicles
7	Personal safety
10	A comfortable journey
6	Accessible system that can be used by people with a wide range of abilities (e.g. step free access)
	Onboard facilities such (e.g. wi-fi, mobile charging points, passenger info)
8	Easy access to live/ up-to-date passenger information (online and at stop/stations)

Are there any other features we should consider to encourage usage of the HERT in the future?

It is extremely difficult to rank all of these in any form of priority order, since many of these goals are not mutually exclusive – for instance, features such as an Accessible system are not an “either/or” with topics such as Reliability and Fast Journeys; rather it is essential to deliver fast and reliable journeys as it minimises dwell time at stops.

For instance, we have ranked an Accessible system as ‘6’, but equally could have ranked it as ‘1’, as it is a basic requirement for any new public transport system – indeed, we do not even understand why it is present on this questionnaire as something that might not be provided, as such provision is now a baseline expectation of any new public transport system. It is not stated specifically, but for Accessibility, over and above topics like step free access, mental health and abilities needs to be

considered as do matters like fare payment methods. Whilst many will prefer Smart Card or Smartphone ticketing (including the author of this submission), they are not suitable for all, and ticketing needs to cover non-internet users and those with Smartphone use challenges (eg arthritis, dyslexia and blindness).

‘Reliable’ and ‘Fast’ journey times need to encompass topics such as ticketing (eg use of Smartcards / Bank Contactless Cards / Smartphones ~ all where the point of checking is not at the point of boarding as is typical for buses); ‘Convenient onward links to other passenger transport modes’ needs to ensure through fares (and ticketing) in addition to physical interchange. And it can easily be argued that Easy access to up to date information’ is part of this – knowing the state of the service effectively improves reliability and speed as it avoids wasting time at stops waiting for late running services et at.

In your analysis, you should separate out topics – it is not useful to say – eg – Railfuture prefers a fast journey to an Accessible system. That is not meaningful. That we have ranked Reliability over Speed is a genuine “choice”.

Q18. Based on the factors you considered a priority in the previous question: *if the HERT could meet these priorities, how likely are you to use it?*

Please indicate your views using the scale below, with 1 being unlikely and 5 certainly.

1. Unlikely	2. Possibly	3. Likely	4. Almost certain	5. Certainly
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Q19. What types of trips could you see yourself using the HERT for? You can choose **multiple** options.

- ✓ Commuting for work or business trips
- ✓ Travelling to school or university
- ✓ Food shopping
- ✓ Other types of retail shopping
- ✓ Leisure and recreation (e.g. visiting cinema, pubs and restaurants)
- ✓ To visit friends and family
- ✓ To run personal errands
- ✓ To go to a medical appointment
- ✓ To go to the airport
- ✓ To catch the train
- ✓ Other, please specify

Note: This is a collective comment, members will vary in their individual use.

Benefits of the HERT

Q20. In general, thinking about the benefits the HERT could bring to our **environment, our people and our economy** how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

HERT Benefit Themes	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Not applicable
Our environment: The HERT will provide a sustainable alternative to the car, helping to enhance our environment and quality of life through a cleaner, greener transport system.	✓						
Our economy: The HERT will make travel easier to access current and future job opportunities and will provide businesses with greater access to skilled people.	✓						
Our people: The HERT will provide a convenient and competitively priced system that will cater for all ages and abilities in our diverse communities.	✓						

If you want to provide more detail about the benefits the HERT could bring to our environment, people and economy, please tell us more here:

Refer to our response to Q13.

Q21. Reflecting on the information provided in the brochure and the responses you have provided in this survey, how much do you support or oppose our initial plans for the HERT?

Strongly support	Support	Neither support nor oppose	Oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know
✓					

If you want to provide more detail for your response to this question, please tell us more here:

Refer to our response to Q13.