

Railfuture Summer Conference on Saturday 21st June 2014
The University Centre Mill Lane Cambridge
Rail – The Engine for Change

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Railfuture thanks the Best Western Gonville Hotel Cambridge for its sponsorship of this conference.

Introduction

Peter Wakefield, chair of the *Railfuture* East Anglia branch, welcomed everyone to the Summer Conference and its emphasis on change. He stressed that we must concentrate on sustainable transport as this is the only way to improve the future.

Welcome to Cambridge

Councillor Gerri Bird formally declared the conference open and welcomed all participants to Cambridge which is sustaining considerable growth in the use of rail with over nine million passengers using the railway station over the last twelve months.

The City Council was promoting sustainable transport. At present there are eight trains an hour to London with the fast trains taking under an hour to get to there.

Sustainable transport is the only way forward for Cambridge as the city can only grow if it reduces the use of the car.

Implementation of Thameslink upgrade and its importance to high tech Cambridgeshire

David Statham, Managing Director of First Capital Connect (FCC), said that he was pleased to be at Cambridge but was sad to report that he had only twelve weeks left in his post as First Capital Connect had not been selected to run the new Thameslink and Southeastern franchise but that he would outline what has been achieved by FCC and what the new franchise should be delivering.

Thameslink will transform travel in the South and East of England and FCC will continue to invest in better provision of information; Improved staffing; better cleaning and attacking graffiti.

So far FCC has achieved better performance as a result of infrastructure improvements at Finsbury Park, extra platform, and Hatfield, grade separated junction.

Better value through the use of the Nectar Card reward scheme plus a 20% reduction in Super off Peak fares and at weekends and passenger information through the use of multi-modal media and M-ticketing.

A £31 million investment in the class 365 fleet which is receiving a full mechanical overhaul, deep cleaning, repainting and fitting of GSMR radio to improve communication with signallers and control, was ongoing with the first two units returned to traffic.

FCC was providing better staff training, and better station facilities with more room for bikes at stations and also on board the trains.

Trains had been lengthened; frequencies improved and 26 new trains introduced providing 8000 more seats in the peaks, which was a 29% increase. In the future passengers can look forward to many changes. There will be a minimum service of a train every thirty minutes to Ely and King's Lynn by 2017.

The new class 700 trains will be introduced, fifty five twelve car and sixty eight car trains, with new depots at Hornsey and Three Bridges.

By 2018 there should be 24 trains per hour from Cambridge, Peterborough and Bedford running directly through Central London to destinations south of London with a major new interchange at Farringdon with CrossRail. Across all routes there will be a further 35% more carriages and many trains in the peak will be formed of 12 carriages.

David Statham then talked about the new class 700 trains being built by Siemens and due to start coming into service from 2016.

These trains will provide easier access for wheelchair users, be 25% lighter than existing trains and use regenerative braking, both of these features meaning it will use less electricity. The capacity of these trains will be 1,754 for a twelve-car train and 1,146 for the eight-car version, although in answer to a question from the floor he did agree that this included a high number of standing passengers as the trains would have two plus two seating and again after a question from the floor did admit the seats were a compromise but that the emphasis was on commuter traffic. When asked about the use of eight and twelve car fixed formation trains he pointed out that this allowed for more passenger accommodation and would also have the benefit of preventing an operator using short formed trains and give an incentive to fill up empty seats off-peak.

Asked about the nonstop trains to King's Cross he was very noncommittal and muttered something about new technology and without actually saying it gave the impression that it's not going to be his problem.

The final piece in the Thameslink jigsaw, due for completion in 2018, was the rebuilding of London Bridge station and its approaches. The net result of all the changes would be more through platforms and fewer dead end platforms and with grade separated junctions at both ends of the station there would be two tracks dedicated to Thameslink to provide the extra capacity needed.

As ever, however, there is a downside to the rebuilding and that is that from June 2015 until the full opening in 2018 Thameslink trains would be unable to stop there.

Cambridge Science Park station and its innovative funding

Bob Menzies, Head of Major Projects, Cambridgeshire County Council, stated that the Science Park station, situated to the north of Cambridge on the line to Ely and Peterborough, had first seen the light of day on the early 1990's. In 2001 it was put in the Local transport Plan and a business case for it was submitted in 2006. In 2009 it became a High Regional Priority but in 2010 the government cancelled the finance for all non-committed schemes.

In 2011 Cambridgeshire County Council proposed to the government that the Council should borrow the money to build the station and in January 2012 the government agreed to this method of finance.

The planning could now go ahead and later in 2012 Cambridgeshire and Network rail developed a business scheme to build the station.

In April 2013 GRIP 3 was completed and the Department for Transport proposed Regulation Asset Based Funding for the station.

In December 2013 Cambridgeshire County Council secured planning permission and in a landmark ruling the Department for Transport and Network Rail announced that they would take over the lead role in the project and then in February 2014 GRIP 4 was completed.

It is expected that Network Rail will complete GRIP 5 relatively quickly and that construction will start in 2015 with the station opening in May 2016.

So what was the case that convinced firstly Cambridgeshire County Council then both the Department for Transport and Network Rail that the Science Park station was vital to North Cambridge?

There is a great deal of development around the site of the station as it will serve the Cambridge Science Park, St. Johns Innovation Centre and Business Park and the Cambridge Regional College. It will provide job opportunities in North Cambridgeshire and give access to rail travel for the northern district of Cambridge.

The station should also produce congestion benefits by freeing up capacity at Cambridge station, reducing traffic in Cambridge which can't cope with any more traffic and reducing traffic on the A10 road.

The business case for the Science Park station is also strong with a predicted minimum of 3000 passengers a day which would bring in £5 million in new revenue each year. In eight to ten years it should have paid for itself as it has a BCR of 4:1

The station will have three platforms for 12-coach trains, 1,000 spaces for bikes, 450 car parking spaces which combined with an extension of the Busway, not a guided section, will provide a great intermodal interchange.

There will be two through platforms plus one bay platform for terminating services from London. All services that pass through the station will stop there and Cambridgeshire County Council are looking for a basic service of two trains an hour on the through platforms to King's Cross, Norwich, King's Lynn, Peterborough and Stanstead Airport, with extra services in the peak hours.

There will be space to extend the car park and the cycle storage areas if the forecast usage is exceeded.

Cambridgeshire County Council has awarded a £6 million grant to extend both the Busway and the Cowley Road Cycleway to be implemented by the end of 2015.

Bob Menzies said that the project had been so successful because of the political will of local politicians, strong commercial viability and good partnership vision combined with excellent stakeholder support, a template other projects would do well to follow.

Cambridgeshire Transport Strategy for Growth

Jeremy Smith, Transport & Infrastructure Manager, Cambridgeshire County Council stated his presentation by outlining just why Cambridgeshire needed a transport strategy.

By 2031 it is expected that 98,500 new homes will have to be built in the county and that this would mean that by that date there would be a minimum of 142,000 new residents. In addition to this they were expecting major growth in adjoining areas.

All of this would add to transport pressures and as Cambridge and the surrounding area can't fit in any more cars but it could fit in more people if other modes of transport are used. Car use needs to be kept at its present level, or better still reduced so the planners need to look at building new homes on or near rail corridors.

A new town is planned at Waterbeach Barracks and Cambridgeshire would like to see a relocated Waterbeach station, with more capacity, to cope with this development. Soham is also a growth area and they would like to see a new two platform station built in conjunction with the doubling of the line by Network rail.

A new development of 5,000 new homes is planned for Alconbury Weald, which would require a new station on the East Coast Main Line which could be served by extending Huntingdon terminating trains to Peterborough in conjunction with reinstating track to produce at least three, preferably four tracks all the way to Peterborough. Network rail is in favour of this as 12,000 extra homes are also planned for the surrounding area.

There is also in the pipeline a Whittlesea Station Master Plan. Whittlesea is on the Peterborough to Ely line and has a population the same size as that of Ely but generates only 100,000 passengers a year compared with 2,000,000 at Ely. A new station and more frequent trains are needed plus removal of the level crossing and longer platforms for four to six car trains which could with a fair wind be electric.

The next issue to be looked at is the proposed reopening of the branch from March to Wisbech which has been priced at between £50 and £75 million, which provides medium value for money, but there are wider economic benefits and the current cost ratio benefit is at present 1.5/2.00:1. With a new rail link Wisbech would be forty to forty five minutes away from Cambridge and two hours away from London compared with a current journey time by public transport from Wisbech to Cambridge of two hours.

There have been many calls for a station to serve the Addenbrooks Hospital and Cambridge Biomedical Campus but this is more of a problem as there is no capacity on the line to Liverpool Street. If Network Rail can increase capacity with extra tracks then there is a strong business case for a new station.

Looking at rail services serving Cambridge in general the County Council are looking for new services to produce the following frequencies.

Cambridge to King's Lynn every thirty minutes. This has been agreed and should start in 2015; Ipswich to Peterborough hourly rather than two hourly; Cambridge to Norwich every thirty minutes; Cambridge to Ipswich every thirty minutes and Peterborough to Stanstead every thirty minutes. A service of four trains an hour from Cambridge to Hitchin is also an aspiration.

On all routes serving Cambridge and Ely there is an urgent need for earlier services in the morning and later services at night and to eliminate level crossings whenever possible.

Ely is a work in progress with work ongoing to eliminate the level crossing at Ely North and to provide an extra track to where the routes to Peterborough, King's Lynn and Norwich diverge; the present single track layout is too restrictive.

Felixstowe to Nuneaton (F2N) and the strategic rail freight network in general

Paul McMahon, Director of Freight, Network Rail, opened by saying that freight is the big success story of the privatised rail network, according to figures from the Office of Rail Regulation, currently moving one hundred and fifteen million tons of freight a year with the largest growth area being intermodal traffic. This growth is moving goods worth £30 billion, reducing truck journeys by 7.6,000,000, reducing CO2 emissions and reducing road casualties by six hundred a year.

Long term plans show that by 2043 rail freight will increase from 23 billion ton/kms at present to 57 billion ton/kms with the biggest growth area being in intermodal, especially domestic intermodal traffic.

Mr. McMahon then went on to explain the principle behind the concept of a Strategic Freight Network.

It must complement and be integrated with the existing passenger network to provide an enhanced core network capable of accommodating more and longer freight trains with efficient operation and a 7-day/24-hour capability. W12 gauge, electrification, additional capacity, strategic rail freight interchanges and protected status for the potential reopening of routes for freight.

CP4 had seen an investment of £545 million by Network Rail on infrastructure, a specific example for freight being the Doncaster North Chord which saves thirty minutes for many freight trains.

In CP6 there will be £206 million of investment in infrastructure for England and Wales plus another £30 million in Scotland and there will be other benefits from many other Network Rail improvements done via other specific schemes.

Felixstowe is the largest container port in the UK and 25% of that traffic leaves by rail either via London or the F2N line but both these routes however have major problems.

There are thirty container trains a day on the line from Felixstowe to Ipswich which is a non electrified single line branch which is working at full capacity at present as it also has to accommodate a passenger service as well. It needs, in an ideal world, to be doubled but this is not likely to happen and the most likely solution is to put at least one five kilometre long dynamic loop in so that longer and heavier container trains can pass each other and the local passenger service. Electrification would also provide a boost for both freight and passenger services.

At present most of the trains travel via London using the Great Eastern Main line to Stratford then the North London Line to the West Coast Main Line. The long term aim is to move all the traffic from the NLL, where it has to fit in with a very intensive local service, but is at least electrified all the way from Ipswich to Nuneaton, unlike the F2N route.

The recently opened Ipswich Chord is the first stage in the upgrade of F2N as it enables trains from Felixstowe to Nuneaton to avoid having to reverse at Ipswich which saves thirty minutes on the journey.

Network Rail has already invested £100 million to improve the F2N route but during CP5 is looking to provide further enhancements with the Ely to Soham section being doubled; Ely North junction to be improved; an enhanced signalling system; junction remodelling, including a grade separated junctions at Peterborough and Leicester and gauge enhancements between Leicester and Stoke on Trent.

Looking further into the future more work will be needed to allow F2N to cope with more freight trains which will need electrification and further signalling and junction improvements.

Rail Prospectus for East Anglia

Chris Starkie, Managing Director, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, said that the New Anglia Local LEP (Norfolk and Suffolk) had a passion for rail, music to the ears of your scribe who lives in Lincolnshire!

He pointed out that the LEPs do not have the funding that the Regional Development Agencies, which they replaced, used to have and need to bid for funds to do any work. What they have done is to join with other LEPs, local government businesses and user/pressure groups to produce the Rail Prospectus for East Anglia which is due to be updated by 2014.

East Anglia is the fastest growing area of the UK outside London and generates £70 billion pounds of business a year which is more than the whole of Scotland. It has suffered from inadequate investment in infrastructure, especially rail, despite the East Anglia franchises

producing £300 million of premium payments to the government which has then been given to the rest of the country. The result of this is that London to York has a faster journey time than London to Norwich despite the fact that it is a fifty mile longer route.

Upgrading the London to Norwich route would strengthen the economy of East Anglia by £3.75 billion as it would attract greater investment in East Anglia because of better links to London for Chelmsford, Colchester, Ipswich, Diss and Norwich.

The Rail Prospectus calls for a more reliable service: faster journey times; better quality trains and improved infrastructure. So far for rail they have achieved recognition from the government that investment is needed with a £20 million refurbishment about to commence, and the Chancellor establishing a Norwich in Ninety Taskforce in which the LEPs will have a key role

Norwich in Ninety has many problems as the easiest way would be to run nonstop services, as East Coast have done for Edinburgh to London, but this would not be popular with the other major towns on the route.

They are at present consulting over what to do next and a refreshed Rail Prospectus is due to be published in November 2014.

Chris Starkie concluded by apologising for the fact that the current Strategic Economic Plan for the region contains too much emphasis on road improvements and they would look to remedy that.

The importance of rail to the high tech industry in the region and the City of Cambridge

Conservative MP for Mid-Norfolk, George Freeman, gave a presentation (without slides) almost entirely devoid of party political dogma, choosing instead to champion the growth of rail, which included some innovative ideas on how to improve connectivity.

The East Anglia Region was a great area for high tech industry and is attracting more and more of these dynamic companies. What Mr. Freeman wants to encourage however is a model for growth that still manages to retain the current positives of Norfolk. You can have heritage and opportunity living side by side and he will fight for really good infrastructure to give good connectivity for the smaller towns in Mid-Norfolk.

Rail, he said, is central to a vibrant expansive area of Greater Cambridge and we must build clusters of innovation which are well connected and retain a good quality of life. He was quite adamant that *"we must not let Cambridge become a giant car park."*

East Anglia is the "New California" with a huge growth in small business and is a net contributor to the national economy. His constituency is only thirty minutes from Norwich and Cambridge, which in many areas would be close, but isn't because of poor connectivity by public transport.

He wants the Norwich to Cambridge rail line to become a major transport corridor with a train every thirty minutes connecting the two major hubs and stopping at most stations on the route, in addition to the long distance services to Ely, Nottingham, Sheffield, Manchester and Liverpool.

The stations between Norwich and Cambridge should become hubs for the local area with small industries being developed around them to give local development without destroying the feel of the towns and villages.

There is no substitute for a fast, frequent and reliable rail service which should be electrified.

Cycling and walking to station – quicker than unreliable journey time by car?

Jim Chisholm, who has been a transport planner and is now heavily involved with the Cambridge Cycling Campaign, argued that the reliability of cycling and walking make home to ultimate destination times quicker than car driving times taking into account traffic congestion, parking and then the walk from the car park to the destination.

To encourage a change in travel habits better facilities are needed especially from fringe developments, to encourage more people to stop using the car to get to work or the local station and get on their bikes or walk.

Transport consultants have stated that no one would cycle more than 2.5 miles or walk more than 1 mile, which in Jim's view is rubbish! The catchment area for travel by bike and foot is much greater than "experts" think especially in large congested cities like Cambridge.

There is a need to provide more parking spaces for cycles in city centres and at stations. Parking for five cycles can be provided in the same space as for one car and it costs nothing if more people work.

Close of Conference

Nick Dibben, former secretary of the *Railfuture* East Anglia branch, and a key representative on television (as seen on a BBC local programme - right) was the day's chairman. He formally closed the conference by thanking the speakers and delegates for being there and stating that we all had a great deal to think about as a result of the various speakers.

Nick looked forward to seeing everyone at the *Railfuture* Autumn Conference on 1st November in London full details of which, like all Railfuture national events, could be found on the website at www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences.



Organiser's review of the conference

Railfuture East Anglia branch chairman, **Peter Wakefield**, who was the principal organiser of the conference, wrote the following review, the highlight of which were include in the October 2014 edition of Railwatch magazine.

This year's summer conference was held in Cambridge, literally amidst the traditional Summer River Cam landscape of sunbathers, groups of relaxed picnickers on the grassy banks alongside it, idly watching others having fun on the punts, drinking beer on the pub terraces. Fun on the river for everybody. A dreamy gentle landscape among the willows. Cambridge as it has ever been.

But...not far away, what contrast....industrial output of national importance from those same people lolling in the sunshine on a Saturday afternoon, in their sleek air conditioned laboratories, workshops and factories scattered right across the city but also concentrated in great centres of excellence along the railway in north Cambridge and in the south around the biomedical campus at Addenbrooke's. Change everywhere.

And what change there has been in this city and its county. It isn't even gradual, it's happening before our very eyes. The tourist city, the centre of educational excellence has turned into an industrial city as well. Population growing so fast as to create a housing crisis, over capacity roads on the verge of breakdown, high pollution levels of all kinds from all the idling exhausts. Development coming on so fast as to potentially destroy the ambience of a place so many want to share in. Transport links unable to function and feed the new economy efficiently.

Cambridge, yes, but also so many other towns in all parts of the British Isles. How to manage ... this conference was put together to try to gather ideas of how to spread the wealth creation and use the momentum as an opportunity to help provide a real step in quality public transport for a whole region. Maybe the new industrial revolution is a little further ahead in Cambridge than in some other places so just maybe ideas could be taken on and transferred elsewhere in the nation.

The general premise for the conference was that sustainable transport is fundamental to managing these changes. Maybe after it we will all be able to see the further possibilities of that great inheritance from the nineteenth century the railwaypossibilities that could be further developed to help us manage these changes but at the same time help preserve the best from the pastto make the only thing we really have in our lives better....the future. It is clear most people will accept the change around us but they certainly do not want everything they value from the past swept away. So back to the railway, which has proved to be very adaptable from its role of being principally a freight carrier up to the 1960s, then becoming mainly passenger, albeit with a growing freight sector in 2014. A change *Railfuture* has had the vision to fight for in the face of those who thought the railway had no further function.

First up was **David Statham**, MD of First Group's Capital Connect franchise.

His company has valiantly managed change throughout its existence often in trying conditions but certainly the timetable it has operated into Cambridge has enabled huge numbers of people to access the city's growing industry both from London and from local stations nearer in. Mr Statham outlined the future benefits of the Thamelink programme to Cambridge in the form of much longer trains all day long and at greater frequency. His successors at Govia will no doubt strive to get those still in cars trying to access Cambridge into the six trains an hour on the London via Royston route it has committed to provide. A huge opportunity. It is to be hoped other towns in the south of England will make great efforts to promote use all this capacity.

Two speakers then from **Cambridgeshire County Council**. The County is acutely aware of its strained road network particularly on all the long approaches to Cambridge and of a rail network having an increasingly heavy load placed on it and now being just about at capacityCambridge station alone now handling a footfall of about 10million a year.

Bob Menzies, Head of Major Infrastructure Delivery, started his presentation by describing the rationale behind the County sponsored railway station in north Cambridge. This will bring some temporary respite to the existing station but will introduce many thousands of new users onto the network. He outlined the path to fruition with its difficulties but all the time explaining the need for it as sustaining the economic development of the city and its hinterland. The station will be close to the huge Science and Business parks and provide a 2- or 3-minute rail journey to the present station that can take 45 minutes by bus, guided or not, in the peak hour traffic. A text book explanation of why new stations are needed to serve new economic zones. It will also provide connections to the Guided Busway to St Ives via the large settlements *en route* and the large new settlement at Northstowe now under construction.

That peak 45-minute road journey through the city centre has been the guided busway's Achilles heel. The station is to be called Cambridge Science Park. It will have large car, bike parking facilities, good access for all modes. The Council has been adamant that it was not to be called "Parkway" as that suggested a car park for local residents to drive to. This station is emphatically for bringing people into work locally from far afield and is all about keeping traffic off these long approach roads to the city....as well as hopefully transferring those who drive to the current city station and thus out of the city.

Jeremy Smith, Transport and Infrastructure Strategy Manager, then stepped up to describe other initiatives the County is undertaking to sustain the huge appetite Cambridge has for workers and housing. The use of the railway is central to this with plans being outlined for enhancements to all the routes though the County including the ECML on which a new station is planned for Alconbury Weald. On the line through the fens, enhancements are planned for Whittlesey, a station for Soham, enhanced services/infrastructure from Cambridge to Newmarket, Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich, to Norwich, to King's Lynn, to Peterborough. He thought that to deal with poor access to Wisbech, rail would be the answer...again this is linked to the growth of Cambridge. And so, now you will begin to see a problem emerging here because as the Romans used to say hereabouts, all railways lead to Ely.

Paul McMahon, Director of Freight at Network Rail, followed Jeremy to tell us about the national strategic freight network and particularly the ongoing upgrade of the railway for freight from Felixstowe to Nuneaton via Peterborough. This project is particularly important not just to the nation but to Cambridgeshire in particular as East Anglia's main media talking point, the A14 trunk road. This physically forms the northern boundary of Cambridge City as well as providing a curtain of noise and pollution before it turns north towards the A1 taking in as it does so, the M11. Recipe for environmental disaster. The railway upgrade is thus fundamental to keeping that road healthy and rest of us with it. But of course that railway too leads through Ely. Out of a real problem at Ely thus created comes a solution that passenger transport into Cambridge can piggy back on if it is done properly. The freight scheme plus all the passenger aspirations need a very expensive upgrade of key junctions, doubling of single track here and there, bridge repairs and the raising of speed limits. The increasing frequency of lengthy freight trains need to get through Ely as quickly as possible to enable the increasing number of passenger trains to do their duty for the economy efficiently too. The current two million users at Ely station will increase rapidly as the town takes its share of new housing planned in the area. Paul outlined his freight schemes and demonstrated that the entire length of the proposed doubling from Ely to Soham is not needed for freight - yet. So it was good for him to hear of the general economic growth in Cambridgeshire, which requires Ely area junctions operated to plan to enable the railway do its job for the economy.

Freight trains do not need to be standing at Ely...the advice from Railfuture East Anglia is double all the way to Soham in one go....do the job now, properly now.

So how are all the disparate schemes shown to be a part of the whole! Enter **Chris Starkie**, MD of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership. Chris has been key in pulling the ideas into one big coherent whole. The LEP realises that industrial growth in Norwich, Ipswich and their regions, have huge strength of their own but they feed off each other so links to Cambridge and to London are vital. The railway is key and so in coordination with neighbouring LEPs, all County and other Councils, the MPs, Railfuture, a Prospectus, "A Railway Prospectus for East Anglia" has been compiled, agreed by all, and presented with all the power that unity implies, to the Government. It is not a wish list but a list that has carefully costed outputs for implementation in CP5/6. As Chris implied with some humour, not all has been accepted but a lot has, including the work at Ely. Lesson, agree your aspirations, cost them, present them show that each scheme is a part of a whole and accept that your local pet scheme may have to wait. Everybody in East Anglia notes that a lot can be achieved from the economic success of a key city if they link their scheme to it. The Prospectus calls not just for improvements as outlined briefly above but for further afield to the great hub stretching across England from Bedford to Milton Keynes, Oxford and the Thames Valley. Enter East West Rail. Watch this space!

Another huge advocate for East West Rail is **George Freeman**, the MP for Mid-Norfolk. George is also a huge advocate of upgrading/speeding up the railway from Cambridge to Norwich to link the science based industries at each end....again so they can nourish each other. He gave a very eloquent talk that shows why he has recently been made the first ever Life Sciences Minister ...congratulations Mr. Freeman. He recognised the relative poverty in parts of rural Norfolk and described how the new industries can be a catalyst for improving quality of life there by using the railway and its stations, which should be hubs to the region from the network, a focus of the village not just entry points. The much valued heritage can be maintained.

Finally **Jim Chisholm** from the Cambridge Cycling Campaign gave a witty and very pertinent talk on how the railway should increasingly be accessed by bicycle for dependable and reliable journey times. The contingency time needed to be built into any other non-rail journey can be used to the cycle's advantage where little contingency time is needed.

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