

RAIL EAST

The Newsletter of the East Anglian Branch of Rail Future

railfuture

Number 125

November 2004

Too much freight?

The successful completion of work to Ipswich Tunnel to allow for the passage of 9 foot 6 inch containers on standard wagons marked the end of the project of gauge enhancement from Felixstowe via London to the West Coast Main Line. Rail freight companies have already announced plans to run additional services from the port. During the summer, a public inquiry was held into plans to develop a container terminal near Harwich at Bathside Bay. Initially the SRA had expressed concerns over track capacity, but a later agreed position statement indicates how extra trains in the future may be fitted onto the network.

At present, rail carries around 21% of containers from Felixstowe on 21 trains each way per day. The main destinations for the containers are Liverpool/Manchester 37%, Yorkshire 24% and Birmingham 21%. For Bathside Bay, a rail share of 22.5% has been used but higher modal shares of 25% and 30% have also been considered. Initially 9 trains per day would be required to serve the new terminal. The SRA gives the freight capacity of the Great Eastern Main Line at 24 trains per day and the cross-country route to Ipswich as 13 trains per day. It therefore concludes that there is enough capacity providing gauge enhance-

ments are carried out on the Ipswich to Peterborough route and along the East Coast Main Line. The SRA say that the port has agreed to contribute to the cost of these works which should be complete by 2008.

The SRA has also looked at possible expansion at Felixstowe. It concluded that a minimum of 34 train paths would be needed at Felixstowe. This would require a major upgrade of the line and also at Ipswich yard to take additional and longer trains. Any extra traffic would have to go via Peterborough and this line would quickly run out of capacity. 19 trains along this route would be needed compared with a capacity of only 13. In addition, a large proportion would be heading for Birmingham and the North West, however the existing Peterborough-Nuneaton line is not suitable for container traffic due to the very limited clearance in Manton Tunnel. It is also worth noting that these numbers exclude any traffic to the Alconbury site and growth at the North Thameside ports.

No solution was given by the SRA, but the options would appear to be "send it by road", major works at Manton Tunnel, or dare we suggest it, a new East-West rail link! With trepidation, we look forward to seeing how the Department for Transport will

Branch meetings

Our Norwich meeting in September had a different format from previous meetings. Rather than a main speaker, we had a series of mini-presentations from a variety of organisations providing an update on their activities. We heard from CAST, IRON, the Bramley Line campaign aiming to re-open the March-Wisbech route, an update from ESTA on plans to add a passing loop at Beccles and from the Manningtree Rail Users on their aspirations. Feedback from the meeting was positive, and more members took part in the discussions. We hope to hold a similar meeting next year.

Our Cambridge meeting will be on Saturday 4th December at the Little St Mary Church Hall, Trumpington Street, Cambridge starting at 14.00. We have invited Lord Berkeley from the Railfreight Group to attend to talk about the future of freight on the railways. The SRA has been obliged to cut funding for freight. Trumpington Street is about 20 minutes walk from the station; alternatively a bus can be used to reach the centre.

The Busway enquiry

The large number of objectors wishing to attend the public inquiry into the plans by Cambridgeshire County Council to build a busway on the former Cambridge to St Ives railway line means that it is likely to be extended. Railfuture is working with other local organisation to present a joint case against the busway. Other members of the group are St Ives Town Council, Civic Society of St Ives, Cambridgeshire CPRE, Hartford Conservation Group and St Ives Town Centre Management Initiative Group. A number of individuals have also asked the group to represent them. We have employed the services of Alan James, a Transport Consultant, to help prepare our case and to represent us at the inquiry. The inquiry opened in St Ives at the end of September, and after the County Council had outlined their case, we were invited to present a 10 minute summary of our case. CAST.IRON and some other key objectors also gave a summary.

Our argument against the busway is based on a number of issues and not just the need to protect the trackbed for a future rail re-opening. The following points are taken from our opening statement:

- The busway scheme fails to consider the alternative of a fully integrated community rail and bus public transport strategy with each mode doing what it does best and delivering complementary services for different journey purposes and serving both local and regional transport needs.
- The busway eliminates the option of reopening the disused rail line for future rail use, which would broaden the spectrum of public transport choice rather than confining it to a single mode.
- The scheme has a weak performance in modal shift terms, which is supposedly one of the core objectives. The minimal transport impact on Huntingdon shows that scheme does not fully serve the A14 corridor, another core objective.
- The long term impact of road improvements along the A14 does not appear to have been adequately considered
- The claimed advantage of flexible bus routes serving places off the busway is not guaranteed so cannot be invoked as a scheme benefit.
- There are many flaws and apparent contradictions within the reports. These include forecasts of journey times, levels of patronage, and effects on traffic.

The above issues in turn affect the economic case for the busway and claimed benefits compared with the key objectives. The most significant issue, is the large discrepancy in the predicted saving in car trips between different sections of the Transport Assessment report. There are also question marks over the scheme's costs, in particular the operating costs. This has consequences for the economic appraisal and the whole question of viability and acceptance by bus operators the lack of a gap in the guideway at these crossings is counter to the requirements of the Disabled Discrimination Act which became law in October 2004. We also have a number of serious objections to proposals for the on-road sections of the busway scheme from the end of the guided section at St Ives through the town centre and on to Huntingdon. Our evidence has been backed up by other objectors, especially CAST.IRON. The County Council have been unable to respond to some issues. The County Council have accepted that there are errors in the transport assessment documents. They have also admitted that their alternative do-minimum bus improvements is not a proper scheme as required by Government guide lines. The CAST.IRON alternative to the busway has also been keenly debated at the inquiry. The County Council issued a report claiming the proposal would cost £300m! That is three times the estimate in the CHUMMS report. Clearly they have not understood the concept of a low cost community railway.

The inquiry is now likely to finish in the middle of December when our group of objectors will be able to make a closing statement. The Inspector's report will be issued sometime in 2005.

Finally, a big "thank you" to all who have contributed money to help pay for the services of Alan James and to those who have made contributions to our case against the busway.

East Suffolk welcomes new Community Rail Partnership



Photo: 'one' Anglia

Suffolk's new Community Rail Partnership was launched with a morning of celebrations at Saxmundham rail station on Monday 4th October. Representatives from the local area including train operator 'one', Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Ipswich Borough Council and Waveney District Council gathered at the rail station to officially launch the partnership. The new logo, designed by Liz Martin who was the winner of the partnership's competition. The logo will appear on station signs along the East Suffolk Line, with the first on a new station sign at Saxmundham.

The partnership has also announced that John Brodribb, (on the right in the photograph) from Beccles, a well respected local rail campaigner, former member of the Rail Passengers' Committee and current co-ordinator of STEER (Sustainable Transport for the East England Region) will be their Chairman.

Dates for your diary

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

Saturday 4th December at 1400 Branch meeting in Cambridge at the Little St Mary Church Hall. The speaker will be Lord Berkeley of the Rail Group.

Saturday 19th February 2005 Branch Annual General Meeting to be held in Ely. Full details to be published in the next edition of Rail East.

Saturday 7th May 2005. Saturday Railfuture Annual General Meeting at the Bull Hotel, Peterborough.

All change!

On 12th December, a date chosen for all the railways in the European Union to change their timetables, 'one' will launch a new timetable for East Anglia. Much of the emphasis has been on producing a regular interval train frequency and introducing more direct train services to London from Suffolk. A much improved Cambridge to Ipswich service is also a feature.

Branch meetings

Stage 1 of the East-West Rail Link between Oxford and Bedford has been delayed after what appears to be a dispute between two government departments. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) was keen to see the £65m scheme progress as part of providing essential infrastructure to the major new housing development around Bletchley / Milton Keynes using money in the ODPM budget to pay for the scheme. However, following the Government's spending review this summer, the budget is now jointly run by ODPM and the Department of Transport. The Department of Transport, it appears, said "no" to scheme and wants yet another look at the figures. So more money will be wasted

Elsewhere the preliminary findings of a SRA study have concluded that the Bedford to Cambridge section of the route would cost hundreds of millions of pounds and can not be justified in the short term.

Drink ale - travel rail

The Bittern and Wherry Lines community rail partnerships have teamed up with train operator, 'one', The Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) and Norfolk County Council's new Broads Hopper cycle bus to promote access to Norfolk's rural pubs without the car this winter.

A Winter Ale TRail leaflet produced by CAMRA lists 25 real ale pubs along the routes of the Bittern Line (Norwich – Sheringham railway line), Wherry Lines (Norwich – Lowestoft / Great Yarmouth) and the BroadsHopper bus. It is hoped that the Ale TRail and AleTrack will encourage people to use local bus and train services and rural pubs during the winter months. Anyone visiting 20 of the pubs on the trail between 1 November 2004 and 31 March 2005 will win a one-day Bittern or Wherry Lines rover ticket. Those visiting all 25 pubs will win a limited edition Ale Trail t-shirt!.

East Suffolk Line Walks

In the last edition we gave the wrong title to a recent publication. The correct title is "East Suffolk Line Walks" and copies may be obtained from Trevor Garrod, 15, Clapham Road South, LOWESTOFT NR32 1RQ at a cost of £2 including postage. There are eleven walks from short strolls to 10 miles walks.

SnOasis

Plans have been submitted to build an all indoor ski slope and sporting resort in a former quarry to the north of Ipswich near Needham Market. The centre could attract over a million visitors each year and the developer has also included plans to build a new station near the centre on the Ipswich to Stowmarket line. The Branch has written to Mid-Suffolk District Council highlighting the need to provide good public transport to the development and welcoming the proposal to build a new station. We have however, also warned of the difficulties to building a new station on the main line and the impact that it would have on the track

BRANCH OFFICERS

Chairman: Vacant

Vice Chairman: Ivan Ivanovitch

3 Elm Drive, Offord Cluny, ST NEOTS PE18 9RN

Secretary: Nick Dibben

24 Bure Close, ST IVES, Cambs PE17 4FR

Tel: 01480 495101

Treasurer: Lewis Buckingham

25 Drury Road, COLCHESTER CO2 7UY

Sales: Chris Milne

25 Thetford Way, South Wootton, KINGS LYNN PE30 3TG

Membership Secretary: Clara Zilahi

31 Wimsotsham Road, DOWNHAM MARKET, Norfolk, PE38 9PE

Snippets compiler: Jerry Alderson

E-mail: jerry.alderon@virgin.net

Editor of Rail East: Tony Albert

Hunterswood, Ipswich Road, Holbrook, IPSWICH IP9 2QT

E-mail: tone_al9@hotmail.com

The Branch welcomes contributions to Rail East. Short articles are particularly welcome. Material for the next edition should reach Nick Dibben by 31st December 2004.