

RAIL EAST

The Newsletter of the East Anglian Branch of RailFuture

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Greater Anglia franchise

The Strategic Rail Authority has announced the companies that have pre-qualified for the Greater Anglia Franchise. At the same time, the SRA is consulting widely within the region about the core specification that the bidders will have to meet. Formal bids will be invited during this summer. The new franchise operator is expected to be announced during the summer of 2003 and will take over the running of the existing Anglia, Great Eastern and the West Anglia route from WAGN.

The listed bidders are:

- * GB Railways - current operator of Anglia Trains
- * First Group - current operator of Great Eastern and other franchises including Great Western
- * National Express - current operator of WAGN and other franchises including Central Trains.
- * Arriva - current operator of Arriva Trains North and Mersey-rail
- * Virgin Group
- * GNER
- * Dutch Railways
- * GOVIA - current operator of South Central and Thameslink
- * Connex - current operator of Connex South East

There is widespread agreement between RailFuture, user groups, the RPC and local authorities as to what should be included in the franchise specification. These include items such as new rolling stock for the London - Norwich service, a minimum hourly service on each rural route, improvements at stations and better interchange with buses. The only area of dispute appears to be the issue of who should run the stations on the Norwich to Peterborough route. Some have suggested that all stations, with the exception of Ely should be run by the new Greater Anglia franchise to give a sense of regional identity. The Branch is not convinced of this as the operator would be in charge of stations that their trains do not use and, therefore, would have little incentive to make improvements. The branch is also rejecting calls to add extra stops to the new Norwich-Cambridge service as we believe this service should remain limited stop to compete with the A11/A14 and in the future would form part of the East-West Rail Link.

Our list of aspirations has been sent to the SRA, RPC and the franchise bidders. The Branch does not intend to support any particular bid, but is happy to discuss our views with all the bidders.

Help required

The branch is looking for helpers for a number of tasks. In addition to being sent to members, Rail East is also sent to others in the region such as MPs, local media and train companies. For the past few years this work has been done by Agnes Harknett. Due to illness Agnes wishes to give up this task. The Branch would like to thank her for her work. We are looking for a replacement, the work involves maintaining a list of recipients and sending out the newsletter.

The Branch is also investigating the possibility of having a stall in city centres during at weekends with the aim of promoting rail development and attracting new members. This will require people on the day and others to help prepare display material. In particular we are looking for a display stand. They are rather expensive to buy, but second-hand units are available when firms update their equipment.

If anyone is able to help on these issues, please contact Nick Dibben.

The Branch welcomes contributions to Rail East. Short articles are particularly welcome. Material for the next edition should reach Nick Dibben by 30th September 2002.

LOIS - A12 multimodal study

Consultants Mott MacDonald have produced a list of possible schemes for improving transport and access along the A12 corridor between London and Ipswich. The schemes are contained in a report and were displayed at a number of exhibitions along the route. Unlike the CHUMMS A14 study, there are a range of both road and public transport proposals along with policy measures to reduce the need to travel.

Included in the rail proposals are plans to 4 track the line from Shenfield to Ipswich, extending London Crossrail to Colchester, the construction of the East-West rail link, a rail link eastwards from Stansted, and ways to encourage rail freight. In our response, the Branch has indicated its support for these rail projects. For the road schemes, the Branch has supported the local schemes that improve safety but we expressed our concerns over the major proposals, noting that they will simply encourage more traffic, which is against the study's objectives.

The Branch is concerned that the public were asked to select 5 schemes they liked and 5 they did not out of a total of 22 and that projects like the East-West Rail link that do not appear relevant to people in Essex will not be selected and give rise to claims that it does not have public support.

Meetings

The Branch has been reviewing its approach to public meetings. In recent years the number attending these meetings has declined. This coupled with increased hall hire charges has led to a rethink. This year, we propose to reduce the number of meetings, but hope to arrange other events such as having stalls in town centres. (see elsewhere).

What do you think the Branch should be doing to get its message across? How can we recruit more members, especially among those sections of the community where we have few members, young people, women, ethnic groups? We need your views. (Nick Dibben's address is on the back page.)

St Ives line

Everyone who submitted comments on the superCAM will have had a letter from their PR company. Surprisingly it is not entirely a standard letter, as the reply acknowledges briefly the points being made, but then goes on to say "it is not possible to respond in detail to the points you have made...".

The consortium will make the TWA application in 2002 - possibly in Summer - and this will allow just six weeks for objections after this date. In Spring 2003 there will be a public inquiry, at which any of the objectors may present their objections in person to the independent inspector. The consortium hope that the Secretary of State will decide in

STEER proposals

Sustainable Transport for the Eastern Region (STEER) has called for half-hourly trains from Ipswich, Manningtree, Colchester, Witham and Chelmsford to join the proposed Cross London Rail Link, and has won the immediate support of Tim Yeo, the Conservative MP for Suffolk South.

Crossrail's web-site said long-distance destinations such as Colchester "have been discarded. Crossrail is seen as a high-density distributor route with the regeneration potential for depressed areas of inner London a key factor" but STEER'S co-ordinator John Brodribb said: "A peculiar idea seems to have grown up that Crossrail trains cannot run past Shenfield. This is totally untrue. In reality, it will be readily possible to run a reasonable number of trains from the Ipswich/Colchester and Southend lines without an extra infrastructure works being needed at all."

Nick stars

Branch secretary Nick Dibben, with Rail magazine news editor Philip Haigh, appeared on BBC2's "East at Westminster" programme on Sunday 19th May. Cambridgeshire County Councillor Shona Johnstone was in the Cambridge studio. Although the focus was on safety and improved services, the East West Rail Link and the Wisbech branch were mentioned.

Railway renewals

Norfolk Orbital Railway

In May 2002, the Holt, Melton Constable and Fakenham Railway Co Ltd produced a leaflet. A copy may be obtained by writing to The Railway Institute, Melton Constable, Norfolk, NR24 2DA, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope. Annual membership is £17, which gives access to detailed information and studies, can be obtained from the same address. The Orbital Railway has received the support of Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Rail Policy Group, various district and parish councils and the East of England Development Agency.

Cambridge - Sudbury

In May, the Renewal Association presented a 10,000 signature petition to Tony Spellar, Transport Minister. Haverhill is to get a 6,400 jobs business park - planning permission was granted about the same time - and this may improve the viability of a Haverhill-Cambridge and beyond service.

Suffolk Rail Passenger Policy

Suffolk County Council has updated its rail passenger strategy. The report starts by listing the improvements to the rail system achieved since the first rail strategy published in 1994. These include improved service frequencies on many routes, better disabled access and the introduction of real time information systems. The report then takes each route within the County and considers possible future improvements. Many of these improvements will hopefully be included within the specification of the new Greater Anglia Franchise. Generally there is a wish to have half-hourly frequency on all routes within 10 years, faster journey times and improved access and facilities at each station.

New stations are considered at Moreton Hall and Great Cornard as part of new development. New stations on the main line either side of Ipswich are considered expensive and likely to cause pathing problems. They are unlikely to be progressed.

The study also looks at bus links to places not on the rail network. The conclusion is that dedicated bus links could not be justified, however there is scope for better co-ordination of existing bus routes and through ticketing.

For more details of this report and other rail plans in Suffolk, come to our Ipswich meeting on July 13th at the Central Library starting at 2pm where Barry Woodgett from the County Council will be talking about the Rail Policy strategy.

The public library is 15 minutes walk from the station - some Anglia tickets can be used on a bus to the town centre - or, coming out of the station, go straight ahead over the river and railway, under or round a roundabout following Princes Street; turning right, enter the pedestrianised Tavern Street to the traffic lights; turn left at the Great White Horse Hotel; the Library is on the right hand side about 150 yards further on and the entrance to the meeting room is just beyond, around the corner.

Dates for your diary

Saturday 13th July: Branch meeting at 2 pm at the County Library, Ipswich. Barry Woodgett, Suffolk County Council Rail Policy Officer.

Saturday 2nd or 9th November: Branch meeting in Cambridge. More information about this meeting will be included in the next edition of Rail East.

Saturday 5th October: RailFuture National Rail Users Conference in London

Rail East by e-mail

A number of members have inquired about receiving Rail East via e-mail. This would save on postage and you would get your copy much more quickly. If you are interested in this arrangement, please send an e-mail to the Secretary at nick.dibben@ukgateway.net. Please include your RailFuture membership number. Postal delivery will continue.

Branch AGM

Around 35 members attended our Branch AGM in February at Bury St Edmunds. Ivan Ivanovic, acting as Chairman, welcomed members and paid tribute to the hard work carried out by out-going Chairman Peter Wakefield. Branch Secretary Nick Dibben, updated members on recent events including the St Ives guided busway. The Hunts Post had started a "Boot out the misguided bus" campaign and had agreed to print a two page article written by Nick about the problems posed by the busway. There were no candidates for Branch Chairman, so the post remains vacant. Jerry Alderson, who produces our e-mail newsletter, was voted onto the committee.

John Brodribb from STEER and the Eastern of England RPC lead a discussion on the Greater Anglia Franchise. The views expressed by members have formed the basis of our submission to the SRA on what we expect the new franchise holder to achieve.

Stations

St Neots

It has been reported that WAGN has agreed to investigate possible extensions to the existing car park at St Neots railway station. WAGN will look at land availability, costs and commercial viability and will report its findings in June. County Councillor Robert Clarke, has been quoted as saying: "The station car park is under pressure which has led to commuters parking in residential areas and on the footpath at the entrance to the station."

Great Shelford

The former station master's house at Great Shelford is to be turned into an Indian restaurant. Station House in Hinton Way is currently boarded up, though a single storey extension to it serves as the station entrance and ticket office.

Elstow Garden Village

A new settlement of 4,500 houses, is to be built on a brown field site four miles south of Bedford. The master plan includes provision for a new station at the heart of the development.

Road congestion

Cambridgeshire had the largest increase in road traffic in Britain with road traffic rising by four times the national average in 2001: 5.5 per cent compared to an average increase of 1.2 per cent across the country. According to the county council figures, Cambridgeshire has experienced a 31 per cent growth in traffic in the last 10 years, double the figure for the country as a whole. At Swavesey (on the St Ives railway line) HGV traffic volume has nearly doubled over the past decade and traffic as a whole has risen by 48 per cent. On the A10 at Ely a 28 per cent rise was recorded. The number of vehicles entering Cambridge in 2001 was unchanged, as bus passengers rose by 18 per cent from 1999, and cyclists by 10 per cent between 1997 and 2001.

RPC consultation

RPC for Eastern England has issued a document requesting comments on its strategic objectives for the new franchise. The glossy 8-page document is largely concerned with retaining and improving existing services. It suggests some new services, but does not elaborate on infrastructure improvements. There is no mention of passing loops, double-tracking, line reopenings, and the only new stations suggested are Chesterton Interchange and Addenbrooke's Hospital.

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