

Railfuture East Anglia written response to the call for evidence sessions for the Greater Cambridge City Deal

Light Rail

November 2015

The development of Cambridge in the last few years as an economic power house of national and international standing has been astonishing.

Cambridge though, has been an important centre for several hundred years in the cultural life of its region and the nation. It has accumulated a unique built environment that is still vibrant and continually evolving. So inspiring is it that many people travel from thousands of miles away to it to enjoy its ambience each year, as well as it being enjoyed by its own citizens.

Such are the contemporary pressures on the city we believe that although some will say it is relatively small, our historic city centre deserves respect from us all as we grapple with the problems of success and that is why, unusually, we think that a tunnel under the city served by a quality light rail line should be considered.

If we do not at least gather the facts for such a transport system now we have the opportunity, future generations will never forgive us.

Please see our brief outline below about how the light rail line could be inserted into our city. Only this line can sustainably handle the thousands of journeys that must be made into the centre each day if we are serious about modal transfer from car, preserve our delicate heritage as well as solving some of our radial congestion issues.

Light Rail for Cambridge

The population of Cambridge will increase by roundly 50,000 when all the planned homes are built within the city, to around 200,000 people. There will be roundly 250,000 people living within 24km of the city boundary. The travel to work area is getting wider which is why rail is so important.

The city centre is an historic site without peer and at the same time a vibrant commercial centre that many towns and cities can only dream about. It is a compact but increasingly fragile delight.

Cars are just about under control but in an effort to keep that control, buses could by the process of unintended consequence become as big a threat to the quality of the city as the car did. Visit Oxford or London's Oxford Street to note unintended consequences.

For the above reasons we contend some of tranche 1 funding should be used to research the cost of an appropriate 4km twin track tunnel under the city centre with a station under Drummer Street and the railway station. At its western end a surface line it should lead to a park and ride towards Cambourne and a branch to North West Cambridge and Darwin Green, both terminals no more than 10 mins from the city centre.

At its eastern end it should surface to the west of Abbey Stadium opposite the site of the old Barnwell station and continue on the track of the former Burwell railway line to Ditton Fields, The Wing housing and again anchored by a large Park and Ride site. A 10 minute journey time from Wing to the City Centre should be possible.

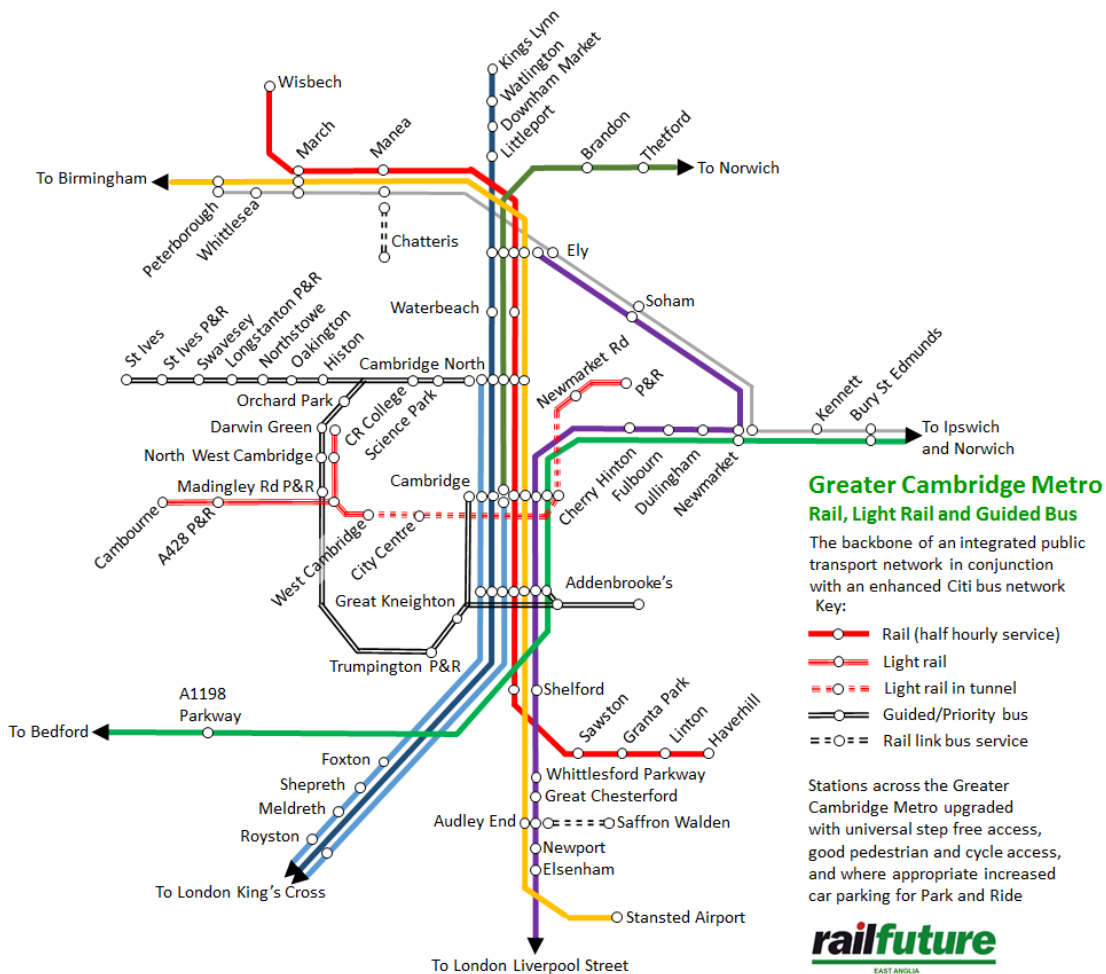
Nottingham's new light rail lines are anchored by Park and Ride sites and new peripheral housing. No street running is envisaged for Cambridge except in North West Cambridge.

We are informed that Cambridge Gault clay is the best tunnelling material. The spoil may well be suitable for filling in the considerable excavations left by the Brookfields Cement Factory which may provide a site for extensive new housing in the east of the city which may help pay for the Light Rail line.

The new Line 2 of the Nice light rail network is about 13km long. It has a considerable tunnelled section in hard rock with stations and is costed at about £600m.

See link www.railwaygazette.com/news/news/europe/single-view/view/nice-selects-alstom-trams-for-line-2.html

A scheme such as this is beyond the scope of the current city deal but tranche 1 funding should be used to research and cost a future scheme and safeguard a possible route for the future. The map below shows how such a line contribute to a future enhanced Cambridge rail network.



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