

RAIL EAST

The Newsletter of the East Anglian Branch of RailFuture

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Mind the Gaps - CHUMMS report issued

Railfuture and other environmental groups are crying foul after the issue of the report into the A14 multi-modal study between Cambridge and Huntingdon (CHUMMS). The main concerns are over the lack of consultation, serious omissions and lack of detail in the report. Although the basic outline of the report was covered in a newsletter that was sent to all households in the area at the end of July, there was very little detail especially on proposed busway scheme. The full report was not published until the end of August, just one week before the deadline for comments. Even then there were still major gaps in the information.

For example, the report does not mention improvements to local bus services or the role that regional rail services such as Peterborough-Cambridge-Stansted can play in providing an alternative to the A14. When the study looked at the rail reopening of the St Ives route, rather than linking the line into existing train services south of Cambridge, it proposed a new branch line to Trumpington. This is simply daft, and therefore the benefits of linking the St Ives line to the wider rail network have been missed.

Significant developments on guided busways recently. Firstly the new system in Nancy, France that opened briefly in February is still out of operation, as the guidance system does not work properly. Secondly, Edinburgh has just cancelled its busway system. Improvements to the local bus network have achieved many of the benefits of the busway at much reduced cost, and no guided busway operator is willing to compete with the buses. A similar situation could occur in Cambridge. Although the report does not mention journey times, developers backing the busway give a journey time from St Ives to Cambridge of 45 minutes; this is 10 minutes longer than existing buses! There are many other issues that need to be resolved. For example the higher costs of running the busway compared with normal buses, serious doubts about the ability to build a busway along side the railway between Chesterton and Cambridge Station and any restrictions that the Health and Safety Executive may add to, say operations at level crossings. Add this together and there is a massive risk that the busway will not be able to deliver. Strangely, none of these items are included in the report.

discussed by Regional Planning Body (RPB) of the Eastern England Local Government Conference (EELGC) in October. The RPB will then make recommendations to the Government. As happened over the Hastings study the Minister could overrule the RPB.

The Branch has written to the EELGC asked for the consultation period to be extended and noted that Railfuture, the Rail Passenger Council and rail freight operators have not been invited to take part in the EELGC workshops to review the proposals. In our comments on the report we have urged the RPB not to agree to the busway until it has fully reviewed the concerns noted above.

Many thanks to all those who have written to the local press about CHUMMS. Although the official comments deadline is now passed, it is still worth writing to Alan Moore, EELGC, Flempton House, Flempton, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP28 6EG by the end of September. Once the RPB has made its views known, letters should be sent to your MP and the Minister Stephen Byers at the Department of Transport.

There have been two signif-

The study report will be

A47 study announced

The next multi-modal study in the region will cover the route between Peterborough and Norwich which includes the A47 and parallel railway line. The rail route to Kings Lynn will also form part of the study. Consultants are expected to be appointed soon.

Meanwhile it has recently been suggested in a newspaper that if the A47 Acle Straight is dualled, consideration should be given to using the rail track as a base for the second carriageway. It is claimed that this would mean minimal disruption to the ecological environment, the loss of the minimum amount of land, and a rail line which is "unnecessary as there is an alternative rail link from Norwich to Yarmouth, and the villages on the Acle line could be served by a bus route".

Although not suggesting the above, Charles Reynolds, chairman of Yarmouth Borough council's economic policy committee, was quoted in the Eastern Daily Press (19th June) as saying: "I get fed up with people talking about improving the rail network. What we need is a decent road to our town."

Access for disabled

Wheelchair access at March station
Access for wheelchairs, pushchairs and cyclists is now available to/from the eastbound platform at March. A car pick up/drop off point for wheelchair users has also been created at the adjacent BRAZA Club car park.

Anglia news

Performance boost

Anglia Railways spends £100,000 to improve performance on Norwich-Ipswich-Liverpool Street route

Anglia Railways is spending £100,000 (with Railtrack) to operate an 11th train set on the Norwich-London route. This will increase the 'turn-round' time for trains operating Anglia's half-hourly mainline service at Norwich from 15-20 minutes to either 40 minutes or one hour. Extending the lay-over time at Norwich increases the time available for minor servicing and cleaning of the trains, and enables the service to recover following a delay. The week of 22nd July was designated a performance week by Anglia, for Great Eastern and Railtrack and extra managers on duty looking at causes of delays.

Passenger compensation

Which? consumer magazine places Anglia Railways highly for customer compensation packages.

A survey published in Which? magazine's August edition compared TOC compensation packages for delayed trains according to how long passengers had to be delayed before compensation was offered, the amount of refund offered and the process for payment. Anglia Railways scored nine points out of 20 and was fourth overall in the survey.

The Rail Passenger Council for Eastern England

The Rail Passenger Council for Eastern England met on Tuesday 24 July at Queens College Cambridge (in a building which Nick Dibben helped to design!). It was attended by members of the rail industry, councillors, rail pressure groups (including Railfuture) but few members of the public. In the morning session, the following Train Operating Companies gave presentations:

* **WAGN** - Current time keeping on outer suburban routes is grim (West Anglia route - 76%, Great Northern Route - 85%). There are problems with many speed restrictions. WAGN have 50 drivers short with 25 sick!. 75 new drivers are being trained, the first batch will have completed their training in September. WAGN are also looking at part time drivers, who would work limited hours, to help fill requirements for the peak periods.

Items raised with WAGN include poor visibility of display screens at Cambridge, and the need to promote bus/rail projects.

* **Central Trains** - Major concern on trespass and vandals. This applies not just to the West Midlands but also to places like Boston where trains were being attacked. All the class 158s are now fitted with TPWS, fitting to class 150 to start in September.

Items raised with Central - Poor timekeeping to Stansted where only 77% trains arrive within 10 minutes, 90% in 40 minutes, 6% over an hour late. CT would like to replace the long distance train fleet with something similar to Virgin's cross-country fleet but all depends on franchise replacement.

* **c2c** - 44 of 46 new trains now available for service. Failure rate improved from every 300 miles!!! to every 9000 miles. The target is every 60000 miles. Problems with RMT union who have broken their agreements on driver only operation.

Also there was a presentation by **Railtrack**

There are currently 15 gauge corner cracking sites and 40 other temporary speed restrictions in the EA zone. Railtrack and contractors are short staffed. There is a £2.2m budget to clear trackside rubbish, several teams have been set up to do each route. Over 6 tonnes of junk is being removed each day. West Anglia resignalling is on target - Seven Sisters route should be completed by November 2001, Lea Valley route June 2002, up to Bishops Stortford by November 2003.

East West disappointment

Following the disappointing rejection by the SRA of the East-West line, Nick Dibben contacted the Chris Haywood of the consortium which has been developing the proposals. Although Consortium disappointed with SRA decision, they think the reaction has raised the profile of the route within SRA and Government so could be better in the long run. The SRA accept that they have not handled the matter well and it should get a big mention in the SRA strategy document out later this year.

It was SRA who wanted the scheme split into phases and minimum phase 1 service of Oxford to Bletchley. They now accept that a Bristol-Bedford plus Aylesbury-Northampton initial service would add little to the cost but add greatly to the revenue. SRA accept importance of whole scheme but that RPP funding may not be best way forward. They also note that Cambridge - Norwich service funding was given on basis of being part of E-W. SRA/Railtrack will build in provision for E-W in WCML and ECML track and signal upgrades. This will make the scheme much easier to build.

6. Consortium still looking at options for Cambridge-Bedford section whilst the St Ives route has not been ruled out; they will make this point to CHUMMS saying no to guided bus. Light rail could perhaps share this route at a later date.

Dates for your diary

Saturday 29th September - Branch meeting in Ipswich at the Library (note new venue) starting at 2pm.

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