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I am writing on behalf of Railfuture East Anglia in response to the Minimum Service Specification recently published as part of the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern 2013: invitation to tender:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/thameslink-southern-and-great-northern-2013-invitation-to-tender>

This includes the transport corridor from Royston, via the village stations of Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton to Cambridge. These stations are an important local transport resource, identified in the Local Transport Plan as a High Quality Transport Corridor and have been the focus of several initiatives including discounted travel for students, a community rail partnership and lower cost station car parks to support travelling into Cambridge.

The local Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group contributed to the Thameslink Franchise Consultation stating aspirations to retain the current service level until the Thameslink upgrade is complete in 2018, with an aspiration of it increasing to an all-day half-hourly service after the upgrade.

Supporting this vision, Railfuture East Anglia has aspirations of 4 trains per hour from the Thameslink core to Cambridge comprising 2 semi-fast services from Gatwick, and 2 stopping services from South London, the latter pair of services serving Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton.

However, we have studied the Minimum Service Requirement and are concerned that it shows a minimum service which is in parts significantly reduced over the current service over the whole length of the franchise:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/245045/tsr-minimum-specification-tables.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/245045/tsr-minimum-specification-tables.pdf)

We realise that this is a minimum specification and there may be little prospect of the actual service reducing to this level, but it is a concern for us how the DfT's ITT can have contained this lack of protection to the valuable service in this area of Cambridgeshire.

The main concerns are:

1. Service from the village stations to Cambridge during the morning peak could be reduced from half-hourly to hourly.
2. Services from London back to the village stations in the mid-to late evening could be reduced to hourly (they are currently half hourly throughout the evening).
3. Services from Cambridge back to the village stations and on to London in the late afternoon/evening peak could be reduced from half-hourly to hourly.

Up to 40 people can board and alight from individual trains at Meldreth alone, as shown in the 2011 station survey carried out by Railfuture:

<http://melbourn.org.uk/railusergroup/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Meldreth-Nov-10th-2011-footfall-count.pdf>

Service reductions would hit this successful public transport service.

We would be grateful if you could investigate this and question how a service which supports the local transport plan, in a growing region, in a period with investment in the rail service, and has been mentioned by the local Rail User Group during consultation can suddenly find itself with a protected service worse than the current one.

Having said the above, we have heard that the Department for Transport also treat the current public timetable as a future minimum service specification, but cannot see reference to this in the ITT documents. If this is the case could this be publically clarified?

Yours sincerely,

Paul Hollinghurst

**Appendix**

Here are the current Meldreth departures; the ones marked with an 'x' could essentially be dropped if the franchise holder chose to simply comply with the publically published minimum service specification:

| Northbound | Southbound |
|------------|------------|
| 0633       | 0549       |
| 0710       | 0643       |
| 0743 x     | 0713       |
| 0810       | 0743       |
| 0843 x     | 0810       |
| 0911       | 0840       |
| 0943 x     | 0910       |
| 1008       | 1010       |
| 1108       | 1110       |
| 1208       | 1210       |
| 1308       | 1310       |
| 1408       | 1410       |
| 1508       | 1510       |
| 1608       | 1610       |
| 1712       | 1639 x     |
| 1743       | 1710       |
| 1805       | 1739 x     |
| 1834       | 1810       |
| 1859 x     | 1839 x     |
| 1935       | 1910       |
| 2009       | 1939 x     |
| 2035       | 2010       |
| 2108       | 2110       |
| 2145 x     | 2210 x     |
| 2208       | 2330       |
| 2245 x     |            |
| 2308       |            |
| 2345       |            |
| 0008       |            |
| 0059       |            |