

RAIL EAST

The newsletter of the East Anglian branch of Railfuture



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More houses! More commuters!

Proposed development along the corridor between London, Stansted Airport, Cambridge and Peterborough will have a significant impact on the demand for rail services according to a report by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

Although the development will provide many thousands on jobs to encourage people to work locally, there will still be an increase in the numbers commuting to London each day. The report, *A study of the relationship between transport and development in the London Stansted, Cambridge, Peterborough Growth Area*, indicates an additional 27,105 peak hour commuters each day into London. Within the Branch area, figures are given below:

Station	Extra passengers by 2021
Braintree	823
Cambridge	5,496
Ely	537
Huntingdon/St Neots	1,928
Peterborough	2,119
Royston	196
Stansted Mountfitchet	859
Stevenage	1,717

These figures exclude any impact associated with growth at Stansted Airport. Having established the additional demand, the report notes that there will be a shortage of around 6,000 seats in the peak hour even allowing for recent and proposed enhancements such as the 12 car platforms on the Braintree Line. If the proposed Thameslink 2000 and Crossrail schemes go ahead these will provide the additional seating required. The Crossrail scheme will enable some additional peak hour trains from the West Anglia Route into Liverpool Street and Thameslink 2000 will enable 12 car services on the Great Northern route to Cambridge and Peterborough.

As noted in the last Rail East there is concern that the infrastructure to cater for the proposed additional 47,000 new houses in the region will not be funded by Government. The problems in providing increased rail capacity formed a major part of the comments submitted by the Branch in response to the East of England Plan in April. Our concerns have been echoed by the Chair of the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA), John Reynolds. Mr Reynolds has written to Transport Secretary Alistair Darling expressing concern over the SRA's spending plans for the region. The EERA supports plans for the East-West Rail Link.

Bird watching, house spotting and walking

“Widen the Choice” is a partnership between the RSPB, the National Trust and the Countryside Agency for Eastern England. The partnership intends to make it easier to reach various reserves, houses, etc using other means of transport than the car.

Apart from the RSPB leaflet, “Birds by train”, an additional leaflet describing how to reach Wicken Fen by public transport has been published. The National Trust have issued leaflets showing how to reach Sutton Hoo, near Woodbridge, and Blicking Hall in Norfolk. The bus serving Blicking Hall from Acle via Wroxham accepts both Wherry Line and Bittern Line Rover tickets. Access to Sheringham Park by bus or from Weybourne on the North Norfolk Railway is described in another leaflet. West Runton and Beeston Regis Heath are readily accessible from the Bittern line.

The partnership has also distributed a leaflet on the CoastLink, a flexible bus service linking with trains on the East Suffolk Line at Darsham. Bookings have to be made before 1200 the day prior to travel on 01728 833526.

The Branch welcomes the partnership promotion of the use of public transport to reach these interesting tourist destinations and is particularly pleased that the non-car owning public are being encouraged to visit these places.

Branch Annual General Meeting

Around 35 members attended the Branch Annual General Meeting in Ely. The regional transport campaign STEER also held their AGM on the same day and both groups combined to hear a presentation by Jonathan Denby from One Railway.

Jonathan outlined the progress that One had made during the first year of the new franchise. It had been a major exercise to combine the three old train operators into a single company whilst keeping the trains running. He acknowledged that the new Winter 2004 timetable had not pleased everyone but noted, that unlike

the first round of franchises, the SRA and Treasury were very much in control and specified the basic timetable. Modifications to the timetable would be made in February and at the next timetable change in June to resolve some of the issues regarding stopping patterns and overcrowding. The new timetable had lead to an increase in train performance with around 90% trains arriving within 5 minutes. Rolling stock improvements were underway and the first of the Class 156 diesel units to be used on local services had arrived. Although the trains had 2+2 seating to

National AGM

The Branch hosted the Railfuture National Annual General Meeting in Peterborough on the 7th May. Over 90 members attended to hear presentations from WAGN and CAST.IRON. Three East Anglia Branch members were elected to serve on the Railfuture Board. Congratulations to Clara Zilahi, Jerry Alderson and Trevor Garrod. The AGM was extensively reported in the Peterborough Evening Telegraph who picked up on the issue of track capacity and the possible threat to some smaller stations such as Whittlesea. A more detailed account of the day’s events will appear in the our national newsletter, Rail-watch.

replace the 2+3 seating on the existing trains there is a slight increase in the total number of seats on each train.

This year would see a number of station improvements, additional CCTV and security staff as well as a new customer service academy that was being built at Stratford.

At the Branch Annual General Meeting, Peter Wakefield was elected as our new Chairman with Peter Lawrence as Vice-Chairman; the other officers remain although several indicated their intent to stand down next year. Chris Burton from Cambridge joins the Branch Committee.

One Railway changes the timetable

On 26th April 'one' announced summer timetable revisions following its assessment of customer feedback and the survey work carried out by the Rail Passengers Committee as a result of the changes made in December 2004. It aims to make better use of rolling stock.

The Monday to Friday 0719 Lowestoft to Norwich trains will depart 0740, closer to the pre-December timetable, and the 0743 service will depart at 0758 ensuring that the busiest train from Lowestoft will have three carriages to cope with the demand, especially from school children.

All Ipswich to Cambridge train services on the hourly frequency Monday to Saturday service will call at Needham Market, Elmswell and Thurston. The 1643 Cambridge to Ipswich service, used by school children, and commuters, will have two carriages train. Currently some trains are a single carriage requiring 'one' to provide buses or taxis.

The 0633 Norwich to Cambridge service will arrive at 0713 at Brandon to serve early-morning commuters. The 1730 Norwich to Liverpool Street service will also call at Stowmarket on Mondays to Fridays providing a more frequent level of service for commuters working in Norwich.

Numerous tweaks are being made to Liverpool Street services for Colchester, Braintree, Clacton and Walton on the Naze to offer more journey opportunities at some intermediate stations.

The Bittern Line will also see extra stops for passengers at Salhouse, Gunton, Roughton Road and Worstead stations. Departure changes at Norwich and Sheringham are changing to aid commuters, students and local schools. The late evening services introduced in 2003 remain in the timetable.

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In brief

The East Suffolk

Traveller's Association

(ESTA) have published their vision for the future of the East Suffolk Line. The report calls for better connections at Ipswich and Lowestoft, improved information and an hourly service on the route. ESTA are sponsoring two tubs at the entrance to Felixstowe station to help brighten the town.

A fire at **Huntingdon station** has delayed plans to build a rail/bus interchange. The site for the bus stop is currently being used for a temporary ticket office.

Hutchinson Ports are currently consulting local residents about plans to restore double track to the Felixstowe Line. The extra capacity is needed to cope with an increase in freight traffic to the docks.

The inspectors report on the guided busway to St Ives is due soon and may be out by the time of the Bury St Edmund's meeting.

The Branch is always willing to provide speakers, especially non railway community groups on the recent developments on the railways.

The Branch welcomes contributions to Rail East. Short articles are particularly welcome. Material for the next edition should reach Nick Dibben by 1st October 2005.

ECML franchise

GNER have retained the East Coast Main Line franchise by offering to pay the Government around £1.3bn in premium payments over the next 10 years. The franchise also includes a number of improvements to the train service. Locally these include ticket barriers, better security and additional car parking at Peterborough which should see an additional early morning commuter service to London.

Branch Secretary Nick Dibben was interviewed for BBC TV news. Although welcoming the announcement and the improvements to services, he expressed his concern that despite getting £1.3bn from GNER the Government will still claim there is no money for capacity enhancements on the route.

What future for rail?

Your editor (not necessarily reflecting Branch policies) is concerned for the future of the network. The recently passed Railways Act means the Government no longer has a duty to develop the network. Indeed, within the PTE areas, there is an incentive to replace trains by buses. Why free bus travel but no free train travel? Route Utilisation Studies advocate closure of stations. The Cross Rail Bill, if enacted, will mean that only two tracks will be available from Liverpool Street for all freight and passenger trains travelling beyond Shenfield. The removal of the regional Rail Passengers Committees removes the interface between train operators and the passenger advocates.

I believe that the next Branch meeting is very important one for every member.

East-West Rail link

It appears that most government departments see the benefit in re-opening the route between Oxford and Cambridge apart from the Department of Transport! The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Department for the Environment are looking at the benefits of the line in relation to the new developments planned across the region. Sir Bob Reid, the former British Rail Chairman is now leading the agency charged with providing new infrastructure to serve development in the Milton Keynes area. Not surprisingly, he is also keen on the re-opening.

The East-West Rail Consortium has objected to plans to build a rowing lake across the old track bed near Bedford. The Consortium's view is that it is possible to move the site of the rowing lake so it does not affect the future rail re-opening. There was also concern that plans to excavate aggregate from the area would also affect the route.

General Election

A "thank you" to all Branch members who wrote to the candidates in the run up to the election. The Branch produced a railway update highlighting some recent successes and what needed to be done. Around Cambridge, the guided busway was an issue, no doubt helped by the leaflets distributed by CAST.IRON.

Dates for your diary

Saturday 25th June: East Anglian Branch Meeting at the Library, Bury St Edmunds, starting at 1400. We will be discussing future Branch campaigns.

Saturday 2nd July: Rail Re-openings conference at Barry, South Wales.

Friday 23rd September to Sunday 25th September: Community Rail Event at Norwich. The Branch hopes to have a stand at this event.

Saturday 1st October: East Anglian Branch Meeting at the Assembly House, Norwich. Mike Young will give an update on the county's rail freight strategy.

Saturday 5th November, Rail Users Conference in Manchester.

Saturday 11th December: East Anglian Branch meeting at Little St Mary's Hall, Cambridge.