

Regional rail for growing towns and cities

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Cambridge has long been an economic centre for a distinct region, hence the large number of local railways that historically centre on it.

Over the past 30 years, in common with other university towns, this regional centre has grown into something more nationally important because of the rise of "knowledge-based industry".

A well-educated population is reliant on "knowledge" that promotes innovation and dynamic entrepreneurship for the benefit of the overall national economy.

Its continual success depends on a well-educated population gathering together from the four corners of the world as well as from all over Britain.

People work in several distinct hubs throughout the Greater Cambridge area. These hubs need a constantly replenishing workforce that tends to be dispersed over a wide travel-to-work area. The hubs are often poorly interconnected within the city and with the railway station.

Cambridge and many historic cities were not built for modern road-borne traffic. The local road network operates at perpetual over-capacity. Movement is slow, air quality poor. Yet the historic centre is valued for a good quality of life by the workforce as much as the millions who travel to it from all over the world.

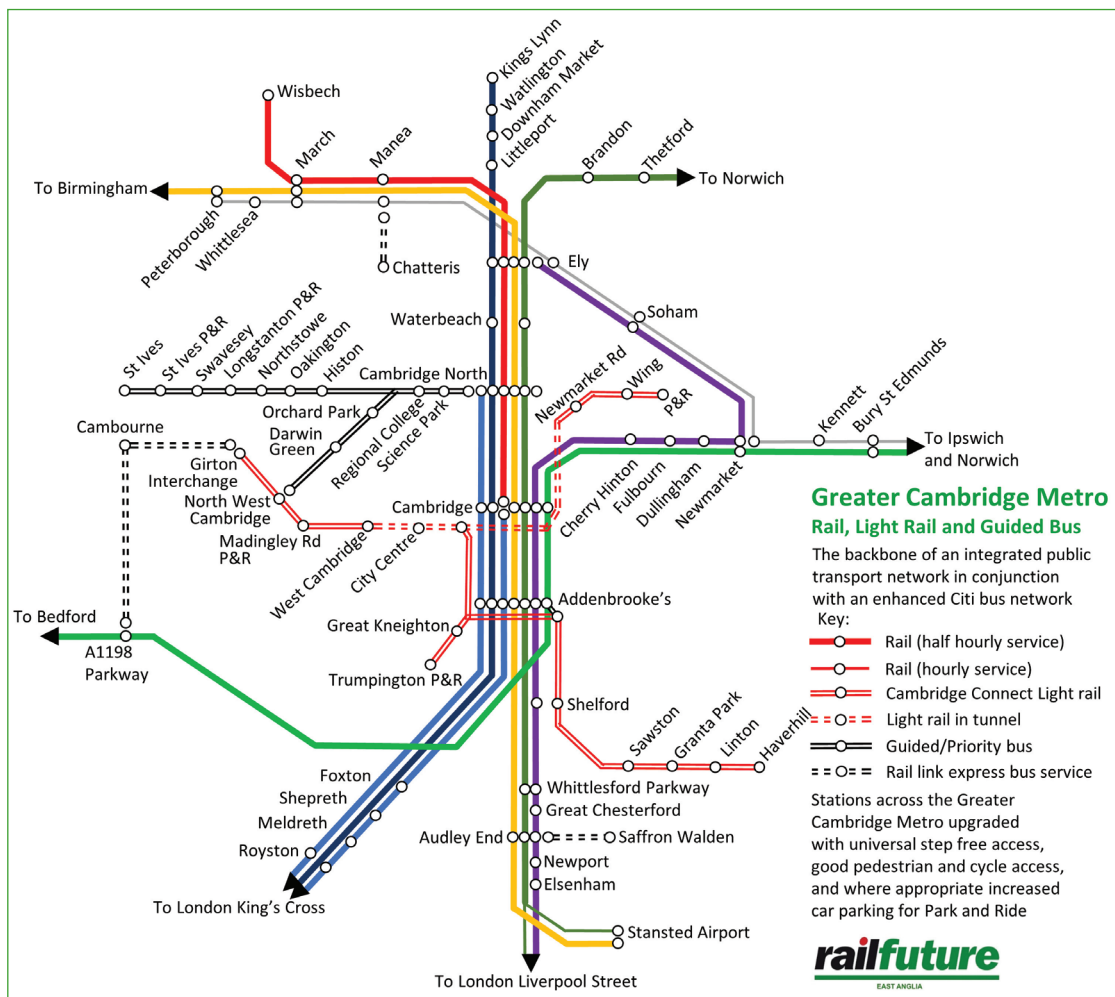
Thousands use it each day for shopping, entertainment and the night economy as well as the important higher educational role that has developed over 800 years. Preserving this dynamic piece of history with its multiple modern functions is where the railway is crucial.

300 buses an hour!

In an effort to alleviate some of the chronic congestion problems, a bus-based solution has been proposed. This would see about 300 buses an hour entering the centre. This is clearly impossible.

There is a pressing need to keep road-borne traffic out of the city and off the radial roads approaching it. These are at grid-lock during ever-lengthening peaks.

The local railway network works hard but Railfuture believes it can do more. It needs to be improved to do so. The Thameslink upgrades will bring four local trains per hour from the Royston line and deliver longer, more frequent services to Ely. The metro-like peak hour services between Cambridge and Ely now bring two million rail



RAIL WAY TO THE FUTURE: Diagrammatic map showing how the regional railway network based on Cambridge could be enhanced by developing light rail and existing bus-based fixed links

users a year from Ely alone, with more commuters using rail rather than the parallel A10 road.

The Newmarket line needs a considerable upgrade to enable rail to work for the economy on that corridor in a similar way. We want minimum half-hourly services on all routes beyond Ely and Newmarket, which of course need considerable capacity improvements around Ely.

The route from London Liverpool Street and from Stratford via Audley End also needs better services. This already busy network delivers 11 million passengers a year to and from Cambridge station. But to get workers to areas further from the existing station, more effort is needed.

Dependable timetable

We believe a Cambridge light rail network can link into the regional railway network and enable the highly skilled regionally dispersed workforce to travel with confidence on public transport to all the major centres of employment that are distant from a station and currently easily accessible only by car.

The nature of the railway and light rail means that the mode is

long term and today's motorists can confidently shift modes for the long term and plan their lives accordingly. In addition, those who work at the further-flung employment centres from Cambridge station will gain access in minutes, to take a train to London or the airports. The phased light rail network will eventually restore rail to fast-growing generators of much road-based traffic such as Haverhill.

Sadly, bus routes provide no such long-term confidence for many potential users who currently use cars. Bus routes can be and are cut because of council crises or the bus operator's bottom line.

Rail operators generally provide a dependable timetable as laid down in their franchise commitments that is available for about 18 hours each day.

With a combination of light rail and the regional railway network an attractive alternative to road-based commuting can be provided.

Cambridge Connect is the name for the planned light rail network for Cambridge and district. It envisages a phased introduction of light rail, coupled with an upgrade of the regional rail

network, to enable road users to make the modal shift at a station closest to their home, rather than pushing on in hope to the grid-locked radial road or a bus-based park-and-ride near the city edge.

Light rail is not just for big cities. It works in medium-sized and fast-growing cities like Cambridge, with a population of 300,000 within Greater Cambridge.

Cambridge North

Light rail and new regional stations such as Cambridge North, which opens this year, will unify all the disparate centres of employment in the Greater Cambridge area into one.

We believe it is absolutely essential for regional rail and light rail to be planned as one, to enable light rail to deliver "the last mile" and rail to develop as the true alternative to the car.

Regional rail could help other growth areas. In East Anglia alone, Norwich, Ipswich and Colchester could benefit from well-planned rail-based networks of train, light rail and bus. More information at www.cambridge-connect.uk/back-ground/