

RDS sponsored conference on public transport from Stansted

If Stansted Airport is to grow to a throughput of 15 million passengers a year, it needs a good rail access - a point made by RDS General Secretary Trevor Garrod in introducing our one-day conference on 22nd September at the Marks Tey Hotel near Colchester.

Two speakers from the Train Operating Companies (Jonathan Chatfield of WAGN and Clive Tilley of Central Trains) were upbeat in their presentations on how their respective companies were working to increase rail's share of the market to this airport. Joint marketing initiatives with BAA and individual airlines were described and the need was stressed for the service to be simple and easy to use.

Rufus Boyd of Railtrack explained how the West Anglian Route Modernisation would tackle the problems of bottlenecks and increase track capacity from Liverpool Street to the Airport.

But what of access from the East? North Essex MP Bernard Jenkin commended Anglia Railways for their rail/air coach link from Colchester station and said that this was a good example of a private company using its initiative to improve integrated transport without waiting for Government to legislate. He was sceptical about whether a rail link from Braintree to the Airport would be profitable.

But to return to the theme of the conference, should we not be looking to such a link as part of

the wider rail network, serving not only airport passengers and workers but also people who want to go from Essex to the Midlands and North without having to pass through London? This point was made by Paula Whitney of Friends of the Earth. The growth of the airport then becomes a catalyst towards the achievement of an improved rail network in our region.

This conference was a first for the RDS in our territory, bringing together councillors, transport and planning professionals, and the voluntary sector.

For a full report, send £1.50 (payable to RDS East Anglian Branch) to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ.

ESTA train travel survey

Good and bad features emerge from a survey carried out by ESTA of travel by members using the East Suffolk line services in August 1999. Overall, customer satisfaction was high, with 74% of travellers rating the journey good or very good. Particular praise was given to ease of interchange, whether from car or a connecting train, and to the effective publicity which made it easy to obtain information about trains and fares. 72% of trains were on time, but those which were late were often significantly so, 14, 15 and 32 minutes being reported. Anglia train conductors came in for praise again. They were almost invariably courteous, and fares were collected on all but four of the journeys. The adverse comments included 27% of travellers reporting their train as being dirty inside and outside cleanliness was even worse, with 37% making an adverse report.

Funding sought

Anglia Railways are applying for funding to increase the Ipswich - Bury St Edmunds service to half hourly and the services from Ipswich to Cambridge and Peterborough to hourly. If successful this would enable Anglia Railways to offer a service that the Branch has been advocating for some time and should be sufficiently attractive to persuade people to use public transport.

East-West rail link progress

A packed meeting in Bedford of nearly 300 people voted to support the East-West Rail Link including the inner route through Bedford serving the existing station. The meeting was called by local MP Patrick Hall as part of the debate about the best route through the town. Although other members of the East-West Consortium favoured the inner route, Bedford Borough Council had some doubts. The issue was delaying progress of the scheme and Bedford Borough Council organised a local poll to resolve the matter. The inner route is seen as being essential to the town's future and would maximise the opportunities to make simple connections. It is also cheaper. Those opposing the scheme, tended to adopt the NIMBY (not in my back yard) approach. The Railtrack speaker at the meeting noted that an intensive consultation would start soon and compensation packages for those affected would be agreed.

At the end, the meeting voted 158 to 81 in support of the scheme. Those voting against, were generally voting against the chosen route rather than the scheme in principal. This is reflected by the results of the Bedford Peoples' Panel where over 90% were in support of the scheme.

The East-West link is likely to be built in two stages. The first stage, between Oxford and Bedford, has cleared the first stage in getting funding under the Rail Passenger Partnership scheme. Final funding agreement is expected in the new year with work starting in about 18 months. At present, Railtrack are hoping to put in an application under the Transport and Works Act for stage 2 covering the route between Bedford and Cambridge. There will be a public inquiry but Railtrack hope to run trains over the entire route within 5 years.

EVENTS FOR YOU DIARY

Saturday 20th November Peterborough/Norwich Rail Users Group Annual General Meeting at 1100 in The Maltings, Ely,
Saturday 20th November Fen Line Users Association Annual General Meeting commencing at 1400 - guest speaker David Bertram, Chairman CRUCC.

Saturday 13th & Sunday 14th November Ipswich Model Railway Exhibition at the Northgate Sports Centre, Ipswich. The Branch has a stand. Please let Nick Dibben if you can help.

Saturday 27th November - RDS East Anglian Branch meeting in Cambridge at the Little St Mary's Church Hall, Trumpington Street at 1400. Guest speaker David Taylor or Gary Willey, local managers from West Anglia Great Northern railway.

Saturday 26th February 2000 - RDS East Anglian Branch Annual General Meeting in Bury St Edmunds.

Thameslink 2000

With only a few days to go before the year 2000, Railtrack has submitted a new Transport and Works Act application for the Thameslink 2000 project. The revised scheme, now costing £800m, reflects the comments made on the previous application. The anticipated completion date is now 2006.

Thameslink 2000 builds on the highly successful Thameslink project that links services north and south of London. When complete, services from Peterborough and Cambridge will be able to run directly to towns on the south coast, via a new station under Kings Cross. Capacity of the existing route through London will be increased to 24 trains per hour.

As a footnote, the success of the Thameslink service across London has proved to be very popular and the trains are amongst the most overcrowded on the network. For those arriving at Liverpool Street and travelling to East Croydon, Gatwick or Luton, it requires a short tube journey to Farringdon before changing on to a Thameslink train.

The Editor recalls the time when Crossrail was proposed. For those wishing to cross London from East to West or *vice versa* this scheme would have achieved a similar benefit to that offered on the North - South axis. Railtrack's idea of linking their network with the northern section of the Circle line might achieve the same result, but would mean that there would be repercussions for existing users of this line.

Branch seeks views

The Branch has spent a lot of time in recent years on campaigns such as the St Ives line and the East West Rail link. We will know if the St Ives route is to reopen as a railway when the A14 study is completed within a year. Likewise, in the near future, we are shortly expecting announcements on the East-West Rail Link.

Over the next year we will need to contribute to the Local Transport Plans being developed by local authorities on issues such as access and security around stations. However the Branch needs to identify new campaigns and we need your input. We will have a discussion at the Cambridge meeting on 27th November. If you are unable to attend please send your ideas to Nick Dibben.

Cambridge

The City Council has carried out a consultation exercise using a questionnaire. Amongst the proposals are a bus link from Hills Road (behind the signal box), possible access under Hills Road bridge - perhaps for pedestrians/cyclists only, a 50% increase in cycle parking, a better bus interchange, a foot-bridge from the Cattle Market car park and reversion of taxis to the station forecourt.

A recent issue of Town & Country Planning has a headline article on the new town at Oakington Airfield. The Town

Working together

The recent public meeting of the RUCC (Rail Users Consultative Committee) for Eastern England at Peterborough was run to a new format. In the morning session there were presentations from the rail industry, however the afternoon session comprised a general discussion, at which the public could take part. The subject for the afternoon's debate the Peterborough meeting in September was the future of passenger representation in the region. In a very positive debate, there was general agreement that the RUCC needed to move beyond an organisation that deals with complaints to one which looked to the future development of passenger services. To achieve this the RUCC would work more closely with the RDS and rail user groups and a special meeting of rail groups is planned for the new year.

Earlier, all parties had expressed their frustration on the lack of progress in resolving the options for providing additional services north of Peterborough. Three train operators are bidding for extra paths. GNER want to run additional services to Leeds and York with new tilting trains as part of their franchise extension bid. WAGN want to run an hourly service from London to Doncaster. Finally a new company Hull Trains want to run direct services to Hull. It was noted that GNER had submitted its plans for a franchise extension over two years ago.

The next RUCC meeting will be in Southend on December 15. The subject for the general discussion will be integrated transport. Details of the meeting will be posted on local stations.

Norfolk

There are two new groupings: East Norfolk Rural Transport Partnership and West Norfolk Rural Transport Partnership.

Peter Lawrence attended the meeting of ENRTP. The main concerns raised were getting transport to and from rural communities whether by taxi, dial-a-bus or community bus to shopping centres and rail stations. Peter suggested that the group should consider looking at ways of working with the Bittern Line Partnership, the Norwich - Peterborough Partnership and the Mid Norfolk Railway.

& Country Planning Association is officially supporting a plan for 10-20,000 houses there. They have mentioned both guided bus and rail options for the transport system, and quoted the RDS as the source of the later.

The Branch has been taking a keen interest in developments at Oakington and the funding of any transport links. In Ottawa, guided busways have failed to get people out of their cars whereas in Perth, Australia, by opting for a rail system in preference to guided busways, a modal shift has been achieved.

Getting out of St Ives - anything neutral but rail!

Following the fanfare publication of the Government's Transport White Paper, very little has happened. The problem appears to be taking the first step. The RDS along with other transport and environmental groups have produced a new leaflet called "Getting out of Neutral" which sets out ways to start developing an integrated transport policy. The leaflet outlines a number of "Quick Wins"- simple actions which can be carried out in a short space of time and "Big Hits" - longer term policies. Copies have been sent to Local Authorities and MPs by the national organisations.

Transport Forum

The RDS EAB have been invited to attend the next meeting of the Stansted Area Transport Forum.

The latest idea to surface about the future use of the St Ives railway line is to turn it into a road! A local businessman has suggested building a single lane toll road for use by cars. Cars would run into Cambridge in the morning peak and return in the evening. What happens at midday is not clear! This scheme is counter to every national and local transport policy and therefore is not likely to progress very far.

The reaction from Railtrack to the re-opening has always been mixed. Many are keen, but some managers want a busway. They say that Railtrack would not sell the land but would build and operate the busway itself. Buses would be charged in a similar way to the track access charges employed on the railway. The reaction of a bus company, when faced with the full roadway costs, will be the key to this approach.

Freight moves

Essex County Council are carrying out a study into increasing rail freight on the Harwich route. The study will focus on reconnecting the sidings at Mistley Quay, Wrabness and Harwich Navy Yard. The prospects look best at Mistley Quay where an earlier study showed that a new connection was possible. The Quay was last used by rail in the early 1990s for grain, steel and explosives traffic.

Great Yarmouth

On Monday, 5th October 1999 the longest freight train to date, at 1050 ft long and with 26 wagons carrying 550 tons of cargo, left the siding. This consignment from the Yarmouth fertiliser company J and H Bunn was equivalent to taking no less than 55 lorries off the county's roads.

Ipswich

Railtrack have issued a warning that the railway line serving part of Ipswich Docks is to become active again. Ipswich Docks have only seen the occasional freight movement in recent years. The sidings used by BOC block trains in BR days has been used enough to justify EWS putting up a large sign on the hut close to the Wet Dock railway access.

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Material for the next edition of should reach, Tony Albert by 24th January 2000.