East West Rail

Details

Project reference code: CR003

HLOS driver: Committed projects

Operating routes: East Midlands, LNW and Western

Last updated: March 2014

CP5 output driver

The objective of this project is to support economic growth along the line of route, particularly around Milton Keynes and North Buckinghamshire, by providing the capacity for direct rail services between Oxford / Aylesbury and Milton Keynes / Bedford. The new services are also intended to encourage residential and commercial growth in the area.

Scope of works

In order to secure efficiencies and economies by combining the incremental outputs required for East West Rail between Oxford and Bicester with the works planned under Chiltern Railway's "Evergreen 3 Phase 2" project, it is proposed to deliver East West Rail in two phases. The works in each phase include the following.

Phase 1

- A second running line between Bicester Town and Water Eaton, with consequential enhancements at Islip station.
- New and enhanced overline structures to be constructed to W10 or W12 + electrification loading gauge, subject to gauging strategy and physical constraints.
- Capacity enhancement works between Wolvercote Tunnel, Oxford North Junction and Oxford station, the scope of which is currently under development.

Phase 2

- Upgrading the existing Bicester Town to Bletchley freight line as a double-track 100mph multi-functional railway capable of accommodating three passenger services each way per hour and two additional paths per hour for freight and inter-regional services.
- Upgrading the existing Aylesbury to Claydon Junction freight line as a single-track 100mph passenger railway capable of accommodating one passenger service and one freight service each way per hour.
- Minor upgrading of the existing Bletchley – Bedford passenger railway to accommodate one additional fast passenger service each way per hour.
- New station at Winslow.
- New high-level platforms and track remodelling at Bletchley.
- New and enhanced overline structures to be constructed to W10 or W12 + electrification loading gauge.
- Installation of a new running loop between Aylesbury and Princes Risborough, if required, to accommodate extension of the proposed East West Rail Milton Keynes – Aylesbury service to Marylebone.

The Department for Transport (DfT) has identified the East West Route as having potential to deliver further enhancements to network capacity and flexibility, as well as opportunities to exploit new passenger and freight markets. In addition, the route forms part of the Electric Spine proposal (ES003) to create an electrified strategic freight and passenger network between the South Coast and the East and West Midlands. In order to deliver these aspirations, significant expansion of the scope would be required, which will be subject to the necessary industry consultation and change control processes.

Significant interfaces

- Project Evergreen 3 Phase 2 (Bicester – Oxford): originally promoted and developed by Chiltern Railways to allow the introduction of a new London (Marylebone) to Oxford via High Wycombe service. The outputs to achieve this objective will now be delivered by Network Rail as an integral part of East West Rail Phase 1.
- Thames Valley resignalling: control of the Oxford area to be transferred to the new Thames Valley Signalling Control Centre in 2016.
- Oxford corridor capacity improvements: includes additional capacity between Didcot and Wolvercote Junction (north of Oxford) to accommodate growth in freight traffic.
- Electric Spine: proposal by DfT to create an electrified network between the South Coast and the East and West Midlands, primarily to accommodate forecast freight growth but also providing opportunities for new passenger services. The Oxford – Bicester – Bletchley - Bedford route forms an integral part of the Electric Spine plan.
- Thameslink: capacity enhancements planned on the Thameslink network are likely to have a major impact on the Bedford station area.
- High Speed 2: this crosses the East West line of route at Steeple Claydon, where an infrastructure maintenance depot is planned. This is planned to be rail-served via the East West route both during construction of HS2 and subsequently after opening of the high speed line. The HS2 alignment also crosses the Aylesbury – Princes Risborough branch near Little Kimble.
- DfT rolling stock strategy: both new electric stock procurement and planned diesel fleet cascade policies are likely to impact on East West Rail scope and programme decisions.

Key assumptions

- In order to secure efficiencies, the incremental works required to provide additional capacity in order to accommodate the later introduction of East West Rail services between Oxford and Bicester will be delivered concurrently with Project Evergreen 3 Phase 2 as "East West Rail Phase 1".
- There will be opportunities to close sections of the East West route for extended periods to allow construction.

- The proposed additional trains (2 each way per hour) between Bletchley and Milton Keynes can be accommodated on the existing infrastructure, and no works are needed to increase capacity over this section.

Activities and milestones

As stated above, it is proposed to deliver East West Rail in two phases:

Phase 1, between Bicester and Oxford, will deliver both the infrastructure required for Chiltern's Evergreen services to London and the incremental works required for the later introduction of East West Rail services.

Works between Wolvercote and Bicester will be delivered during extended blockades of the route between April 2014 and February 2016. Works at Oxford will be delivered as part of the wider works programmed under the Thames Valley resignalling and the Oxford Corridor capacity improvements projects, and funded by the East West Rail Phase 1 project.

Phase 2, which is at a much earlier stage of development, will deliver the East West Rail works east of Bicester to Bletchley and Bedford, including the Aylesbury – Claydon Junction line, by the end of CP5. It is intended that early development work to validate the feasibility reports issued on behalf of the East West Rail Consortium in 2009, and undertake survey work, will commence before the start of CP5.

East West Rail Phase 1

Milestone	Description	Date	Status
Oxford GRIP 3 completion	Single option selection	September 2014	Indicator
GRIP 4 completion*	Single option scope defined	December 2013	Indicator
Oxford GRIP 4 completion	Single option scope defined	January 2015	Indicator
GRIP 6 start*	Start on site	May 2013	Indicator
Oxford GRIP 6 start	Start on site	September 2015	Indicator
GRIP 6 completion*	**Infrastructure ready for use**	**March 2016**	**Regulated Output**
Oxford GRIP 6 completion	**Infrastructure ready for use**	**March 2016**	**Regulated Output**

* Excludes Oxford

East West Rail Phase 2

Milestone	Description	Date	Status
GRIP 2 completion	Feasibility complete	June 2014	Indicator
GRIP 3 completion	**Option selection**	**November 2015**	**Regulated Output**
GRIP 4 completion	Single option scope defined	June 2016	Indicative
GRIP 6 start	Start on site	August 2017*	Indicative
GRIP 6 completion	Infrastructure ready for use	March 2019	Indicative

*Subject to statutory powers and consents. Some preliminary construction may be undertaken before this date.

It is noted that the East West Rail Consortium and DfT have a target date for the core East West Rail train service to operate from December 2017. However, the project is at an early stage of development, and the outputs and scope are therefore unconfirmed. Further work will be required to develop scope and programme options as the project progresses through GRIP 2 and 3.