

**Subject:**  
Response to consultation

EAST SUFFOLK TRAVEL ASSOCIATION

Dear Sir/Madam,

ESTA is the independent voluntary body for public transport users in eastern Suffolk. We welcome the opportunity to take part in the consultation on the proposed East/West Rail Link between Cambridge and Oxford.

For residents of our area and our many visitors, the lack of a direct rail link to important parts of the Midlands is a problem. The current options are to travel via London or via Peterborough and Leicester - in each case with a number of changes; to go by train to Cambridge and then catch a bus to Bedford and another bus onward from there; or to drive all the way to such centres as Bedford, Milton Keynes and Oxford. This applies not only to business and leisure travellers, but also to students and tourists.

When the East/West Rail Link is complete, passengers from Norwich and Ipswich would have easy interchange at the now enlarged station at Cambridge or, ideally, a through service all the way to Oxford and indeed on to Bristol. For this reason we prefer Option E, with the new line leaving Cambridge in a southerly direction. This will make it easier for eventual through services as well as being operationally easier for services from Oxford terminating at Cambridge.

It is important that end-to-end services on the new route are limited-stop, and that a separate stopping service is provided on the Marston Vale section between Bedford and Bletchley.

The aim of zero carbon emissions will be helped if train journeys are as easy and seamless as possible, which means integration of the trains with local transport and publicising the new service and its potential. With the growth of electric vehicles for shorter journey and charging points at station (as is now happening with Wickham Market station in Campsea Ashe, Suffolk), carbon emissions will be reduced. It is also important that the new route should if possible be electrified from the start, although bimode trains (as also operating on regional lines in East Anglia) may have a transitional role.

We are pleased that the consultation questionnaire recognises the importance of station and on-train staff and information systems, before and during the journey. It is also encouraging that the consultation exercise considers how potential travellers research their trips.

The importance of the East/West Link for East Anglia's economy must also be borne in mind. It is said, with some justification, that HS2 could have a negative effect on the economic development of the east of England. All the more reason to have this strategic east/west rail line.

When the through Oxford - Cambridge route existed pre 1967, it was divided between three different British Rail regions. and not as well marketed as it could have been. In the digital era this should be easier to do. Information and booking for all rail journeys should use more than one medium: in the interests of inclusivity there is a need for both paper and on-line methods.

For visitors from, say, Bedford or Milton Keynes, it should be made easy to plan and book a journey to Woodbridge, Aldeburgh, Southwold or Lowestoft, including any bus transfer at the destination. The eventual operator(s) of the East/West service must work closely with the tourism industry to this end.

We in ESTA are happy to answer any other questions you may have.

Trevor Garrod, Chairman  
15 Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ

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