

raileast

Newsletter of East Anglia Branch of Railfuture

Issue 197 • Feb 2023

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**MORE OF THE SAME IS NEEDED AS...
RAILFUTURE REVEALS IDEAS FROM ITS
NEW GEOGRAPHY FOR ANGLIA (NG4A)
STUDY FOR A MUCH-IMPROVED RAIL
SERVICE ACROSS EAST ANGLIA**

Inside this edition of RAIL EAST...

- Railfuture's proposals for better rail services up to the 2050s
- Cambridge cross-city rail
- Funding pay rises to end strikes
- New stations on their way
- Family-Friendly Trains campaign
- Station annual footfall 2021/22
- Cambridge congestion charge
- Station car parking hassles
- Soham "a soaring success" but single track stifles rail demand
- News in brief

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS ISSUE OF RAIL EAST

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Highlighting key messages from *New Geography for Anglia* – and more on the vexed issue of parking at stations

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An introduction to *New Geography for Anglia*, an ambitious look into a possible future for rail in the east

Station footfall data, 2021 – 2022 – [p.12](#)

The regional picture from ORR, reflecting our first post-pandemic cycle

Rail strikes – is there a solution? – [p.14](#)

Settling the current dispute will involve making unpalatable choices

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Some lateral thinking serving multiple purposes

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Current initiatives – plus some exciting future possibilities

Good news from Soham – [p.20](#)

Another vindication of “Build it & they will come”

A solution for Cambridge traffic congestion? – [p.22](#)

The highly contentious subject of the proposed Sustainable Travel Zone

News in brief – [p.23](#)

Levelling up – ESTA 10 year plan – Katch reprieve



Cross Country Trains is set to get a four-year contract but no service improvements, sadly. As requested in RAIL EAST, Cambridge North signage has been improved, even if stuck on. A family waiting area at King's Cross, which our AGM guest speaker will no doubt talk about.

Station car park problems are mentioned on page 3. Good news...Greater Anglia has reduced charges by up to 15% at 15 of its car parks until April 2023 to try to tempt back travellers. But not at Dullingham, where the £3 charge remains.



Cab view of soon to be modernised level crossing at Dullingham from Twitter (@TheNorfolkScot)



CHAIR'S THOUGHTS

BY NICK DIBBEN, CHAIR, EAST ANGLIA BRANCH

Growing the railway

Members who came to our Cambridge meeting in December 2022 heard from Jonathan Roberts, a transport consultant commissioned by Railfuture to produce a long-term rail strategy for the region. If you didn't make the meeting, you can read the first part of a write-up and see a map of a possible future rail network on pages 4 - 11. The study does not go into detail on some of the projects that are currently being investigated, such as the Ely Area Capacity Enhancements (EACE) upgrade and Haughley Junction upgrade near Stowmarket. The study assumes that these projects have been delivered as they are essential for any development of the rail network. In this respect it is good to see a growing number of MPs who support these schemes, including many from other regions who recognise the benefits that these projects will bring to the whole country.



Further good news is that the new station at Cambridge South to serve the Addenbrooke's Hospital complex and adjacent biomedical research park has been approved and enabling work has started — as shown on the front cover photo, and on page 18 which also covers the start of work on the new station at Beaulieu Park just north of Chelmsford to serve a major housing development.

Although rail campaigners love talking about new infrastructure and new trains, the more human side of the railway is also vital in encouraging people to take the train. So come to the Railfuture East Anglia AGM in Bury St Edmunds on Saturday 25 February to learn about the Family-Friendly Railway from Nick Flynn — see page 10.

The saga of paying for car parking at Huntingdon station (see RAIL EAST issue 196) continues. Following complaints from passengers who pre-paid for parking on-line then could not find a parking space, this option is no longer available. This decision was agreed by train operator GTR and the car park operator. In addition, the last remaining car park ticket machine has been removed, so you have to use the app. However, the local newspaper recently included a letter from a passenger warning about a scam website for the parking. Customer service? Not really! It's not clear if this is just the train operator, or is it down to the Department for Transport trying to micro-manage the railway but not making any decisions? Perhaps someone in the rail industry can enlighten us all.

Jerry Alderson writes, Nick is right to refer to the problems of car parking, which affect many stations in East Anglia. The railway in Britain can often learn from those in other countries. In Belgium, a carnet of 10 24-hour electronic car parking tickets can be purchased (see poster on display at stations, right), which has a validity period of 12 months. They are added to the (MOBIB) travel smartcard; simply tap it on the reader at the car park terminal, after parking, to use one of the 10 days.



In Britain, automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) is taking over, but changes need considerable thought before introduction, what one might call 'stress testing', and then refining. Too often, organisations and even entire industries do not think of all scenarios and when it goes wrong, they reverse rather than resolve issues.

Many problems with station car parking and using trains have a common cause — fragmentation of the industry that works against customers. Different companies can operate behind the scenes but for users there is just 'the railway'. A national one-stop-shop for everything — or at least a default one leaving customers to choose an independent one if they wish — where people can get rail information, buy train and car parking and obtain refunds if required. "Great British Railways" (quotes are needed as the Williams-Shapps plan for rail is now very fluid, to say the least) was supposed to solve these problems. If it doesn't, who will?

NEW GEOGRAPHY FOR ANGLIA (PART 1)

BY JONATHAN ROBERTS, NICK DIBBEN AND MARTIN COOPER

New Geography for Anglia (NG4A) is the result of a major study carried out for Railfuture East Anglia by our appointed independent transport consultant, Jonathan Roberts (pictured right) that, if implemented, would make rail the travel mode of choice for many more journeys. The findings were presented at our public meeting in Cambridge on 3 December 2022.



This article provides an introduction to the study which has reviewed the whole East Anglian sub-region, itself a sub-set of the larger East of England region. Further articles will appear in RAIL EAST during 2023 to cover the findings in more detail and set out our recommendations for:

- Improved rail services for inter-urban corridors
- New metro services, like those proposed in Devon, for the top five regional cities
- New domestic freight flows into the region.

Introduction – The region, its geography and transport challenges

The study area, shown in Figure 1 below, comprises:

- The core 'East Anglia' of Peterborough, Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire:
 - (excluding some west of Cambs. wards), with 2,556,000 people (2021 census) across 12,245 sq.km.
- A 'South Anglia' zone in North Essex and Hertfordshire:
 - extending from Colchester and Chelmsford to Braintree, Stansted Airport, Bishops Cleeve and Harlow, with 969,000 residents across 2,351 sq.km, at double the population density of 'core' East Anglia.
- Other urban centres on inter-regional transport corridors:
 - with catchment populations of at least 154,000 in Greater Bedford and 58,000 in Ware/Hertford.

This introductory map (right) shows the rail network set against the population density of different parts of the East Anglia region, with the background colour that ranges from light green, through yellow, to dark red being self-explanatory. The post-Beeching rail network is focused on most centres of economic activity and population, with a few exceptions such as Haverhill and Wisbech, which have no rail services. However, the expansion of jobs and population in recent decades has often been in locations poorly accessed by rail, including outer suburbs.

Distribution of Anglia population density

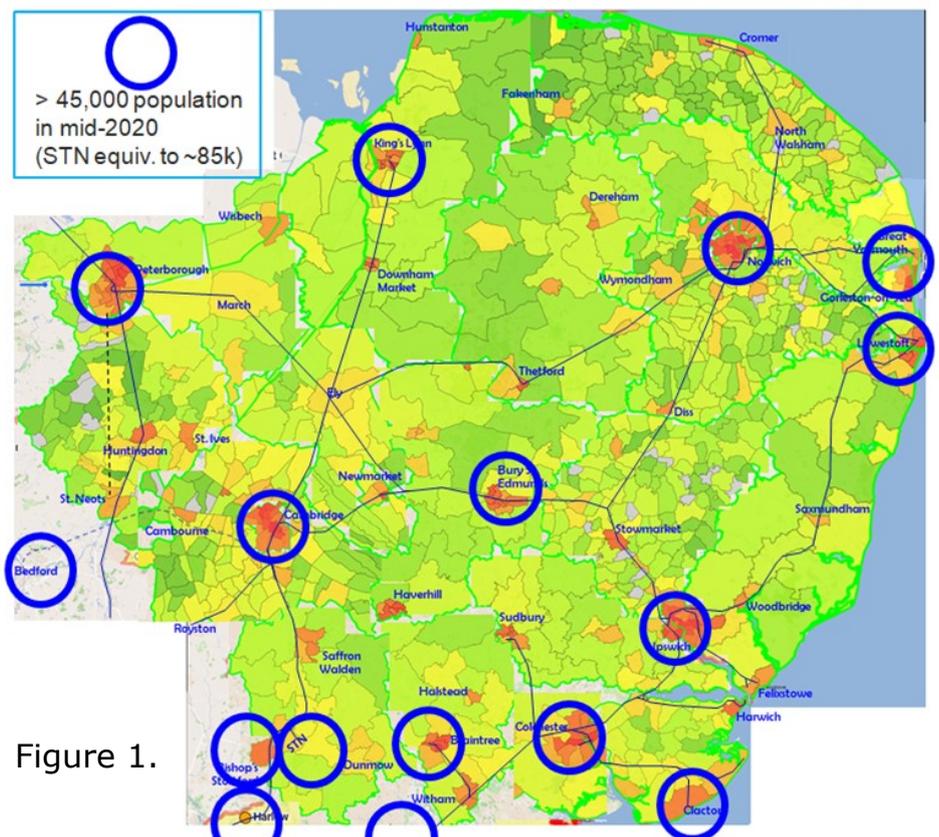


Figure 1.

East Anglia itself is an area larger than the whole West Midlands region. Much is low density, yet the bulk of the sub-region’s population lives in towns and cities of more than 15,000 people. This mix of remoteness, lengthy distances and long journey times between major population centres presents significant challenges for passenger and freight transport.

Realising the long-term vision for a more effective rail service

A Rail Network Development map (see page 11) illustrates the study’s vision for the 2050s, of how investment in the region’s rail network could be a major factor in economic growth across the region, and a substitute for much road traffic growth and investment. The proposals enhance sustainable travel options for the 16 main population centres. The study recognised that rural communities remain car dependent – however, access to sustainable travel including rail can still be improved with benefits for those rural communities.

This is a long-term vision, and it is essential to make a start on delivering the existing outstanding priorities identified by Transport East, which address capacity issues at Ely and Haughley Junction on the Felixstowe-to-Midlands railway, vital for international freight, along with improved capacity for East West Rail to be accommodated across Cambridge and to continue to Norwich and Ipswich.

Projected 21st century growth in travel volume should favour direct passenger rail services between all 16 main centres (see the list on the right, and also the 16 blue circles in the map on page 4), with an existing population of nearly 1.5 million in the built-up areas and over 1.7 million in the wider agglomerations, which could be 1.9-2.1 million by 2050. (Stansted Airport counts as one of these nodes because of its high daily travel volume pre-COVID). The challenge is that the Anglian rail network is not geared for that growth!

For example, Greater Norwich has a 247,000 population across 150 sq.km. There is just one principal railhead, Norwich Thorpe, inconvenient for much of this catchment and also 15-20 minutes’ walk from the city centre. By contrast, Greater Cambridge has a smaller population of 204,000 across a larger area, 184 sq.km. Its principal station is also remote from the city centre. However, a second main station opened in 2017 at Cambridge North, and both stations are at the heart of large-scale employment zones. A third principal station is now being constructed at Cambridge South to serve the Biomedical Campus, forecast for 27,000 jobs by 2031. There is also an expanding local catchment population.

The number of rail rides per head of local population is telling with these two examples – which of course also reflect the effectiveness of rail in serving the city region catchments. Norwich Thorpe saw 4.2 million entries and exits in 2019-20 pre-COVID, while Cambridge and Cambridge North saw over 13 million, so respectively 17 and 64 rail rides per head of catchment population per annum. The growth in ridership in Cambridge shows change is possible, with rail positioned as an enabler for economic growth and sustainable travel.

The core of the study has looked (a) at the existing and future passenger flows between these existing 16 centres, which contain over half of the entire East Anglian population, and (b) at the potential for Metro-style regional services. The research analysed equivalent *Generalised Journey Times (GJTs)* including multiple origins/destinations in the biggest urban zones, to assess rail competitiveness against car, for the inter-urban routes linking these centres and for potential Metro services. (GJTs allow for all the “static” components of travel – buying tickets/

Bedford [*]
Bishop’s Stortford [*]
Braintree [*]
Bury St Edmunds
Cambridge
Clacton
Colchester
Great Yarmouth
Harlow [*]
Ipswich
King’s Lynn
Lowestoft
Norwich
Peterborough
Stansted Airport
Witham [*]
Asterisk denotes centres outside the Railfuture East Anglia branch area

waiting for a train etc or allowing for time to park or urban delays when driving – thereby establishing a fairer baseline for direct comparisons.) Rail along these corridors will also link many other towns, so cumulatively serving the bulk of East Anglia’s population.

Recommendations

- Improved links between all key East Anglian centres. Where justified, direct services can be achieved by a small number of new chords and cut-off lines, for example a chord near Ely to enable direct trains between Norwich and Peterborough/King’s Lynn.
- A second East-West corridor – an R120 paralleling the A120 road – between Mid/North East Essex and Stansted Airport (exterior pictured right) and on to Cambridge and Harlow. This might extend to Hertford, so responding to EEH interest in a rail corridor north of the M25. Travel modelling suggests that a new rail corridor between the A12/Great Eastern and the M11/West Anglia corridors could become **the busiest railway in the whole of East Anglia**, with multiple origins and destinations geared to the urbanised growth centres of Cambridge, Harlow, Chelmsford and Colchester, and many other towns across ‘South Anglia’. Instead of ‘Southern Electric’, think ‘Anglia Electric’!
- Better rail infrastructure to support new intensive development for housing and other economic growth, as justified. Housing capacity and city access is vital around the major Anglian cities of Cambridge, Norwich, Peterborough and Colchester/Ipswich (the latter two are increasingly a twinned urban zone). This gives scope for some new stations and links, to improve rail access for these major city regions, including tram-trains where the railway is distant from city centres and other major destinations.
- Awareness of post-COVID travel preferences, to accommodate greater travel diversity. Greater London is now less of a growth zone and is recovering slowly. There is already a new travel demand geography which favours non-London/closer-to-home towns and cities.



As an example of assessment and outputs, North Anglia illustrates the possible options which were reviewed. The study rejected various ideas, such as a railway reopening in North Norfolk along the A47 corridor between Norwich-King’s Lynn. Low population density ruled this out and may also rule out improvements to the A47 itself (route is shown on the map on page 7) since the DfT lacks funds.

Direct railway services are supported only to the major North Anglia population centres. There the study favours:

- Reopening of the Wymondham-Dereham line:
 - as a fast Norwich regional service with through tram-trains into central Norwich.
- A direct chord north of Ely to connect the Norwich and Peterborough/King’s Lynn lines:
 - for direct express Norwich-King’s Lynn trains taking 70-75 minutes so competitive with road times.
 - the same chord would cut Midlands, Peterborough and Norwich journey times by 15-20 minutes.
- Reinstatement of March-Wisbech (catchment of nearly 40,000 residents):
 - through tram-trains can run to Peterborough and to Greater Cambridge.

The main enhancements are shown in Figure 2 below - the A47 Corridor.

The new schemes identified by the study will take time to deliver. It is critical that transport and development planners work together to plan, coordinate and safeguard these opportunities to achieve better outcomes for the region’s future prosperity and quality of life.

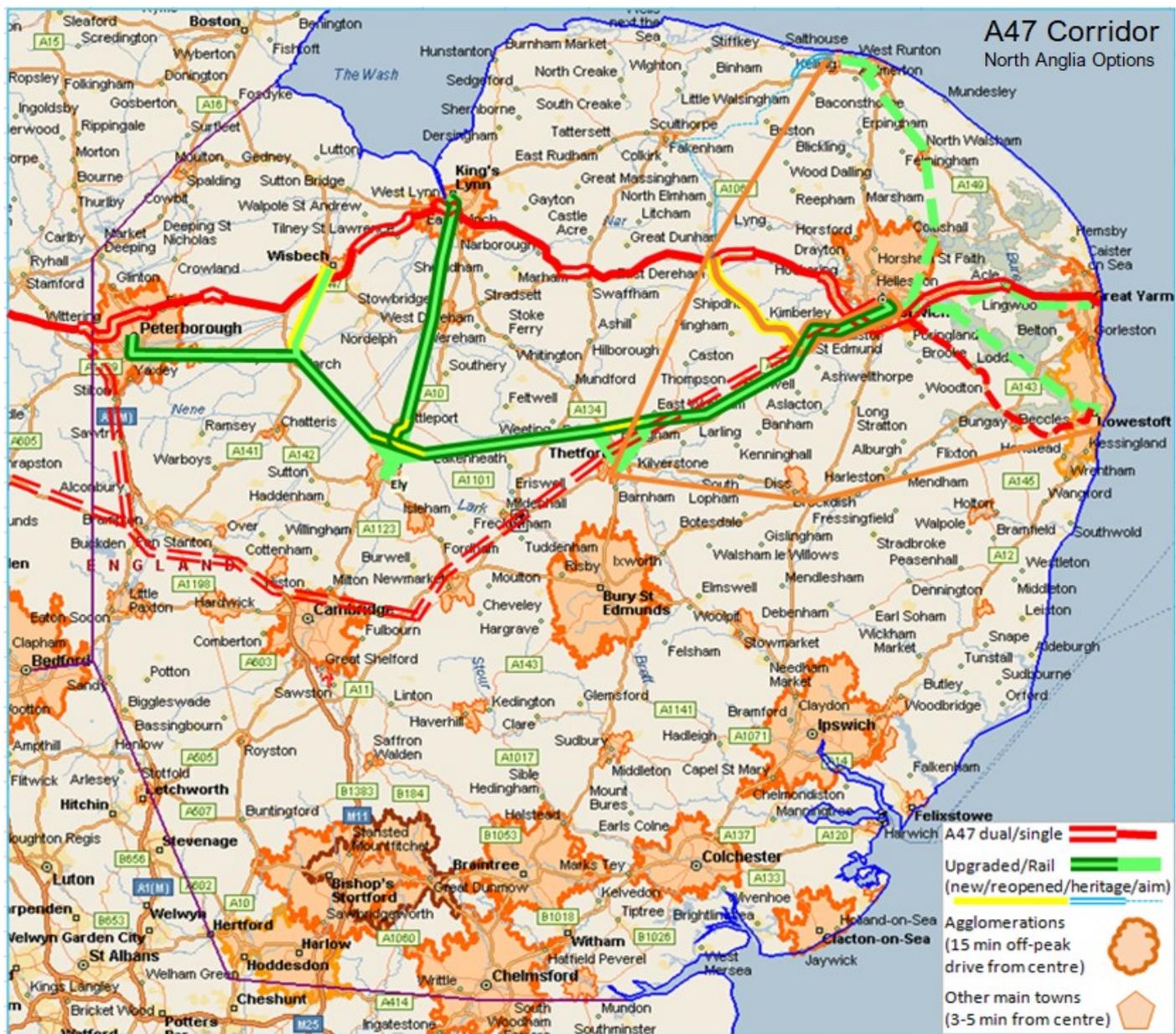


Figure 2. The map shows the A47 in red (along with the A11, A14 and A1 roads in red dashed lines, which provide an effective car journey time compared to going all the way by the shorter A47) with the current and reopened railway lines in green.

A targeted programme of further infrastructure and improvements to the existing network will allow the following **rail service improvements**:

A new layer of **fast, limited stop services**:

- between the five busiest population and economic centres of the region.

A **minimum of two trains per hour** on most inter-urban and branch routes:

- e.g. an hourly fast, and an hourly semi-fast/stopping, adjusted to the scale of intermediate towns.

- Providing **better catchment access** to the railway:

- by use of new parkway railhead stations for car access, and bus feeders.

- Redrawing the rail timetable **to provide reliable connectivity across the region**:

- this will require a less London-centric pattern of connections where it is not possible to provide direct train services.

- Metro standards for **corridors serving large city region catchments**:

- to support Anglian city access and connectivity.

Growth in rail travel can be further enhanced by simplified and integrated ticketing, better coordination with other transport modes, marketing rail as a comprehensive Anglian network, better access to stations and promoting active travel.

Helping the region cope with growth

The study identified problems with existing transport in the region.

The region is growing in economic strength and in population, so demand for transport will increase. At the moment the region is highly car dependent with correspondingly high levels of carbon emissions. Existing housing development does not generally feature sustainable transport options, although such solutions are required nationally within 30 years.

Transport plans need to reflect the concerns about the environment, climate impact and address social exclusion – creating a more equal society by improving access to jobs, education and training. More sustainable options should be possible, as nearly 80% of the population live in cities and larger towns so that concentration of effort can be achieved.

Most travel comprises short, local journeys within urban areas which are not suitable for rail. The inter-urban element of the study therefore focussed on the journeys into and between the main urban centres. This accounts for around 20% of all journeys being longer distance. A review of existing road and rail flows shows that the rail share of the longer distance journeys is between 5-10% with a few exceptions where rail is doing better, such as London-Cambridge and Norwich-Ipswich. The higher share for rail is likely due to more frequent and faster rail services competing against slow or congested roads.

The outputs of the study have provided high-level answers to the question: “What needs to happen to accommodate the planned growth in East Anglia and to improve rail’s contribution?” Planning just to contain the growth in road traffic over the next thirty years sees a projected four-to-six-fold increase in rail journeys. This sounds a lot, but it is from a low base. Most of the capacity change can be met by running longer trains (example, right) and modest increases in frequency.



The review identified many possible options for achieving a bigger and better railway. Selection of the proposed interventions was guided by the following criteria and considerations:

- Rail must focus on what it does best
- Journey time not distance is a more important determinant of travel choice
- Making the most of the existing network, which is not full save for the outer-London two-track lines and at busy junctions, and with targeted investment in capacity and line speeds
- Constraints such as level crossing limitations, and single lines lacking enough passing/dynamic loops should also be tackled



Congestion is a sign of economic success. Investing in rail helps everybody, including drivers, by limiting the further growth in road traffic, and brings more sustainable growth. We have a choice about how to support our continued economic success.

- Solutions in proportion to the potential populations to be served along the line of route should be cost-effective
- Linking rail investment with the delivery of new housing and job opportunities in managed corridors, through better collaboration between transport and development planners
- Co-ordination with road investment plans to achieve modal shift from HGVs to rail
- Providing parkway stations to avoid increased pressure on city centre traffic when growing the volume of rail travel
- Developing tram-train services (see photo above) allows some existing rail services to access the city centre and other key destinations such as universities or regional hospitals
- Opening new stations to serve major employment destinations
- Restoring former lines can be supported when the line is relevant to shaping the development planners' views of the future economic growth of the region
- Planning is required for the larger scale of facilities required at stations and their surface access, extra rolling stock including support facilities such as depots/sidings, and foreseen network pinch-points with higher train frequency.



Transport for Wales class 398 tram train for use in South Wales. They are scheduled to enter passenger service during 2023



Cambridge North station opened in 2017

The benefits

An enhanced rail service will have many benefits for the region and its communities. The study identified the following:

Benefits for people

- Faster more reliable journeys between the region's cities and larger towns
- Improved connectivity for wider Travel to Work Areas, opening a bigger jobs market and also addressing deprivation zones
- Better access to services and facilities, including access to training and skills, that are only provided in the larger agglomerations.

Benefits for the economy

- Attract inward investment in jobs and counteract the negative effects of deprivation arising from poor access and connectivity
- More energy efficient transportation of people and goods
- Supporting business growth with greater access to jobs, education and training
- Reducing the impact of future traffic congestion and the need for new roads,
- Reduce road maintenance costs
- Making best use of existing infrastructure
- Reduced public health costs.

Benefits for the environment & development planning

- Support decarbonisation of transport
- Supporting sustainable and higher density development to enable more cost effective service provision
- Improved air quality in cities and towns

'New Geography for Anglia'—Concluding messages

The study demonstrates that rail offers a sustainable long-term approach to supporting economic and population growth, if investment is well targeted. The sub-region's funding pots should be flexible about which modes of travel and which sustainable development planning objectives to prioritise.

The current transport challenges are in large measure a consequence of business-as-usual investment in the road network for the past 60 years. It is important that the next round of transport investment recognises the need to redress the balance, to slow the growth in car inter-urban traffic and reduce urban car dependency.

The review provides evidence that reduced Generalised Journey Times **will** attract people from other modes to use rail. This can be paralleled by development planning reform and underpinned by a restored belief in rail as an effective mass volume transport system. The drive to make rail more competitive will reduce congestion, air pollution and the unviable expansion of large-scale car parking in areas of high value land. It is time for Railfuture East Anglia to work with the rail industry and its partners in local and central government to rise to the challenge, raise its game and deliver the better, more reliable and affordable rail services that a thriving economy will need.

The next article will focus on inter-urban flows including the case for a new East-West railway corridor across Essex, to connect the A12/Great Eastern and the M11/West Anglia corridors and communities. See map on page 11.

RAILFUTURE AGM AND PUBLIC MEETING— GUEST SPEAKER **SATURDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2023 — 14.00 TO 16.30**

**OUR USUAL VENUE — THE FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE,
ST JOHN'S STREET, BURY ST EDMUNDS IP33 1SJ**

The meeting will begin with a presentation by **Nick Flynn** (right) of the **Campaign for Family-Friendly Trains**, a group of parents working towards making train travel more accommodating for families with young children. Their key demands include reservable space for prams and pushchairs on trains, toilets and baby-changing facilities that are family-friendly, step-free access, and level boarding.



Travelling by train became a challenge for Nick after he had children. Once-simple journeys were made difficult by broken lifts, gaps between the train and the platform, and trains that lacked spaces for babies and children in prams and pushchairs. Sometimes it is just poor design, as shown by the tweet above.

Campaign for Family-Friendly Tra... @trains_for_ki... · Dec 23, 2022

Step 1. Take your baby to the train toilet to change their nappy. 🧑
Step 2. Baby presses the big, brightly lit button positioned within easy reach of the changing table 🚽
Step 3. Toilet flushes loudly. 🗣️
Step 4. Baby freaks only and starts crying 😭

If you use social media, you can follow their campaign using @familyfriendlytrains on Instagram and @trains_for_kids on Twitter.

Following a break, around 15.00, there will be the branch AGM, which will include reports from Railfuture about its activities in East Anglia, and a chance to ask questions. The branch committee will also be elected. Only members may vote.

The St. John's Street entrance is opposite the bus station and car park, the entrance from St. Andrew's Street is best for those walking from the railway station, which is about 10 minutes away. Tea and coffee will be provided.

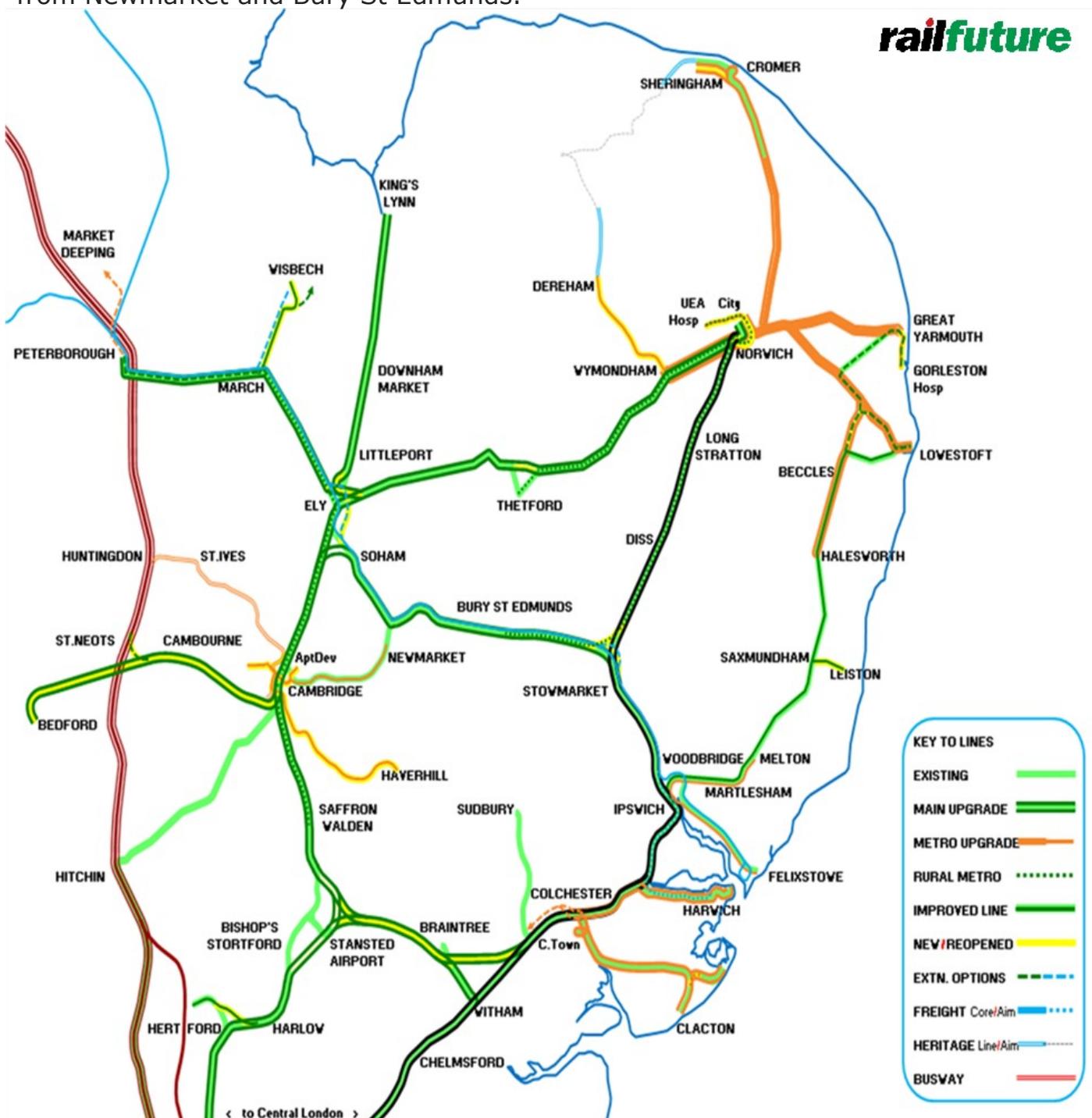
EAST ANGLIA RAIL NETWORK IN 2023—RAILFUTURE’S VISION

The map below shows what the rail network could look like if all of the elements in Railfuture’s *New Geography for East Anglia* (NG4EA) proposals are adopted.

The colours denote the types of improved services that could be operated.

Reopened and new rail routes are, naturally, included. Railfuture’s key campaigns of Wisbech and Haverhill are shown, as is operating regular services over the Mid-Norfolk Railway between Wymondham and Dereham (something that was proposed in a Restoring Your Railway bid that the MNR backed).

On the minor infrastructure side, there would be a link from the Fen Line joining the west curve at Ely allowing direct services between King’s Lynn and Norwich (the curve already allows for direct services between King’s Lynn and Peterborough), a possible short-cut from Soham to Cambridge that avoids Ely, a fast stretch of new track on the Ely to Norwich enabling some services to avoid the dog leg at Thetford, and a north-facing curve at Haughley junction to enable direct services to Norwich from Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds.



OFFICIAL ANNUAL STATION USAGE ESTIMATES FOR APRIL TO MARCH IN EAST ANGLIA

Because of the significant patronage reduction caused by COVID-19 between March 2020 and spring 2022, and the distortion this can cause when comparing one year against the next, we have broken from convention and shown figures for the six consecutive years from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2022. All figures from the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) on 24/11/2022.

Station name [code]	Year ended 31 March						% change 2022	
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2017	2021
Norwich [NRW]	4,111,338	4,156,302	4,250,834	4,041,818	967,650	3,213,504	-22	232
Salhouse [SAH]	13,350	10,448	11,778	9,856	11,566	12,692	-5	10
Hoveton & Wroxham [HXM]	125,282	129,552	136,414	125,260	38,880	112,218	-10	189
Worstead [WRT]	24,652	26,766	25,650	25,404	6,730	22,270	-10	231
North Walsham [NWA]	251,382	257,940	265,400	226,116	54,894	221,032	-12	303
Gunton [GNT]	15,848	17,008	19,188	18,560	3,334	22,228	40	567
Roughton Road [RNR]	15,998	16,846	21,766	21,552	3,304	20,956	31	534
Cromer [CMR]	201,300	204,582	219,244	213,936	60,352	212,590	6	252
West Runton [WRN]	26,186	24,844	27,212	26,076	9,144	31,834	22	248
Sheringham [SHM]	209,952	221,480	225,894	182,288	53,214	233,550	11	339
Brundall Gardens [BGA]	14,360	14,022	12,248	9,408	9,318	11,358	-21	22
Brundall [BDA]	108,202	99,930	97,164	89,742	33,282	83,006	-23	149
Lingwood [LGD]	49,208	47,934	46,134	43,536	12,622	37,524	-24	197
Acle [ACL]	47,714	44,914	45,336	41,618	8,478	33,642	-29	297
Great Yarmouth [GYM]	399,182	384,966	381,002	344,276	117,164	347,854	-13	197
Cantley [CNY]	23,216	21,682	20,590	17,048	7,004	14,776	-36	111
Reedham (Norfolk) [REE]	50,302	46,020	45,618	41,074	10,770	36,230	-28	236
Berney Arms [BYA]	1,126	966	442	42	348	868	-23	149
Haddiscoe [HAD]	13,098	12,924	13,580	12,650	2,870	9,086	-31	217
Buckenham [BUC]	122	202	216	212	98	300	146	206
Somerleyton [SYT]	11,638	12,378	12,972	10,898	2,194	8,696	-25	296
Oulton Broad North [OUN]	117,920	115,400	112,600	106,438	21,768	98,344	-17	352
Lowestoft [LWT]	449,864	452,118	438,476	406,440	103,144	354,928	-21	244
Oulton Broad South [OUS]	48,616	47,996	47,696	43,518	7,212	45,430	-7	530
Beccles [BCC]	109,906	110,774	114,302	110,152	17,682	97,838	-11	453
Brampton (Suffolk) [BRP]	7,842	9,004	9,532	9,858	1,342	7,674	-2	472
Halesworth [HAS]	100,186	97,870	102,016	99,838	15,854	84,792	-15	435
Darsham [DSM]	55,880	57,728	59,924	61,534	13,092	48,180	-14	268
Saxmundham [SAX]	152,074	154,322	164,400	165,274	35,022	138,696	-9	296
Wickham Market [WCM]	46,392	47,890	50,932	55,266	11,570	47,570	3	311
Melton [MES]	68,340	77,748	84,358	82,562	14,742	55,112	-19	274
Woodbridge [WDB]	204,654	206,028	210,440	209,172	50,570	168,694	-18	234
Westerfield [WFI]	9,580	11,110	11,642	11,284	10,188	12,988	36	27
Derby Road [DBR]	49,014	48,310	47,938	46,808	18,040	56,746	16	215
Trimley [TRM]	32,888	32,420	32,178	31,122	7,366	35,612	8	383
Felixstowe [FLX]	198,934	202,568	187,454	170,412	58,704	193,072	-3	229
Ipswich [IPS]	3,342,366	3,351,902	3,416,026	3,292,182	726,756	2,125,686	-36	192
Mistley [MIS]	77,606	71,082	75,366	71,784	14,418	36,520	-53	153
Wrabness [WRB]	25,172	30,526	30,348	29,056	5,458	17,280	-31	217
Harwich International [HPQ]	90,506	105,802	110,944	109,876	33,030	74,476	-18	125
Dovercourt [DVC]	173,364	174,788	177,752	163,728	46,460	118,474	-32	155
Harwich Town [HWC]	134,614	140,520	151,076	128,454	27,818	79,978	-41	188
Diss [DIS]	685,326	689,962	700,586	671,300	124,442	422,272	-38	239
Manningtree [MNG]	1,068,642	1,078,502	1,106,204	1,068,816	200,350	634,684	-41	217
Colchester [COL]	4,475,581	4,378,760	4,453,178	4,249,444	1,029,176	2,913,266	-35	183
Colchester Town [CET]	774,969	758,204	771,090	735,814	178,206	504,448	-35	183
Hythe [HYH]	204,786	234,522	265,716	279,464	59,242	178,362	-13	201
Wivenhoe [WIV]	393,050	389,822	401,240	403,306	70,786	216,778	-45	206
Alresford [ALR]	69,720	61,752	62,994	65,602	15,816	47,180	-32	198
Great Bentley [GRB]	81,140	76,770	81,144	78,634	18,728	50,764	-37	171
Weeley [WEE]	31,820	33,354	34,908	37,652	11,506	30,360	-5	164
Thorpe-le-Soken [TLS]	134,164	127,928	131,088	135,486	32,264	95,582	-29	196
Clacton-on-Sea [CLT]	824,270	790,866	799,344	763,016	276,656	623,870	-24	126
Kirby Cross [KBX]	46,332	46,386	44,782	47,842	13,726	36,664	-21	167
Frinton-on-Sea [FRI]	208,252	191,352	200,904	184,550	51,010	134,952	-35	165
Walton-on-the-Naze [WON]	132,296	131,148	136,708	130,090	40,024	97,784	-26	144

Station name [code]	Year ended 31 March						% change 2022	
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2017	2021
Marks Tey [MKT]	557,456	577,550	604,902	606,914	112,616	302,470	-46	169
Chappel & Wakes Colne [CWC]	37,408	38,544	39,360	46,258	4,090	22,490	-40	450
Bures [BUE]	62,838	58,680	60,432	58,024	8,626	35,712	-43	314
Sudbury [SUY]	320,042	323,052	334,274	334,694	61,846	224,284	-30	263
Kelvedon [KEL]	865,706	844,570	847,748	797,650	119,948	355,632	-59	196
Needham Market [NMT]	91,706	100,648	102,320	100,754	33,484	79,196	-14	137
Stowmarket [SMK]	951,396	935,244	967,114	916,094	185,762	615,232	-35	231
Elmswell [ESW]	71,566	68,546	71,078	71,050	13,570	67,164	-6	395
Thurston [TRS]	69,258	72,388	77,592	71,562	15,688	76,036	10	385
Bury St.Edmunds [BSE]	633,362	652,084	665,112	657,942	151,514	564,972	-11	273
Kennett [KNE]	37,150	39,512	42,684	42,516	9,408	36,538	-2	288
Newmarket [NMK]	363,784	358,798	355,068	335,652	77,602	255,860	-30	230
Dullingham [DUL]	40,376	39,028	41,832	35,086	10,842	22,798	-44	110
Shelford [SED]	182,138	204,618	207,478	216,194	57,942	140,840	-23	143
Whittlesford Parkway [WLF]	509,744	538,972	558,134	552,024	93,042	291,808	-43	214
Great Chesterford [GRC]	114,146	109,116	110,120	110,198	24,252	77,954	-32	221
Audley End [AUD]	930,960	1,011,626	979,414	1,006,730	172,636	502,644	-46	191
Newport (Essex) [NWE]	176,142	184,798	188,094	195,984	64,436	167,346	-5	160
Elsenham [ESM]	219,542	246,268	252,716	245,240	63,386	155,610	-29	145
Stansted Airport [SSD]	7,632,108	8,934,250	9,773,870	8,474,784	794,992	3,368,742	-56	324
Stansted Mountfitchet [SST]	569,860	584,288	599,478	578,766	150,136	406,316	-29	171
Foxton [FXN]	92,908	102,170	101,990	105,404	30,564	75,252	-19	146
Shepreth [STH]	110,756	114,294	115,600	117,102	23,676	68,718	-38	190
Meldreth [MEL]	269,934	307,868	295,470	305,888	82,016	181,362	-33	121
Royston [RYS]	1,483,338	1,477,616	1,467,154	1,435,616	289,662	835,428	-44	188
Ashwell & Morden [AWM]	150,384	152,372	156,490	159,254	34,748	104,212	-31	200
Baldock [BDK]	648,738	653,280	637,664	654,320	154,004	387,170	-40	151
Letchworth [LET]	1,890,116	1,900,970	1,856,558	1,834,720	457,590	1,189,236	-37	160
Hitchin [HIT]	3,213,416	3,237,946	3,265,142	3,233,772	750,478	1,981,466	-38	164
Arlesey [ARL]	693,548	674,194	662,676	696,708	152,836	407,022	-41	166
Biggleswade [BIW]	1,029,086	1,058,184	1,038,164	1,033,622	227,702	592,254	-42	160
Sandy [SDY]	522,584	529,072	497,992	495,528	143,316	385,704	-26	169
St.Neots [SNO]	1,351,480	1,337,948	1,325,534	1,261,664	246,330	672,958	-50	173
Huntingdon [HUN]	1,840,936	1,845,126	1,786,548	1,723,088	337,704	949,924	-48	181
Peterborough [PBO]	4,774,744	4,909,286	5,059,576	4,934,692	1,089,232	3,719,850	-22	242
Whittlesea [WLE]	30,474	32,556	31,986	35,230	8,026	26,436	-13	229
March [MCH]	395,950	403,972	407,914	385,956	87,832	251,638	-36	186
Manea [MNE]	13,452	15,894	18,950	18,834	3,910	16,192	20	314
Soham [SOJ]						14,196		
Ely [ELY]	2,209,350	2,281,710	2,386,744	2,363,818	577,460	1,634,548	-26	183
Shippea Hill [SPP]	156	276	432	164	36	102	-35	183
Lakenheath [LAK]	518	468	454	416	246	476	-8	93
Brandon [BND]	112,670	115,932	117,798	111,572	26,804	93,682	-17	250
Thetford [TTF]	302,920	297,388	299,752	286,700	73,700	226,022	-25	207
Harling Road [HRD]	3,022	3,074	2,880	3,794	646	978	-68	51
Eccles Road [ECS]	1,294	2,700	2,952	2,390	296	1,276	-1	331
Attleborough [ATL]	159,466	159,916	163,062	158,464	41,592	131,918	-17	217
Spooner Row [SPN]	1,256	1,628	1,344	276	74	320	-75	332
Wymondham [WMD]	188,224	186,924	200,332	196,036	56,424	150,466	-20	167
King's Lynn [KLN]	998,316	988,498	991,252	931,394	240,162	683,706	-32	185
Watlington [WTG]	144,114	146,014	153,782	138,366	39,078	105,886	-27	171
Downham Market [DOW]	523,846	533,426	549,562	512,772	129,058	341,550	-35	165
Littleport [LTP]	242,814	245,786	248,808	238,488	60,976	153,660	-37	152
Waterbeach [WBC]	440,142	430,050	407,650	377,660	100,176	265,180	-40	165
Cambridge [CBG]	11,424,902	11,530,238	11,983,320	11,599,814	2,300,528	6,952,780	-39	202
Cambridge North [CMB]		488,878	812,972	949,550	220,958	733,612	N/A	232
Total for Railfuture East Anglia	70,041,064	72,375,174	74,631,292	71,514,332	14,989,042	45,676,094	-35	205

Mike Farahar has again produced this extract from the Office of Rail and Road's (ORR) annual estimate of the usage of the nation's railway stations. The two tables show usage in station order along each branch of the network centred on the five regional main hubs.

The most-recent ORR figures are for the year 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, so they reflect times of COVID lockdown (including the Omicron variant) when the instruction was not to travel and there was a rather limited train service.

Train service frequency has improved, thanks to revived demand and on most lines usage is now (February 2023) close to pre-pandemic levels, so the next set of figures will be quite positive. Even so, the pattern of travel has changed, with less peak-time commuting and many more leisure journeys, especially at the weekends.

As mentioned in RAIL EAST issue 195 (page 9), fare revenue is significantly lower, so operators need to keep promoting rail travel for revenue to get back to where it was.

Note: two comparisons are made in the last columns in the table: over five years (2022 back to 2017) and 2022 back to 2021. In the latter case, every single station has seen increased usage.

One new station, Soham, opened on 13 December 2021. This has made an impressive start as mentioned on page 20, and Cambridge North will celebrate its sixth anniversary on 21 May 2023.

ENDING THE RAIL STRIKES - CAN PAY RISES BE FUNDED?

BY JERRY ALDERSON

The station usage figures shown on pages 12 and 13 were not impacted by any significant industrial action in East Anglia — the Greater Anglia dispute in 2018 that saw drivers take over door controls was soon resolved — but there will have been more than 20 days of significant disruption (and late starts on the following day) during the April 2022 to March 2023 statistical year. The root cause of the often crippling industrial action that Britain's railway has suffered since May 2022 is money, or more precisely the apparent lack of it, something which a 'magic money tree' would solve overnight. In its absence, without cutting capital expenditure on much-needed enhancements, where could the money for pay rises be found?



Noel Dolphin
@NoelDolphin

Today was the @TransportCttee with the 3 biggest rail unions, RDG and Network Rail there to discuss the strikes. On a scale of 1 - 10 how close are we to an agreement?



Funding from taxes

There is a 'good' and a 'bad' way of doing this. The good one is through economic growth, where no-one feels the pain. Unfortunately, this is not the best time for growth, and it's not just caused by the war in Ukraine. The UK, like most first-world countries, has an ageing population, with more being spent supporting pensioners and fewer people earning. Brexit (and new immigration rules) has reduced the supply of working-age people, whilst COVID-19 has seen the better off re-evaluate their lives and focus on enjoying the time they have left rather than working, with a million or so choosing to be 'economically inactive'.

The other option for government is to put up taxes either directly (a higher percentage on existing taxes or new taxes) or indirectly (so-called 'fiscal drag' by not increasing tax allowances or thresholds at a level to keep up with inflation). Neither method is popular with voters at election time!

Even if taxpayers' money could be found, the NHS will be seen as more deserving than the railway, which won't even be in second place. Transport has never been a priority at election time. However, now that the price of petrol has come down significantly from its 2022 high, perhaps current Chancellor Jeremy Hunt might choose to reverse the 6p per litre cut (5p duty and 1p VAT on it) that Rishi Sunak made in 2022, or end the 12-year freeze on fuel duty, but it's pretty unlikely.

Exploiting all possible income streams

The railway gets most of its earned income from passengers (fares and car parking). Only a small proportion comes from rail freight, concessions (e.g. coffee shops, retailers and cash machines), tenants (diminished as Network Rail lost its income from arches after completing their sale for £1.5bn in 2019), taxi rank fees, advertisements and partnerships. Contracts will prevent many of these increasing by above inflation and, where not restricted, the market will only bear so much.

Before COVID-19 much of the fare income was a 'distress purchase', with commuters having little choice but to go by train as the roads into cities were congested at peak times and there was insufficient city centre car parking available. Of course, five-day-a-week commuting was already on the decline, but more employees now have flexibility. They may still have to go into the office, but can they do so more cheaply with alternate-week season tickets or starting later and paying off-peak fares?

Fare revenue will (without growth in passenger numbers) fall in real terms in 2023 as the UK government announced in December (see right) that it will limit fare rises in England to 5.9% (average salary rises in the year to July 2022) – less than half the RPI rate in July 2022 (its traditional formula, albeit a discredited one) but still more than it is offering public sector staff.

Biggest government intervention ever to keep rail fares down

- *Increases capped at 5.9% – 6.4 percentage points below July 2022 RPI
- *Intervention will help reduce impact of high inflation for passengers
- *Rise to support crucial investment and financial stability of railway

The good news is that — when strikes are not occurring, and train operators are not telling potential customers to ‘travel only if essential’ seemingly for operational convenience — the railway’s leisure market is buoyant, even stronger than pre-pandemic. Unfortunately, average revenue per user (ARPU, also known as yield) is not. Four commuter journeys from Cambridge from London, at a rate of £40+ per day totalling £160, replaced by a family of four (mum, dad and two children) on a super-off-peak fare with a Family & Friends Railcard, who might pay as little as £30, is a big revenue loss despite patronage appearing to be the same.

Axing the private train operating companies

Always the argument of those on the left of politics, this is becoming more palatable amongst those who would have once dismissed it. Barring the tiny open-access operators, which are legitimate hard-working businesses made to fend for themselves (including during strikes by signallers and other train companies), the operators under contract to the Department for Transport (DfT) get paid a fee just for ‘existing’ plus a small incentive for meeting their key targets, although encouraging more people to travel by rail isn’t one of them! They no longer bear revenue or cost risk and are given no freedom to grow the market, so they are not bringing anything to the table. The formula could easily be tweaked to incentivise them to improve the railway economics. In the meantime, other than to deflect attention from the government (hardly a service to the public) it’s hard to see the value for their fee (capped at 1.5% of costs incurred that are approved by the DfT), which exceed £100m per year. Even so, that’s nowhere near enough to fund the pay rises demanded.



Michael Holden @holdmch · 7 Jan 2023

I can't see any point keeping on paying 1.5% to private owners whilst insisting on making every decision inside govt. TOCs either need to be given some P&L responsibility with an element of revenue incentive or brought back in house. The current situation has become unsustainable

Sir Michael Holden (who was Chief Executive of Directly Operated Railways from Jan 2012 to Dec 2015 and also a Zone Director for East Anglia in the 1990s) seems to agree, according to his tweet above.

Cutting services or the quality of the service

Sadly, despite the consequences (including societal and environmental ones) this seems the default approach of the Treasury and DfT. The former receives all *fares* whilst the latter pays all *costs*, but they appear to operate in two isolated silos, without considering the relationship between the two, commonly known as the ‘bottom line’. A spiral of decline is not inevitable but is looking likely.

Improving productivity

This is the ‘win-win’ solution, not just for the railway’s funders but also to help secure its long-term future, which is most definitely in the interests of rail staff. It happened, to some extent, under British Rail because it lived under a cost-driven model, being set an annual budget by the government (sometimes not confirmed until after the financial year had begun). Privatisation in the 1990s switched the railway to a revenue-based model, meaning that antagonising the unions (or not

meeting their demands) would likely cost more in lost revenue (and growth) than any cost savings (ITV took a similar approach in the 1970s when it was 'a licence to print money') and as the passengers were largely a captive market, improving the customer experience wasn't a priority.

Network Rail CEO Andrew Haines believes he knows what is needed (as he explained in a 15-minute in-depth interview on the BBC's Newscast podcast on 4 January 2023 – listen at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p0dt6gms> starting at 20 minutes, available online for 12 months). He is trying hard, albeit meeting a lot of resistance to change from those responsible for maintaining the railway infrastructure. On the train operations side, it's a different matter. The government seems not to understand the rail industry sufficiently to achieve gains. That's the danger of putting civil servants in charge of running the railway. Judging by the changes proposed in the offers put to the ASLEF and RMT unions, it seems that they have asked rail managers for a list of all the things they have wanted to implement in the last decade (some from the McNulty review of the railway in 2011) but were unable to do so. A lot of it makes sense, but it lacks a coherent implementation plan, and ideas such as 'station groups' to enable staff to visit nearby stations when required are hindered by different operators being responsible for adjacent stations.



Many of the proposals appear to make more efficient use of staff, who may consider the new flexibility (what, where and when) as an attack on their jobs. However, demarcation (perhaps the costliest of 'restrictive practices') reduces the value (economically and in terms of customer services) of each employee. Let's take train drivers. The cost of employing 23,500 drivers is more than £1.4 billion per year (including national insurance, pension and other employment costs). They are expensive, at around £45 per hour worked (standard rate), but that's not the issue. What they do each hour matters – not every paid minute is spent in the cab (or preparing for that day's driving or personal needs breaks). A lot of it is lost time. This is exacerbated by train operators needing spare drivers to guarantee a service but delivering no value if rostered and unused (although using such 'downtime' to learn, refresh knowledge and even being tested is valuable). Drivers are contracted to drive and nothing else. They need to be in the right place to drive when needed, perhaps at short notice. However, asking them to help with relatively simple customer service functions, when convenient, will stir up a hornet's nest and no rail manager (or government minister) is brave enough to go there!

Monetary jiggery-pokery

When you've run out of business and operational solutions, one thing remains. A big railway cost is servicing the debt that Network Rail accrued between 2002 and 2014 having had free rein on its so-called credit card, when it was a 'pretend' private company. Up to £2 billion a year is being spent on interest payments, because much of the borrowing was on the money markets, as the government didn't want the debt on its books. The government can borrow more cheaply, so it would make sense to 'consolidate debt into one easy payment'. But there will have been conditions imposed by the lenders and there may not be a cheap and easy way to repay them right now.

If you're a rail user wondering why the strikes seem to have no end in sight, then hopefully this article may shed some light. If you are a politician, then it may help you understand some of the hurdles that need to be overcome.

Sir Michael Holden puts the future of the railway firmly in the government's court in RAIL magazine on 8 February 2023.

Jerry Alderson is a freelance business and technology consultant, and is also Railfuture's Director of Finance and IT.



THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME? CAMBRIDGE CROSS-CITY TRAIN SERVICES

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

The East West Rail Company (EWR) is progressing its plans to link Bedford and Cambridge by rail. The new railway will provide a minimum of four trains an hour on the route serving at least St Neots and Cambourne. Two of the trains will probably carry on to Norwich and Ipswich across Cambridge – to Cambridge South, Central, North and now maybe East?

EWR proposes that two trains will terminate at new platforms at Cambridge 'Central' Station. These are to be built awkwardly at the northeast edge of the station – unnecessarily inconvenient for users of the station and taking over sidings needed for long-distance freight traffic. It is vital that the limited space at the station is used efficiently to enable present and future services to flow smoothly into the rest of East Anglia. **It must not become a bottleneck in the network.**

Railfuture proposes that EWR uses platforms 2 and 3 (the two bay platforms at the southern end) for its terminating trains. The current occupiers of those platforms are mainly Thameslink stopping trains to/from London King's Cross. We propose that these trains continue north across Cambridge to the proposed new station at Waterbeach. Currently the plan is just to construct up and down platforms there. But if a turn back platform was incorporated into the station design, all trains from stations into Cambridge from Hatfield could terminate at Waterbeach, providing a cross-city service from much of South Cambridgeshire.

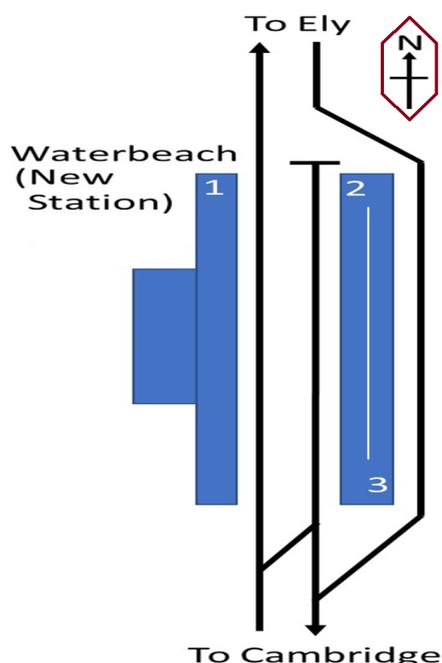


Fig 1 (right): Plan showing our proposals for a turn back platform at Waterbeach New Station. In providing an extra platform that enables a Cambridge cross-city service to operate, it would also provide relief at Cambridge Central station as it would be unnecessary to build new platforms for EWR there.

Foxton	d	08:12	08:42
Cambridge South	d	08:18	08:48
Cambridge Central	a	08:22	08:52
	d	08:24	08:54
Cambridge North	d	08:29	08:59
Waterbeach (New)	a	08:33	09:03
Waterbeach (New)	d	08:46	09:16
Cambridge North	d	08:51	09:21
Cambridge Central	a	08:55	09:25
	d	08:57	09:27
Cambridge South	d	09:00	09:30
Foxton	d	09:06	09:36

Fig.2 (left): Table showing the possible timings of extending the half-hourly Thameslink stopping train service across Cambridge to turn back at Waterbeach. We have used existing arrival and departure timings at Cambridge station.

This cross-city service on a north south axis would serve the predicted growth at Waterbeach, Cambridge North, the explosion of jobs at Cambridge Central and Cambridge South. It would also connect directly to fast growing communities in and around Foxton, Foxton Travel Hub, Shepreth, Meldreth/Melbourn and Royston.

NEW STATIONS ARRIVING...

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

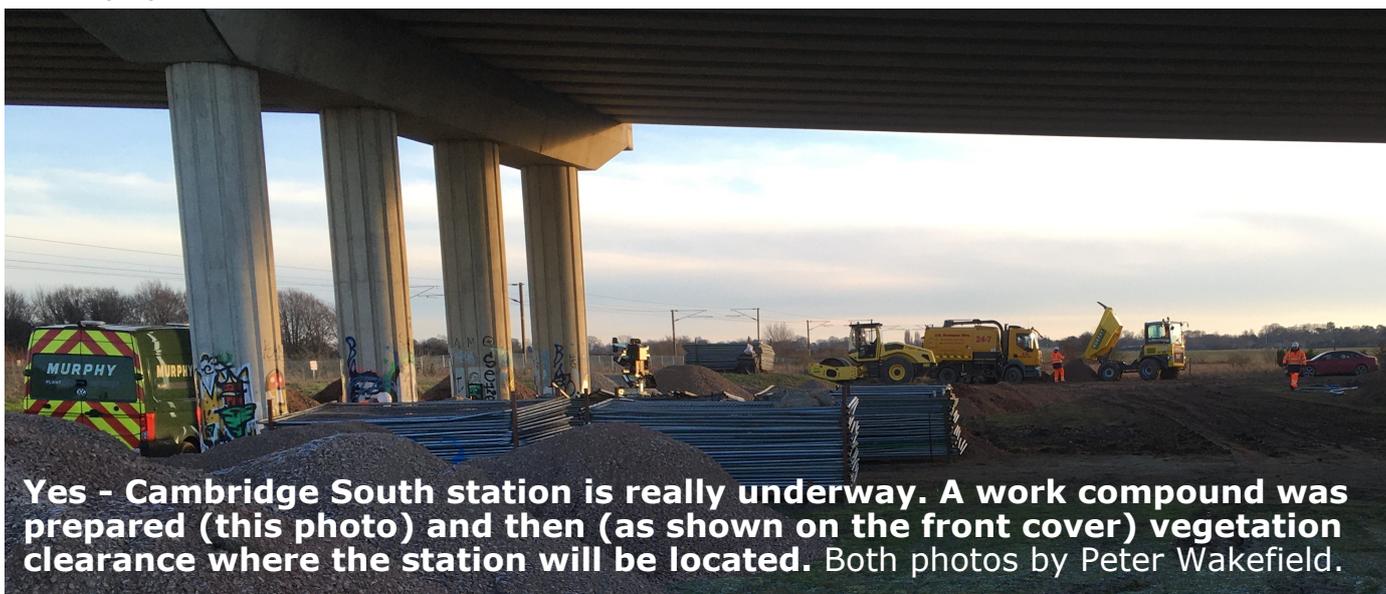
Cambridge South Station: On 21 December 2022 the good news was published by the DfT that the application under "the Transport and Works Act 1992 for the 'Network Rail (Cambridge South Infrastructure Enhancements) Order' had been approved by the Secretary of State for Transport on the recommendation of the Inspector." We quote further:

"The Order as applied for would allow Network Rail to construct and operate: a new Cambridge South Station and related track works; junction improvements at Shepreth Branch Junction; and a new connection between existing lines at Hills Road (to improve the southern access to Cambridge Station). These are collectively referred to as the Cambridge South Infrastructure Enhancements project ('the Scheme'), additional elements of which include the stopping up of two level crossings and their replacement with a new accommodation bridge; a new railway systems compound containing a substation, signalling and telecommunications equipment, within a fenced enclosure; four supporting Distribution Network Operators supplies; the provision of supporting infrastructure; drainage works; hard and soft landscaping; and ancillary infrastructure such as fencing, lighting and electrical connections."



Two out of three ain't bad. A 1990s Railfuture East Anglia campaign called for new stations in the north and south of Cambridge, but failed to get the St Ives railway reopened.

On 16 January 2023 the first work site compound was established by the contractor J. Murphy at the site.



Yes - Cambridge South station is really underway. A work compound was prepared (this photo) and then (as shown on the front cover) vegetation clearance where the station will be located. Both photos by Peter Wakefield.

It is very pleasing to see the hard work of so many people at Network Rail, the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority and the other local authorities coming to fruition. Of course, Railfuture has supported this project from its very inception. It will contribute hugely to the sustainable development of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus with many thousands of employees and daily visitors. We look forward to the development of a train service plan that will see **ALL** current and future train services calling there.

It is worth recalling that the station was originally a part of the East West Railway plan but was detached from it and brought forward for delivery by 2025 by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, such is the importance given to this new station.

Cambridge East Station: by contrast, the delivery of a station in east Cambridge is at the very start of its planning journey. The Greater Cambridge Partnership and Cambridge City Council have aspirations for this station even though the site is not committed. Recent planning approvals mean that near the railway to Newmarket over 10,000 jobs will be within five- or 10-minute walk of a site on Yarrow Road. Any new station will have to go hand in hand with the restoration of double track between Cambridge Coldham Lane Junction and Newmarket Chippenham Junction.



Chelmsford Beaulieu Park: other good news slightly away from our Branch area in Essex is the approval of funding for Chelmsford Beaulieu Park, which will greatly improve connectivity in and around Chelmsford for us all. Work on the station (computer generated image, left) is about to commence, with opening scheduled for 2025. As at Cambridge South and Soham, the principal contractor is J. Murphy. Provision will include:

- Three platforms with a central loop line and new tracks to enable stopping services to call at the station while allowing fast trains to pass through unimpeded
- Step free access to all platforms via two lifts
- Accessible toilets, baby change facilities, waiting area and space for retail/catering
- Ticketing facilities, with ticket vending machines and a gate line
- Pedestrian and cycle access routes to the station
- 500 spaces for cycle parking and storage
- A bus interchange including bus stands for local services

RAIL EAST issue 198 will revisit the campaign to re-open a station between Norwich and Diss serving the growing town of **Long Stratton**, which highlights the groundswell of support for “a bigger and better railway” in the region. It also reminds us of the considerable time lag existing between a demand being recognised and being met.

Winslow: even further away from our Branch area, but on the vital East West Rail (Oxford to Cambridge) route that is gradually being reopened, construction at Winslow, midway between Bicester and Bletchley, is progressing fast. The two platforms have been built and the lift shafts installed. Footbridge next. The drone photo (right) was taken by Richard Crouch DronePix (permission to use granted).

A replacement (accessible) footbridge is finally being constructed at **Royston** station and **Stowmarket** is waiting in the queue (along with others).



SOHAM'S INAUGURAL YEAR — “A SOARING SUCCESS”

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

... so says Greater Anglia's press release put out on the first anniversary of the restoration of the railway station at Soham, Cambridgeshire.

And it goes on: "Soham station has seen healthy and consistent passenger usage over its first year since opening to the public, seeing almost 50,000 journeys starting or finishing there".

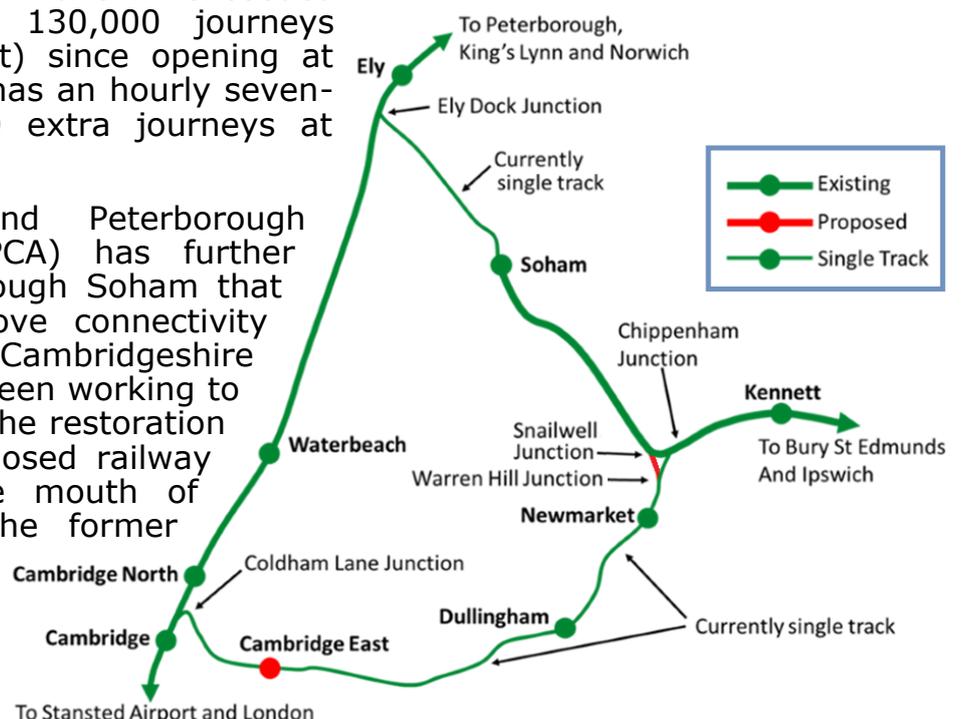
This is indeed a startling success, not because the town has over 11,000 people and is situated on an incredibly busy road corridor (that's a given) – but because its train service runs **only every two hours**. It really does show the demand for railway services in East Anglia in general, and Cambridgeshire in particular. The train operator Greater Anglia, when it was a part of the franchised railway, made a winning bid for the franchise with commitments to operate our railway that included an hourly service through Soham from Ipswich to Ely, March, Whittlesea, Peterborough using a fleet of new trains. As promised, it leased the latter to cover the hourly service but has been prevented by Network Rail from inaugurating it because of the latter's concerns about the safety of level crossings at Ely Queen Adelaide. Just think what a train every hour would do to those footfall figures.



Soham Station is already a much-appreciated new asset to the town.

If proof is needed that service frequency gets more people onto the railway, check out this statement from Devon County Council about its sponsored restored Okehampton service that also has been running for just over a year. The intermediate station at CREDITON is served by Okehampton as well as Barnstaple trains so it now has two trains an hour. Devon CC says about its reopening project: "Passenger numbers have exceeded expectation, more than 130,000 journeys (over double the forecast) since opening at Okehampton, which now has an hourly seven-day service, and 50,000 extra journeys at Crediton."

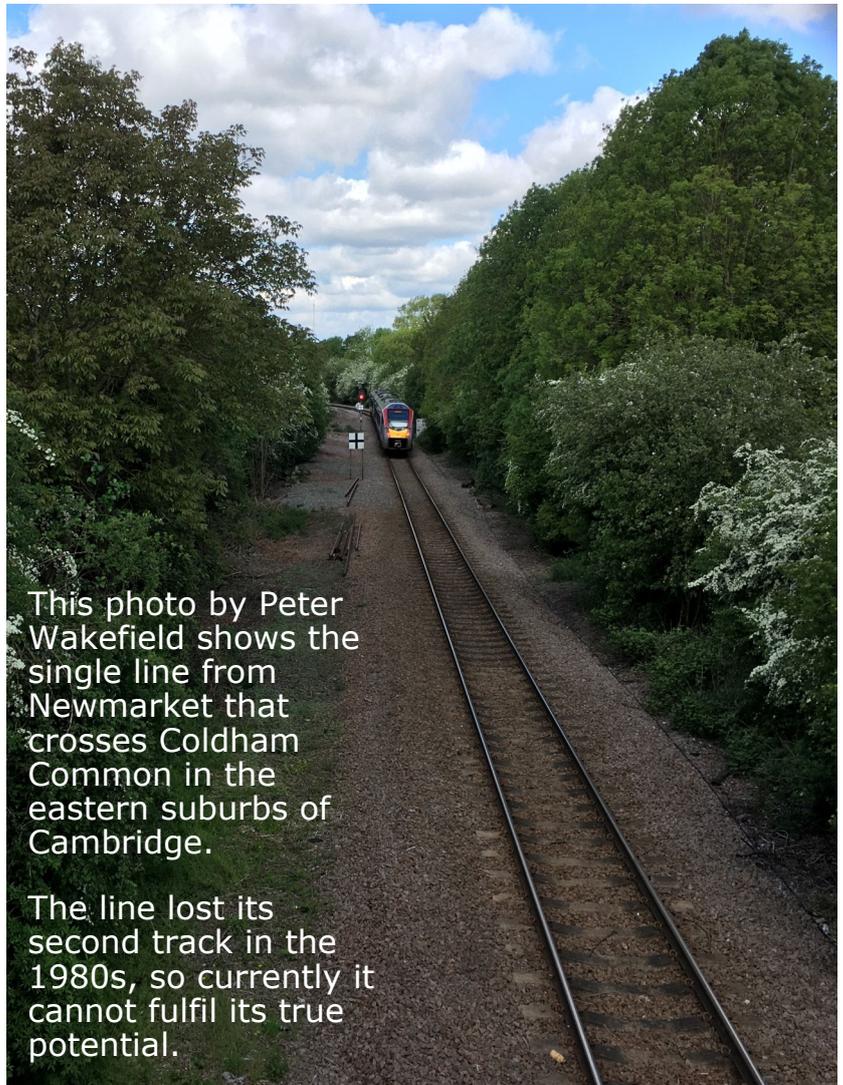
The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) has further plans for the railway through Soham that would dramatically improve connectivity over a wide area of East Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk. It has been working to build a business case for the restoration of the short section of closed railway that ran from near the mouth of Newmarket Tunnel at the former Warren Hill Junction to Soham line (see red line in image on right). This



restored chord, a very short extension, would make this a real network enabling trains to run from Ely and Soham directly to Newmarket once again and on to Cambridge, offering direct Soham-Cambridge services.

Of course, there are two other very important pieces of infrastructure that need funding to enable all this to happen; the Ely Area Capacity Enhancements and the restoration of the second track from Newmarket to Cambridge Coldham Lane Junction (see photo right). The latter also will be needed by any additional services required for the massive east Cambridge developments plus East West Rail trains east of Cambridge.

All the single line sections must be double tracked (except for Newmarket Tunnel). Current plans show in the region of 10,000 research park jobs within a 600-metre walk of a potential Cambridge East station.



This photo by Peter Wakefield shows the single line from Newmarket that crosses Coldham Common in the eastern suburbs of Cambridge.

The line lost its second track in the 1980s, so currently it cannot fulfil its true potential.

In the press release, The Deputy Mayor of CPCA, Cllr Anna Smith, added: "This is a fantastic start to a growing service which is life-changing for many people in the Soham area. The new station points towards the future of greater and greener connectivity for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, at the heart of an active travel and public transport network which will give people the option of leaving the car at home for many commuting or leisure journeys."

The success of this station and the further development of the network east of Cambridge could see frequent trains serving Newmarket, Cambridge East and Cambridge Central.

Newmarket, a very important economic centre, could have direct services to Peterborough by the diversion of the Ipswich to Peterborough service to an upgraded station there. Trains would reverse out, continuing to Ely by the restored Warren Hill-Snailwell curve.

The press release concludes by drawing attention to the CPCA's aim in funding Soham's new station ... "[It] was conceived to afford the local residents and businesses better connections to the wider surrounding areas, unlocking the potential to major economic growth whilst removing the barriers that lead to transport related social exclusion."

Here is a reminder of our 2019 20-page paper proposing improvements to the whole of the Ipswich to Newmarket/Cambridge/Soham/Ely railway:

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/east/docs/Railfuture-East-Anglia-20191030-Mid-Anglia-from-branch-to-main-line-proposals.pdf>

THE COST OF A GREENER CAMBRIDGE: IS A CONGESTION CHARGE THE ANSWER?

BY PETER WAKEFIELD

Cambridge Sustainable Travel Zone also known as the Congestion Charge

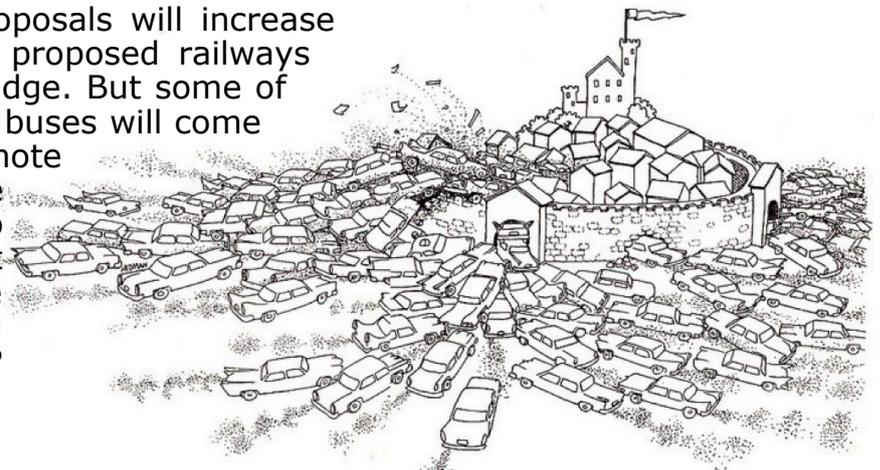
Staying in Cambridgeshire, a notable transport plan is being vigorously debated. Colloquially called the Congestion Charge plan, formally as the Greater Cambridge Partnership "Sustainable Travel Zone proposals" (STZ). At their heart, they aim to significantly reduce trips made by motor vehicles. This will be done by improving public transport and active travel. To achieve the former, the bus network will be greatly improved and better infrastructure provided for walking and cycling. This could be described as "the carrot". No mention so far of any proposal to help improve railway infrastructure. Whilst clearly ambitious and contentious, it is important to note at the outset of this article that **the proposals are in line with local, regional, and national transport plans and policies.**

The GCP also plans to implement a Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ), including a road user charge, proposing it to be fully operational **from 2027/28 (weekdays, between 7am and 7pm)** – "the stick". The GCP suggests that the STZ will reduce motor vehicle trips by 50% but this is only achievable, it stresses, if public transport usage increases by 40% across Greater Cambridge.

The GCP is thus proposing cheaper, faster, more regular, more reliable buses across a larger local network. This will be achieved, in part, with a £50m investment in new buses between **2024 and 2026**. The STZ will free up road space and the revenue from it will provide additional funding of £50 million per year for improvements, especially to walking and cycling infrastructure. The GCP estimates that this will enable the increase of walking and cycling trips by over 60,000 extra each day. As a consequence, the city's air quality will improve too. It is estimated that 120 deaths a year can be laid at the door of poor air quality created by motor traffic in the city.

We are sure that the GCP proposals will increase rail traffic on all existing and proposed railways leading into the City of Cambridge. But some of the modal transfer from car to buses will come via bus roads to huge new remote Park and Ride sites. We are very unhappy about those so we have objected, arguing that they will inevitably undermine rail public transport. We would prefer that some GCP investment went to

- upgrading the railway from Cambridge to Newmarket to double track, and
- restoring the Haverhill-Cambridge railway – instead of the GCP proposal for a dedicated bus road to the A11 across a sensitive landscape



Drawing by Richard Hedman from Autokind vs Mankind by Kenneth R. Schneider (1970). Yes, written over 50 years ago when it was already more than evident that our historic cities are unable to cope with the demands of personal motor transport... so many people are asking why it has taken so long even to get to the point of thinking "if we don't act now, when?"

The capacity provided by these relatively cheap schemes would far outweigh any unsustainable car-based P&R site. The Cambridge Connect proposals for a light rail network should be implemented at the outset as the City of Cambridge core last mile network.

Below is a link to the comments we have made so far about various proposals put forward by the GCP, formerly known as the Cambridge City Deal.

So... for nostalgia – here is our City Deal page:

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/East+Anglia+Cambridge+City+Deal>

...with links to various documents, including this one outlining what the GCP could be doing to enhance rail rather than funding its park and ride busway obsession.

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/east/docs/Railfuture-East-Anglia-2015-03-04-City-Deal-Cambridge-Delivering-Urban-Rail-Scheme.pdf>

NEWS IN BRIEF

LEVELLING UP

Some welcome news for transport in the region comes courtesy of the Levelling Up Fairy. A total of 111 areas throughout the UK have been awarded a share of £2.1 billion from Round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund, announced at the end of January 2023. For the east, the total funding pot amounted to just under £166 million, with approximately £92 million for three schemes intended to impact on rail travel and wider public transport options, including active travel:

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority: Peterborough Station Enhancements and Connectivity (£47,850,000 – pictured above.

Great Yarmouth Borough Council: Great Yarmouth Riverside Gateway (£20,000,000)

Norfolk County Council: King's Lynn Sustainable Transport and Regeneration Scheme (King's Lynn STARS project) (£24,115,860)



EAST SUFFOLK LINE – A RAILWAY FOR ALL PURPOSES

In early December 2022, ESTA under the above title launched a detailed paper setting out ideas for the further development over the next 10 years of this important part of our regional network. One particular area of analysis are the current average (surprisingly low) speeds along the line and how they can be improved, giving vital end to end journey time improvement.

The discussion paper can be viewed here: <http://www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk/page4.html>

KATCH REPRIEVED

And sticking to ESTA's patch, RAIL EAST was about to produce an obituary for the innovative Katch demand-responsive electric bus service when news arrived in February of a reprieve and relaunch. The original scheme, established in May 2021 with support from Suffolk County Council and the East Suffolk CRP – described in RAIL EAST issue 190 (June 2021) – carried its last passengers in December 2022. Now we understand that East Suffolk Council plans to restart the scheme from April 2023. Let's hope the relaunched scheme will be promoted imaginatively enough to achieve the ridership levels the initial pilot failed to sustain. For further information on the pilot see www.katchlift.com/katch-news

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR RAIL EAST

Please send articles for possible inclusion in RAIL EAST to Peter Feeney, who collates all submissions and prepares them for the newsletter. Please provide good quality photos or images, which are help to make RAIL EAST visually attractive.

All submissions by **26 May 2023**, please, but articles covering late news will be considered just before going to print. RAIL EAST is formatted by Jerry Alderson.

RECEIVING RAIL EAST BY POST OR ELECTRONICALLY?

You can be emailed a copy of RAIL EAST on the same day that it goes to the printer, so you will receive it more than a week before other people. To switch to receiving it by email, please contact Lloyd Butler, who manages our database, at renewals@railfuture.org.uk. Your willingness to reduce postage will be appreciated.

railfuture East Anglia

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MEETING DATES AND VENUES

SATURDAY 25 FEB 2023

Friends Meeting House
St John's Street

BURY ST EDMUNDS

IP33 1SJ

SATURDAY 17 JUNE 2023

St Mary's at Stoke
Stoke Street

IPSWICH

IP2 8BX

SATURDAY 23 SEPT 2023

Friends Meeting House,
5 Upper Goat Lane

NORWICH

NR2 1EW

A flyer for our meetings is always at: www.railfuture.org.uk/east/meetings.
This includes a map of the venue and directions from the station.

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