

## Railfuture East Anglia Branch

# Response to CPCA Local Transport and Connectivity Plan Consultation

12<sup>th</sup> July 2022

## Introduction

Railfuture is Britain's leading independent organisation campaigning for a bigger better railway. It is a voluntary group representing rail users, with 20,000 affiliated and individual members. Railfuture is not affiliated to or funded by train companies, political parties or trade unions, and uses one-member one-vote democracy.

Railfuture welcomes the opportunity to comment on the CPCA's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan. Railfuture strongly supports the vision and transport goals outlined in the Plan for transport within the CPCA area.

Whilst the CPCA Plan concentrates on local transport within the CPCA area, it is important to consider wider transport objectives across the region and beyond. To this end, Railfuture is currently undertaking a study of future rail potential linking major population centres across East Anglia. This report is due to be issued during the Autumn of 2022. The emerging findings are consistent with the goals of the CPCA Plan.

## Vision and Goals

Railfuture strongly supports the vision and goals set out in the Plan.

To deliver the Plan, Railfuture believes that much stronger links should be established between the Transport Plan and the Development plans produced by the various local planning authorities. Much recent development has been too car focused, with a lack of local amenities and access to local and regional public transport. The result has been a lot of new housing that requires two car parking spaces per dwelling as residents are dependent on the car to access jobs and facilities. There are also major commercial developments, including a number of research campus sites south of Cambridge, that are not well served by public transport. Such development cannot be allowed to continue and CPCA will need to work with the local planning authorities to ensure that all new development is consistent with the CPCA Transport Plan.

The second essential development required for the successful implementation of the Transport Plan is the creation of a Cambridgeshire Transport Smart Card or similar, perhaps using debit cards on the pay as you go principle. The card would work in a similar way to the London Oyster Card and cover trains, buses and cycle hire in the county with daily and weekly caps of fares. Any system will need to ensure that those not comfortable with digital technology can still use the system and are not disadvantaged.

The third essential development is to consider updated transport scheme analysis tools that reflect the change in transport habits and the importance of climate change. Traditional analysis, often insisted upon by Government, has been based on peak hour demand with people (often men) making a single journey into work in the morning and back in the evening. Carers (often women) that make multiple local journeys are generally ignored. The growing number of people working from home and more flexible working means that a new approach is required.

Fourth, it is essential that the railway is seen as the backbone to the CPCA's transport network. Linking all the major settlements with fast frequent services (at least hourly) would enable the network to become a tool to spread development around the CPCA as equally as possible, so that no one settlement is overwhelmed by, say, research centres or other industrial developments or housing. Research centres could be encouraged to Wisbech or Haverhill or Whittlesea or Soham, diversifying employment opportunities, if rail connectivity improvements to the Cambridgeshire network were prioritised, taking the pressure off Cambridge. Nowhere should be more than 45 minutes from Cambridge or Peterborough.

## Rail Projects

The Transport Plan includes a number of rail infrastructure projects that are strongly supported by Railfuture.

### East Cambridgeshire

Railfuture consider that the Ely Area Capacity upgrade is the key to unlocking rail's potential in the area. This scheme along with work on adjacent lines such as the Soham and Kings Lynn double tracking and signalling upgrades will enable many of the rail service enhancements mentioned in the Transport Plan. These include a Wisbech to Cambridge train service, additional trains between Ipswich and Peterborough, additional services between Cambridge and other cities and more rail freight.

### Fenland

Railfuture strongly supports the re-opening of the March to Wisbech line and a direct service to both Peterborough and Cambridge in order to achieve the maximum connectivity benefit. The location of the station within Wisbech needs to balance the requirements of serving new housing, bringing people into the town and possible future extension of the railway towards Kings Lynn. There is also potential for the re-introduction of freight services from the Nestlé plant in Wisbech.

### Greater Cambridge

Railfuture strongly supports proposals for the East-West rail link, including the southern entrance into Cambridge and the extension of services beyond Cambridge to Ipswich and Norwich. Railfuture supports the building of new stations at Cambourne and in the St Neots area.

Railfuture strongly support the introduction of direct trains between Soham and Cambridge enabled by the construction of a new curve east of Newmarket.

Railfuture strongly supports the re-opening of the railway line to Haverhill and has submitted a Restore Your Railway Bid to the Government for a proper study into this re-opening. Although funding was not allocated in the latest round of schemes, the Government response to the application was that there “was a good case for future development”. The rail reopening is supported by local MPs.

We have concerns regarding the proposed Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership South East Transport proposal for a busway to a park and ride site on the A11. This proposal benefits those with access to a car and this conflicts with some of the goals of the CPCA Transport Plan. A restored railway would provide connectivity between the fast developing research parks and housing plans in south east Cambridgeshire to Cambridge South, Central and North stations in a way no other mode can.

## Huntingdonshire and Peterborough

On the East Coast Mainline, Railfuture supports the Network Rail signalling upgrades and new stations to serve the Alconbury Weald development and a parkway station south of Peterborough.

### Stations

Stations should be considered key transport hubs within the CPCA area. The Transport Plan should include strategies to improve access to and facilities at railway stations. The recent upgrade work at March station shows what can be achieved.

Station strategies should include the following:

- Development of walking and cycling routes to stations with suitable signage that includes distances and journey times.
- A minimum of 200 cycle secure cycle spaces at each station.
- Bus services extended to railway stations where practical with bus operating times matching those of the railway.
- Bus / rail ticketing as described above.
- Step free access to all platforms and trains.

Developer contributions to achieve these objectives should be sought where possible.

### Freight

The Transport Plan says little about freight movement other than to recognize the role of rail freight to take long distance journeys currently performed by lorries on the main roads such as the A14, A1, A47, A10, M11. Improvements to the railway running through Cambridgeshire from Kennett, Soham, Ely plus EACE, with improved signalling between Ely and Peterborough, will enable many more freight train services to operate, allowing a reduction in HGV movements on those trunk roads crossing the county. The potential improvements to road safety, air quality, noise pollution, particulate pollution in large urban areas such as Cambridge, Wisbech, Peterborough and St Neots should be examined in more detail.

Additionally the restoration of the Wisbech branch will enable major companies such as Nestlé and del Monte, based in Wisbech, to consider rail as a part of their commitment to decarbonising production and logistics.

The rail freight industry is preparing to introduce services carrying containerised light goods/parcels from the Midlands to all major settlements in the East of England. Sites alongside the railway in Peterborough and Cambridge should be safeguarded for future possible developments.

A future zero carbon freight distribution network is likely to rely on electrically powered freight trains on the long haul, supported by electric lorries for local distribution. This will require more rail/road interchanges to be provided. The CPCA Transport Plan will need to consider suitable sites for these interchanges.

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