

Bedford-Sandy corridor chosen as preferred route for East West Rail to Cambridge

NETWORK Rail has revealed its preferred option for the Central Section of East West Rail as the Bedford–Sandy–Cambridge corridor.



The proposed Central Section would connect with the Western Section of East West Rail via a geographic 'corridor' that starts in the Bedford area and progresses towards Sandy and on to Cambridge.

Network Rail will publish written documentation, analysis and evidence supporting the decision in May.

Once the methodology behind the Bedford-Sandy-Cambridge corridor is published, further analysis and consultation will take place to determine options for the 'line on a map' route.

Principal strategic planner Erica Blamire said: "In reaching our decision on the Central Section we have assessed the benefits and costs of several potential broad corridors, with input from rail industry stakeholders and regional working groups, including the local authorities in the East West Rail Consortium and the Department for Transport.

"We have considered the station catchment areas for population and employment, operating costs, forecast passenger demand, demand for short and longer distance journeys, and the impact on reducing crowding on the London rail network.

"We have also considered the infrastructure needs, train service opportunities and wider impacts that the railway would have.

"This work has allowed us to reduce the 20 potential corridors which were originally identified down to this single corridor which the evidence indicates offers the best return on investment."

The announcement has been welcomed by Central Bedfordshire Council. Cllr Sue Clark, deputy executive member for regeneration said: “It is incredibly important we continue to make progress with the Central Section, as its completion means faster and better rail services for Central Bedfordshire, bringing essential infrastructure to support housing growth and the prospect of more jobs.”

East West Rail seeks to provide more, faster and more reliable services connecting East Anglia with Central, Southern and Western England to improve connectivity and support economic growth.

Rail Minister Claire Perry said: “East West Rail is a great opportunity to transform connections across the region. The first phase, which has created new journey opportunities between London and Oxford Parkway via Bicester, is already proving hugely popular.

“East West Rail is an important priority for government. Because of this, we have agreed with the National Infrastructure Commission that they will take the Consortium’s work as an input as part of wider work to unlock growth, housing and jobs opportunities along the Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford corridor.”

Work is already under way on the Western Section of East West Rail. A new passenger service between Oxford Parkway and London Marylebone via Bicester Village started in October and services are due to operate from Oxford from December.

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