

## Railfuture East Anglia – Seamless Public Transport in East Anglia How well integrated are trains and buses?



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## 1. Introduction

You can drive a car between almost all towns and villages in East Anglia for the price of licence and fuel.

How can public transport compete with that? Trains and buses can, and sometimes do, combine to give seamless travel.

The objects of this report are:

1. To inform you about what already exists.
2. To spread good practice.
3. To indicate possibilities for improvements.

We shall concentrate on multimodal ticketing, where you may pay for an end-to-end journey. How can this be improved in the short term if the will is there? How may it also develop in the longer term? What other factors also play a role?

We shall show, that even with through bus/train ticketing, there are obstacles which may deter passengers from using it - and how measures like improved infrastructure and staff training can overcome some of these hurdles.

In this report we are not advocating any new legislation - though this may help in the longer term. Rather we are showing how seamless travel, starting with multimodal ticketing, can be to the benefit of all operators as well as society, the economy and the environment.



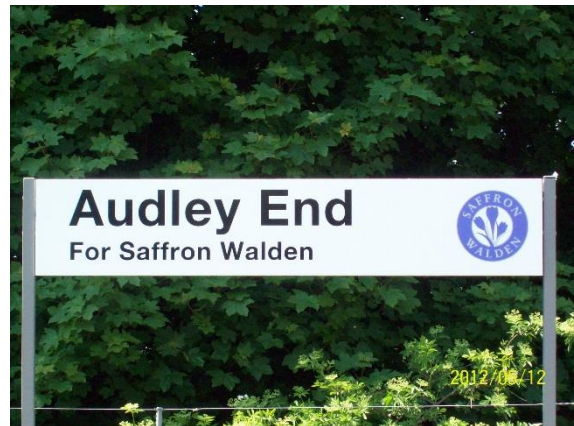
## 2. What do we have already?

PlusBus is a scheme started over a decade ago nationwide and now offered in 21 towns and cities in our region. These are:

Arlesey, Biggleswade & Sandy, Bishop's Stortford, Braintree, Bury St Edmunds, Cambridge, Clacton-on-Sea, Colchester, Ely, Great Yarmouth, Harwich & Dovercourt, Huntingdon, Ipswich, King's Lynn, Lowestoft, Norwich, Peterborough, Royston, St Neots, Witham and Wivenhoe.

It means that, for example, a train ticket from Cambridge to "Ipswich Buses" gives you unlimited use of buses within the borough, for which you pay an extra £3 on your train ticket. There is also a Plus Bus add-on for weekly and monthly season tickets. Other add-ons range from £2 to £4.70 for a day and up to £66.70 for a month. Sometimes the bus add-on can be valid beyond the town itself - to Kessingland in the case of Lowestoft ; and to Godmanchester and Brampton in the case of Huntingdon. At Peterborough the PlusBus add-on can take you as far as Wansford to the west and Whittlesey to the east.

Other bus add-ons for longer journeys exist from Audley End to Saffron Walden (2 miles) and from Halesworth to Southwold (8 miles). Longer train and bus tickets are also available via Peterborough to Wisbech and on to King's Lynn, Swaffham and Dereham - though the end-to-end bus journey takes over two hours. The Saffron Walden tickets are however close to just being a symbolic gesture as they are only available for journeys from Cambridge and London, and even then are only available on a small number of ticket types so often work out more expensive than buying separate bus and rail tickets. A simple solution would be to make these bus add-ons a simple extra amount on top of any rail ticket to the connecting station.



**Audley End**

The Bittern Line Ranger is aimed at the leisure market between Norwich and Sheringham and is also valid on the Coasthopper bus via Blakeney, Wells-next-the-Sea and Burnham Market as far west as Hunstanton. There is also a Wherry Line Ranger between Norwich, Yarmouth and Lowestoft, but it is not valid on any local buses.

Advantages exist for the customer and the operator. At the end of what may be quite a long train journey, the customer does not have to buy another ticket and so saves time and hassle. The bus driver does not have to complete a ticket transaction and so the bus can continue on its way more swiftly.

There is a perception that a particular town is easier to reach, and therefore to visit - if you can, for example, obtain a through fare from London Liverpool Street to "Southwold bus"

### 3. Further Opportunities

Felixstowe, Thetford, March and Sudbury are all significant East Anglian towns not in the PlusBus scheme. Why not? Let us consider each of them.

**FELIXSTOWE (pop.23.689):** Buses call outside Great Eastern Square, the 1898 building now transformed into a shopping centre, and trains terminate in the platform which is 2 minutes' walk away. These buses continue to other parts of the town and there are also some town services. Negotiations to improve signage between train and bus are ongoing.

For short local journeys to Felixstowe, such as from some parts of Ipswich, the bus can be more convenient than the train. For longer journeys, however, it makes sense to go to Felixstowe by rail and, if necessary, reach more outlying parts of the town by bus.

The local public transport users' association, Felixstowe Travelwatch, maintains information boards at the station and in the Co-op store which is part of the Great Eastern Square complex.

**THETFORD (pop: 24,340):** The station is within easy walking distance of the historic town centre and the bus stop outside it in Station Road is served three times an hour by town services and some 12 times a day by service 84 to and from Bury St Edmunds. Other buses and coaches use the Bus Interchange, 10 minutes' walk away in Minstergate. The Station Road bus stops only have a shelter on one side of the road, they have no timetables and there is no sign on the station pointing to them or to the Interchange.

The "Welcome to Thetford" poster merely invites customers to phone Traveline, but there is also an "Onward Travel" poster. The Interchange has good route maps and timetable posters plus a real-time information screen - but no train information, even though very few of the bus routes are in competition with trains. There are no evening, Sunday or Bank Holiday buses locally, while taxi fares within the town are reasonable.

Nevertheless, better publicity, at minimal cost, would increase awareness and encourage usage.

**MARCH (pop.22,298):** The station is 15 minutes' walk from Broad Street, in the town centre, where there are bus stops for most rural services. However, services 33 and 59 (to Peterborough via Eastrea and to Wisbech) also serve the bus stop just north of the station, and call at several stops within the town, 6 and 11 times a day respectively in each direction.

A timetable for service 59 is displayed in the station entrance hall. Nevertheless, there are no signs pointing to the bus stop, from either platform, the "Onward Travel" poster is out-of-date and the "Welcome to March" poster states, "There is no regular bus service from this station." The timetable for service 59 mentions that it passes the station; the service 33 timetable does not.

**SUDBURY (pop. 21,971, including Great Cornard):** Like Felixstowe, Sudbury is the terminus of an hourly train service, 7 days a week. Its station is also the railhead for a wide rural area of Suffolk and part of Essex, including popular tourist destinations such as Long Melford, Cavendish, Lavenham and Clare. The town has bus links to Bury St Edmunds,

Ipswich via Hadleigh and Haverhill as well as two Demand Responsive Transport minibuses and a town service making up to 12 trips a day.

The only bus services that could compete with the train are those to Colchester and Ipswich. None of these buses serves Sudbury rail station, but the bus station is barely five minutes' walk away. You cannot see it from the rail station and you cannot see the rail station from the bus station. There is no signpost. The rail station has a town map on which you can find the bus station.

It would make sense for at least the three main bus operators serving Sudbury to join the PlusBus scheme and for additional signage to be erected.

### **Other Ideas:**

Stansted Airport is not just an airport and a rail station; it is also a significant bus hub. The easiest way between the Braintree area and Cambridge, for example, is by bus and train. Is this a case for a combined ticket?

Should rail tickets be issued on the bus? Probably not - unless there are special circumstances and it is tried as an experiment.

An e-ticket printed at home, and including the bus journey to the station, is reasonable, however, and can already be done for PlusBus.

Codes for longer distance bus add-ons (which are not the same as PlusBus) were introduced by British Rail in the 1980s and then taken over by the Association of Train Operating Companies (now the Rail Delivery Group) after privatisation. They exist for journeys to over 40 towns and villages in Norfolk and Suffolk - such as Hadleigh, Fakenham, Bungay and Framlingham. If the train and bus operator(s) can agree an arrangement, therefore, the software to put it into effect should already be there.

There may also be scope for a shorter distance bus add-on for Cambridge where the station is a significant distance from the city centre so many passengers use the frequent bus service as far as the City Centre but in this case the PlusBus add-on is not an option as it is more expensive than buying a return ticket on the bus.

We also have a type of seamless ticketing known as the "Dutch Flyer", with a ticket from any Greater Anglia station to any Dutch Railways station via the Harwich - Hoek van Holland ferry. Holders are issued at Harwich with a special Combi-Ticket which is also accepted by RET (the Rotterdam urban transport authority) that now serves Hoek van Holland, as well as by Dutch Railways.

Is there also scope for seamless ticketing between National Rail and those heritage railways with actual or potential interchange with the main line system? Our region has four such lines. Alternatively, is it easier to have an arrangement whereby the heritage line gives a small discount to customers arriving with a valid National Rail ticket?

In April 2017 the European Passengers' Federation (to which Railfuture is affiliated) issued a report THE FINAL MILE (available on [www.epf.eu](http://www.epf.eu)) in which add-ons in many European countries are described. In fact, the UK compares quite well with some (but not all) other countries on multimodal ticketing, but often less so on infrastructure.

## 4. Obstacles to Seamless Travel

Railfuture has anecdotal evidence from its members and those of affiliated local Rail Users' Associations. They have encountered obstacles. However good or smart the ticketing system, sometimes further measures are needed to overcome the obstacles.

(a) Sometimes this means better information and easier booking. National Rail produces some good, attractive posters and leaflets with such slogans as "Convenience is buying your train and bus travel together." There is also a website [www.plusbus.info](http://www.plusbus.info). Greater Anglia timetable booklets show an appropriate logo by PlusBus stations, although it is missing for Bury St Edmunds in the current issue. The National Rail "Guide to Tickets" includes a short section on PlusBus including its website.

The Anglia Plus tickets also include free bus travel when you are going to Norwich, Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds or Great Yarmouth. The area of validity is not identical to that of Plus Bus, however, and the Anglia Plus rover tickets are not well marketed and no longer obtainable from ticket vending machines.

The Greater Anglia app does not (yet) enable you to book PlusBus.

Automatic ticket machines do not always easily enable you to book PlusBus.

Bus operators do not always put train times at the stations at which they call.

(b) Sometimes rail and bus staff (especially the latter) are not aware of PlusBus. There is a need for more training (and consistency) here. Such examples have been reported of bus drivers, mainly on urban routes, refusing to accept PlusBus or Anglia Plus tickets. It can also be confusing for the customer when not all operators in a town or city are in the PlusBus system.

(c) Sometimes interchange is difficult. You can buy a ticket from, say, Ely to Yarmouth Buses but out of season you then have a 14-minute walk from the rail station to Market Gates Bus Station. During the summer, service 1B calls at the station, as a result of suggestions by the East Norfolk Transport Users' Association.

There are occasions when the rail station lacks signage to bus stops or the bus station. In other instances, not all buses directly serve the rail station at Saxmundham; Bury St Edmunds; or Ipswich - where country buses depart from a bus station 10 minutes walk away and the Stansted Airport coach is not allowed to use the station forecourt.

On other occasions there is no bus timetable (recently rectified at Wickham Market) or shelter (for southbound buses passing Lowestoft station). At St Neots (a PlusBus station) the nearest bus stops are a 10-minute walk from the station; and one of these - Loves Farm - does not even have a bus stop flag. Yet if the X5 were diverted to serve the station, a very useful interchange facility could be created.

## 5. Good and not so good practice

**NORWICH:** As you exit the station you can see a sign with an arrow pointing to "buses and taxis" and the large well-lit bus shelter is clearly visible to your right, with seats, timetable posters, maps and an electronic screen showing imminent train and bus departures. This stop is served by buses to the city centre, hospital, university and other important destinations. Directly behind it is Thorpe Road with its own stops and shelters for buses to and from the east, on both urban and rural routes.

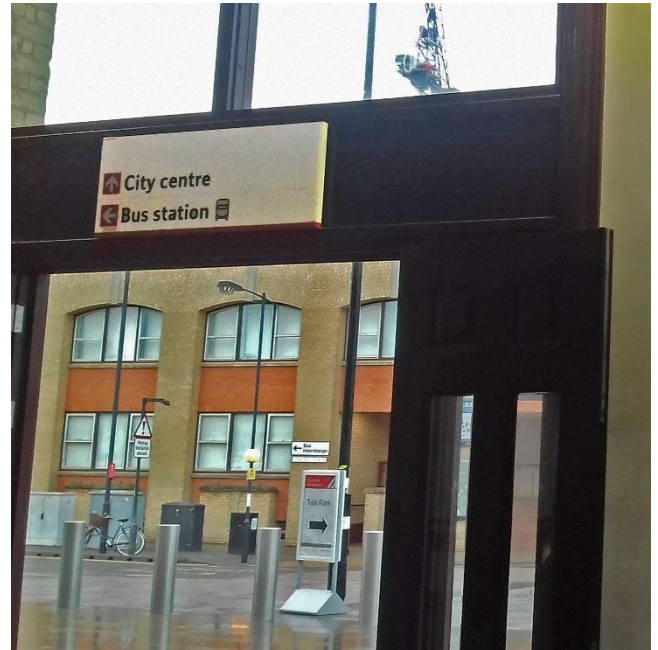
There is no real-time bus information on the railway station, however; and this is probably the highest priority for improvement at present.

**IPSWICH:** As you exit the spacious modernised booking hall, you can see a sign with an arrow pointing to the largest of four bus stops. The canopy and then the shelter roof provide continuous cover as you walk and wait for the bus. There are three other bus stops, with shelters, for town services which do not come on to the station forecourt, and two of these are clearly visible from the station exit. The main shelter is well-provided with Suffolk County Council maps and timetable posters, which also show you at which stop to wait for which bus.

What is lacking is real-time bus information - either in the station booking hall or at the bus shelter. Hardly any of the buses calling at the rail station could be said to be competing with trains and so Greater Anglia (which leases the building and forecourt) could reasonably agree to such electronic screens.

**CAMBRIDGE:** A sign on the station points you via the exit to the buses but the stops, to your left, involve a slightly longer walk, in the open air, than did the former ones before the forecourt was remodelled. At the new Cambridge North station you can see the two bus stops ahead of you as soon as you exit the station. There are real-time bus information screens at the bus stops outside both stations. A new information kiosk planned for the forecourt of the main station should help.

Other possibilities would be a shuttle service between St Ives and Cambridge North, with interchange on Milton Road to Park & Ride and local services; and enhancement of the "R" service to make Trumpington Park & Ride an attractive and convenient alternative to parking at Cambridge station.



Exit from Cambridge Station



View from Cambridge Station to the bus stops



**BURY ST EDMUNDS:** The walk from the station to the town centre involves up and down gradients and an unsignalled crossing of a busy road. However, as you exit from the station, a sign points to the left to a bus shelter at which some 12 different services call up to the early evening. These include buses to the town centre and bus station and to such places as Thetford, Mildenhall, Sudbury and Diss.

Under the railway bridge and across the main road is also the Fornham Road bus stop used by some southbound services. There are informative Suffolk County Council posters on both shelters and the "Onward Travel" poster states that PlusBus applies here. Sunday buses only operate on two routes and include eight runs by town buses sponsored by the County Council.

**KINGS LYNN:** The rail station is 5 minutes' walk from the bus station, which is on the edge of the shopping and historic centre. Buses from the north call at the rail station before continuing via a one-way system to the bus station and returning northwards to their point of origin (such as North Lynn, Hunstanton, Docking or Fakenham). Buses from the west (such as Wisbech, Terrington and the Walpoles) or the south (Southery or Marham) stop at the bus station first and then continue to the rail station. The bus station has information screens showing both bus and train times.

However, in the rail station there is no bus information and the stop outside only has route numbers, not times. Clearly there is scope for some modest improvement in information.

**COLCHESTER:** There are two exits from the main line station, on the up side (for trains towards London) and on the down side (for trains from London). Buses call at the down side exit, which is also where the booking office is, and take you southwards into the town centre and beyond. It is also useful to know that some trains also run to and from Colchester Town station, which is convenient for much of the central area.

Country buses towards the Stour Valley stop on the main road at the bottom of the station approach.

**GREAT YARMOUTH:** The urban area stretches some six miles from north to south along the coast from Caister to Gorleston, and the station is a good 20 minutes' walk from the popular beach. Visitors arriving by train therefore look for onward travel possibilities. There is a bus shelter to the left of the station exit but only one service calls there, and that only during the summer season. It would make sense to provide that service throughout the year, as the East Norfolk Transport Users' Association has suggested.

Another option would be a shuttle bus service between the town centre bus station and the rail station continuing to the Asda Superstore just beyond the latter.

ENTUA maintains its own poster board including town centre map at the station.

The hexagon column recently installed by the County Council outside the bus station also displays a train times poster.

**LOWESTOFT:** Next to the station (where a bay platform used to be) is a bus interchange, funded by a Local Sustainable Transport Grant which Suffolk County Council received from central government in 2012. It is used by northbound buses, most of which terminate at the bus station a few minutes' walk away. Currently the only town service calling there is number 101 and a couple of buses aimed at college students.

On the opposite side of the road is a more useful bus stop for visitors and local people alike, as all southbound buses call there - but there is no shelter! Currently only the East Suffolk Travellers' Association board on the station tells people about this stop - or they can call in at the Visitor Information Point at the station at times when this is open.

Most of the buses are not in competition with the trains. The only ones which compete are the X2 and X22, providing a slower but more frequent service to Beccles and Norwich.

There is now a real-time information display at the stop for southbound buses. The next improvement needed on the station is a real-time bus information screen on the rail station.



**Outside Lowestoft station**

## 6. What can be done about it?

As has been shown, these obstacles can often be alleviated at very little cost or effort.

County Councils have responsibilities for bus stops, shelters etc. Sometimes Community Rail Partnerships can help by funding signage. Sometimes a local rail users' association with detailed local knowledge (such as ENTUA) presses successfully for improvements and in at least three cases has provided its own publicity at stations and elsewhere.

At more important stations, it is sensible to have an electronic screen giving real-time information about onwards bus connections in the town and city. These already exist at the new station in Corby. Cambridge station also has a screen showing flight departures from Stansted Airport. Such local transport screens are also becoming more common in stations in France, Germany, the Czech Republic - and elsewhere?

The design of such information screens should also take into account that visitors to a town or city may not be familiar with the final destinations of urban bus routes; but need to know which one serves - for example - a sports or cultural centre, a college or a hospital.

The technology exists to give connecting bus information on the train as well. For example, Stadler trains in Switzerland have screens which indicate connecting trains and buses. By the end of 2019, all of Greater Anglia's regional services are due to be operated by new trains built in Switzerland by Stadler. Can we expect these to have screens which show - for example - as the train approaches Halesworth the time of the connecting bus to Southwold?

## 7. Other recent and future developments

(a) It is now possible to go "contactless" for many transactions, including on some public transport journeys. Passengers from our region arriving at Liverpool Street or Kings Cross stations in London can now use their bank cards to pay for the Underground. Will we see more local transport operators including the "contactless" option in the future? Stagecoach have introduced this method of payment on buses in the Cambridge area for example.

(b) Smartcards are also a future option and have been introduced, in the form of a "Fusion" card on some buses in and around Norwich. "Keygo" smartcards can be used on trains between Cambridge and Kings Cross.

Train Operating Companies have been developing smartcards with encouragement from the Department of Transport which announced £80 million investment in such schemes in October 2017. But will such smartcards also be valid on connecting buses? Will there be such a plethora of smartcards that passengers will be confused? Whatever happens, there must always be more than one way of paying for a journey.

(c) Greater Anglia totems - during the period of the Greater Anglia franchise (up to 2025) we are promised "totems" at all stations. These can make it easier to get multimodal information. Will this happen in practice? Open data and a willingness of operators to co-operate must be encouraged. That is also why, in this report, we have given many instances where bus and train services are complementing each other, not competing against one another.

(d) Digital technology has made further contributions to integrated transport information. The UK Buschecker app may be used if, for example, your train is approaching its destination and you need to check in real time when your connecting bus will leave.

Will the bus wait for a late-running train to arrive? At least the technology is there so that a bus driver could find out if a train is running late and by how much.

The website [www.journeysolutions.com](http://www.journeysolutions.com) is also useful for researching options for a multimodal trip and is funded by five major train and bus companies. The Journey Solutions Group is also responsible for managing PlusBus. Its website also contains links to [cheapercommuting.com](http://cheapercommuting.com) (where rail commuters may weigh up the costs of a car park charge or a bus add-on) and the national Traveline website, which helps to plan multimodal journeys.

But however good such innovations are - they still need to go hand in hand with reliable information, training and infrastructure.

## 8. Summary of Recommendations

1. Some modest extension of PlusBus.
2. Investigate the potential for other longer links to larger settlements not served by rail and perhaps to tourist attractions,
3. Improve staff awareness.
4. Real-time bus information at rail stations.
5. Investigate improved bus links, shelters and bays at stations which do not have these at present.

## 9. Further Action

We are sending this report to train and bus operators, County Councils, stakeholders such as Local Enterprise Partnerships, Community Rail Partnerships and local users' associations, as well as all others with an interest in the economy and environment of East Anglia.

This report is not intended to be the last word, but we hope that it will help to spread good ideas and help towards the development of a user-friendly public transport system.

Please keep us up to date with developments in your area - which we can also publicise in our newsletter RAIL EAST, our website and social media.

You may also like to join Railfuture and strengthen our campaigning. Log on to our website [www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk) for more information.

## Editor's Note

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The recommendations in principle were agreed by the Railfuture East Anglian Branch Committee in December 2017. Responsibility for the final text is mine, however. I took all reasonable steps to ensure accurate information as of February 2018, but cannot be held liable for any errors or changes since then.

Further information, suggestions and experiences can be emailed to [trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk)

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Cover photos: Halesworth Station with bus interchange.

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