

RAIL EAST

The Newsletter of the East Anglian Branch of Rail Future

railfuture

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'one' launched: the Greater Anglian franchise

The new Greater Anglia Franchise was launched with the brand name 'one' on the 1st April by National Express. The 'one' label represents the creation of a single operator for the region.

Further details are inside.

Public inquiry into the St Ives busway. 3000 objections registered!

The Department of Transport has received around 3000 objections to the proposed guided busway between Cambridge and St Ives that would run on the former rail route. The number is far more than Cambridgeshire County Council expected and ten times the number received for the Luton busway. Thank you to all Branch members who wrote in. A public inquiry will be held during the autumn and Mr Chris Gossop BSc MA PhD MRTPI has been appointed as the Inspector. The inquiry will open in St Ives on the 28th September but will move to New Hall College Cambridge on the 12th October.

The Branch has sent in a 6 page objection letter that covered 29 points. These can be broken down into four main categories:

1. Missing information that means claims about the busway can not be justified.

No details on proposed services

No information on integration with existing buses

2. Disagreement with the statistics

Disputing the user figures

Concern over projected running costs

3. Lack of investigation into alternatives

No consideration of freight

Little consideration given to improving existing buses

No consideration given to a Community Rail reopening as proposed by CAST.IRON.

4. Concern over off-guideway elements

Impact on running through St Ives town centre

Congestion within Cambridge

Flooding risk from new bus lanes.

The next stage is to put forward a more detailed case. The Branch is looking to work with other organisations that have objected such as CPRE and the St Ives Civic Society. We are also considering getting professional advice from a university transport expert to help us put our case together. Although some of the money for this will come from Railfuture National and Branch funds, we are looking for additional donations. If you can help please send donations to the Branch Secretary with cheques made payable to Railfuture East Anglian Branch.

Ipswich Tunnel closure

The tunnel just to the south of Ipswich station will be closed during the summer between 11th July and 5th September. Work in the tunnel will provide extra clearance to allow larger containers, now an increasing proportion of those being landed at Felixstowe, to be carried by rail using standard wagons. The works will also enable trains carrying this type of container to be routed northward from Harwich (and the Bathside Bay development if approval is given) to access the proposed route via Ely to the Midlands. Discussions on alternative arrangements have been going on for the last year or so and the Branch has been involved in some of the meetings. During the tunnel closure there will be replacement bus services between Ipswich and

Manningtree with additional direct coach services in the peak period from Stowmarket, Woodbridge and Felixstowe. On Sundays the line will be closed south of Manningtree and the coaches will run from Ipswich to Witham with provision being made for local journeys.

Existing car park users at Manningtree will have special priority parking, and parking at Ipswich and Stowmarket will be free to discourage people from driving to Manningtree where a £10/day temporary car park will be provided. For people travelling from Norwich, there will be direct trains from Norwich to London running via Cambridge in the peak period whilst at other times, there will be an option to a change at Ely or Cambridge.

East - West may be approved - in part

Local Authorities are confident that the Government will give its approval for the first phase of the East - West Rail Link covering the section between Oxford and Bedford. A proposal costing £65m has been submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) for funding. The government appears to have finally recognised the benefits of the scheme, especially as it is suggesting many thousands of houses should be built along the route. An hourly service, taking around 54 minutes between Oxford and Bedford is proposed. There is also likely

to be an hourly service between Bedford and Aylesbury. Freight traffic is also likely with aggregate trains delivering construction materials for the new housing. An announcement is expected when the Government reveals its spending plans in the summer. The East-West Rail link has been a long standing Railfuture campaign and the recent progress is encouraging.

If Phase 1 is approved, it will be time to raise the profile of the campaign for Phase 2, the section between Bedford and Cambridge so the next section follows on quickly.

News in brief

A package of works to improve **Brundall station** has been completed. The work included refurbishing the car park, new lighting and two new waiting shelters.

Cambridgeshire County Council have announced that a **new station at Chesterton Junction** to serve the Cambridge Science Park is unlikely to be completed before 2009. The extended time period appears to come from delays in agreeing a planning strategy for the adjacent site and lack of funding commitment from the SRA.

The new Network Rail **maintenance facility at March** is expected to open at the end of May.

The Branch has agreed to provide a **contribution to the East Suffolk Travellers Association** to support promotional material on walks and cycle rides from stations along the route.

Congratulations to Peter Lawrence who, having stepped down at National Chairman, has been appointed President. Peter will continue to act as the main media contact for Railfuture.

Branch Secretary Nick Dibben gave a talk to the Bury St Edmunds Society at the end of March on current and future rail developments in the region. The Branch is happy to give similar talks to other local organisations.

CAST.IRON are arranging a visit to the **Wensleydale Railway** on 25th September 2004.

'one': Greater Anglian franchise is launched



Photo: one

The new operator has promised a number of improvements to train services. There will be refurbished rolling stock and Class 90 locomotives for the main line and the first of these trains was rolled out on the 1st April and was used to carry guests to mark the launch of the franchise. Approval to use the Mk 3 driving van trailers (from the West Coast Main Line) between London and Norwich was only given a few hours before. Most of the London suburban trains will be refurbished and better information systems and CCTV will be fitted. Around £31m will be spent on station upgrades. There are significant improvements planned for the rural routes including an hourly service between Cambridge and Ipswich and 2 hourly direct services from London to both Peterborough via Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft. These services should start in December this year when there will be a major revision of the timetable. As expected, the SRA has cut the number of off-peak trains on the Great Eastern Main Line to allow more paths for freight trains.

The franchise will last for 7 years but can be extended to 10 years if performance criteria are met. There will be no subsidy from the taxpayer. Instead National Express will pay the SRA around £500m over the 7 years. The Branch has expressed concern about this level of payment and has asked the SRA how much of it will return to the region in the form of extra track capacity and new facilities.

At the timetable change at the end of May, the fares which were set by Great Eastern and Anglia (who were in competition with each other at Ipswich, Manningtree, Colchester and Liverpool Street) have been rationalised. This should not result in significant changes although the Manningtree Rail Users Association did discover that the Manningtree to Ipswich fare was to rise from £3.10 to £7.40; the matter was raised with 'one' and, at the time of going to press, subject to SRA approval, the new fare is expected to be £3.20.

Dates for your diary

Saturday 12th June at 14.00 Branch meeting at Ipswich in the Library, Northgate Street.

Peter Meades from one anglia will be talking about the new Greater Anglia franchise.

Saturday 18th September at 1400 Branch meeting in Norwich at the Assembly House.

Saturday 27th November Fen Line Users and Norwich-Peterborough Rail Users Annual General Meetings at the Maltings in Ely.

Saturday 4th December at 1400 Branch meeting in Cambridge at the Little St Mary Church Hall.

Branch Annual General Meeting report

Around 25 people attended the Branch's Annual General Meeting held in Bury St Edmunds Library during February. Secretary Nick Dibben outlined some of the issues that the Branch had been involved in during the year including the Greater Anglia Franchise, rail route capacity, aviation expansion and of course, the St Ives guided bus. Nick concluded his report by noting that the organisation of the railways was changing and that other organisations such as the SRA and RPC were more active in putting forward ideas. He said that Railfuture had to consider how it could still make its voice heard alongside these other bodies.

The return of Peter Wakefield after his trip to Africa is the only change in the Branch committee. The full list of committee members is Ivan Ivanovic (vice-chairman), Nick Dibben (secretary), Lewis Buckingham (treasurer), Clara Zilahi (membership), Chris Milnes (sales), Committee: Tony Albert, Jerry Alderson, Peter Bayless, Ken Burton, Peter Lawrence, John Saunders, Robert Stripe, Ben Walsh, Peter Wakefield.

The post of Chairman remains vacant as the Branch ideally wants someone who does not represent Railfuture to the media nationally.

Community Rail proposals

The SRA has issued a consultation document on community rail routes. The report looks at ways to build on the success of the various community rail schemes around the country, to increase passengers on branch lines whilst, at the same time, keeping costs under control. The Branch has responded by generally welcoming the ideas but expressing concern about the intention to raise fares and replace some services by buses. We have also requested safeguards to ensure that reduced track standards do not inhibit future rail freight from using these routes.

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CAST.IRON analysis

Cambridgeshire County Council claims that it supports the guided busway because it would not require any long-term subsidy, but a reopened railway would. However, CAST.IRON has produced a thoroughly researched 40-page analysis of the costs of operating a guided busway, and believes that an average of £873,000 subsidy is required each year just to maintain the busway. After allowing for initial loss-making bus services, prior to new houses being built, a total of £11.6m subsidy is predicted.

CAST.IRON chairman Tim Phillips presented a summary of this information in a 3-minute speech, followed by questions, to County Council members on 30th March, prior to their vote on continuing with the TWA order. Members were not swayed and voted to continue (37 in favour).

Snippets is an e-mail newsletter for members of the East Anglia Branch of Railfuture. To receive a copy, please send an e-mail to jerry.alderson@virgin.net asking to be added to the list. Remember to let Jerry know if you have changed your e-mail address or you will not receive a copy.

The Branch welcomes contributions to Rail East. Short articles are particularly welcome. Material for the next edition should reach Nick Dibben by 20th August 2004.