

Network Rail/Train Operating Companies(TOCs): Revelation

Various sources confirm that the TOCs have heavy evidence of passengers seriously avoiding the bus-substituted railway. Happily, one result is that Network Rail is being compelled to alter its policy of routine close-down for engineering work. At last! Quite apart from the questionable morality of TOCs charging full fare for a seriously disrupted journey, surely it is equally unacceptable for a railway, costing around five times more in real terms to run than in 1997, to regularly thwart weekend and holiday-time travellers?

If this pressure from the TOCs results in far fewer August 9/10-style disruptions (see PW elsewhere), when bus-substitution badly hit our area, we'll be very happy. We wish Network Rail well in this onerous but vital transformation. It will not be a moment too soon. CB

Speaker from East Midlands Trains(EMT) at Norwich Meeting:

Our next meeting is on Saturday 27 September (note change of date) at Chapel Field Methodist Chapel, Chapel Field Road, Norwich NR1SD starting at 14.15 hrs, for which we are very pleased to announce that John Hillman, EMT's Stakeholder Relations Manager has agreed to be our Guest Speaker.

John will no doubt tell us all about his company's plans for our very important rail artery that runs across Norfolk and Cambridgeshire to the ECML at Peterborough, on through the East Midlands, Sheffield, and Manchester to Liverpool. It is surely one of the most fascinating routes to be followed within the United Kingdom.

As we all know, this vital service to our region's economy, has not performed well on many an occasion, over a long period of time. We all look for great things to come from *EMT*, because perform well it must.

There are good signs that things will get better: *EMT's* owner, *Stagecoach*, operates *Southwest Trains (SWT)*, a company I have long found impressive. *SWT* punctuality is good, the rolling stock invariably well presented and when operating on the route for which it was built, comfortable (Class 450 on longer distance services are distinctly uncomfortable).

Rolling stock provision is probably the *achilles heel* of our service. Already services are extremely overloaded along much of the route, and as reliability and comfort improve, this will become even more of an issue. It is interesting to note that *EMT* are trialling 4car *Meridian* units, 7car on occasion, along the Nottingham –Sheffield – Manchester/Liverpool section of the route. Such

innovative flair from *EMT* is very encouraging. So it will be very interesting to hear what Mr Hillman.... and yourselves, have to say. PW

The View from the Chair (Peter Wakefield)

Wisbech - March reopening.

The short mothballed branch from March to Wisbech is in the news again. A local group has organised a petition on the Prime Minister's website for a Wisbech to Cambridge and London service.

Peter Lawrence is presenting to ATOC, at their request, a list of East Anglian towns of over 20,000 people that do not have a station. Wisbech fits that bill nicely with over 33,000 people, in and immediately adjoined to the town.

A Wisbech reopening has been an aspiration of the Branch for many years.

Our proposal can be viewed at the Society website, www.railfuture.org.uk (Click local groups, then on the map, finally Wisbech - March).

East West Rail link

You will be aware by now that this project is nearing the time when rebuilding of the route between Oxford and Bletchley will take place. The EWRL Consortium is keen to emphasise that the railway *must go* east of Bedford to Cambridge as well. To help focus minds on this section as well as that further west, the Branch is cooperating with the Thames Valley Branch in producing a leaflet. It will shortly be coming your way with suggestions to lobby politicians that the whole route is vital to the economy of the region.

Network Rail Train, Operating Companies and weekend trains

Countless assurances have been given over the years that where two routes exist, as say between Norwich and London, Cambridge and London, one route will always stay open during essential weekend renewals. It is disappointing to note that on the 9/10 August the routes out of Norwich to London were closed, both via Diss and through Thetford. Further south Cambridge to London via Bishops Stortford or Royston suffered the same fate. It has been suggested that TOCs would rather pocket the compensation for the disruption and push customers onto buses, than to sit down and work out a way of maximising the rail network for its customers. That can't be true, can it? (no, as already stated.)

Needless to say, the huge amount of renewal work going on is extraordinary and most welcome.

A warm welcome to the Port of Felixstowe Transport and Works Act order!

It is pleasing to note that the TWA order for enhancements to the route between Felixstowe and south Yorkshire via the East Coast Main Line has been issued as of 23 July 2008.

This means that the Felixstowe branch will be double-tracked for 4.2 miles from Trimley to Trinity Park (Suffolk Showgrounds); and three extra 24 wagon sidings provided at Ipswich Yard. The works will enable up to 40 freight trains each way per day to be provided rather than the current 23.

We note that the proposals do not include, for the longer term, the laying of a

new chord from the East Suffolk Line directly to the Stowmarket line just north of Ipswich East Suffolk Junction, known as the 'Bacon Factory Curve'. Many in the rail industry believe that this chord is essential in order to keep the traffic moving: a train sitting in Ipswich Yard for 'operational purposes' is not regarded as the best way of increasing throughput

Capacity will still be an issue even after all the works are completed, as 'only' 26% of the port's throughput will be on rail, given that there is to be a huge increase in cargo handled by the port. Many more boxes will be on the road network too (currently rail carries 23% of the port's throughput). The great advantage of railfreight is *volume/load and velocity*. Trains constrained to 24 wagons length because of Ipswich Yard's limitations, fulfill neither criterion.

Much else is being developed concurrently that will generate railfreight company interest and ultimately, business.

The binding legal agreement for completion of rail work is 31 December 2014. The assumption is that most will be completed well before then.

More News

Wisbech (again)

The renewed Wisbech campaign is neatly coinciding with Cambridgeshire County Council compiling a list of transport projects for linking to funding from the proposed Congestion Charge. We shall present our proposal to the leader of the council, Jill Tuck, when we meet her. Nick Dibben is arranging this.

Peter Wakefield (PW) has already presented the proposals to Mike Salter, Transport Lead at Eastern England Development Association, Wendy Otter, Transport Development Officer at Fenland District Council, the Town Clerks at Wisbech Town Council and March Town Council, Cllr Mark Archer of Manea PC and Fenland District councils. First Capital Connect, National Express East Anglia and East Anglia Route Director of Network Rail have also been kept informed. Cambridge Partnership too became recipients when PW attended a recent meeting of theirs. ATOC will get a copy when Peter Lawrence meets them in the near future. For further information it is useful to remember that there are *two* representative websites: "the officials" www.bramleyline.org.uk and "the provos" www.bramleyline.com They also contain proposals similar to ours. CB/PW

Overcrowding

Jerry Alderson writes to say that according to .. <http://www.dft.gov.uk/foi/responses/2008/aug/foiresponsesdespatch/congestiondata.pdf>, the Cambridge to Kings Cross service now 'boasts' four of the six most overcrowded trains in Great Britain:

07:15 Cambridge - London Kings Cross	176%
08:02 Woking - London Waterloo	176%
07:45 Cambridge - London Kings Cross	164%
17:45 London Kings Cross - Kings Lynn	164%
08.22 Oxford - London Paddington	159%
18:15 London Kings Cross - Ely	154%

Apparently these were a random snapshot from Autumn 2007, but have only just been released through the Freedom of Information Act. If the 07:15 and 07:45 represent 'average' rather than 'worst' snapshot figures (does anyone know?), increasing them by a third to twelve coaches will still not seat everybody. In the editor's experience the first evening 'off-peak' service, 19.15 to Cambridge, seldom leaves without many passengers having to stand.

Interestingly, when the Kings Cross service gets its first twelve-coach services in May of next year, these will only number *two*; the 07.15 and 07.45 from Cambridge, with the evening rush-hour remaining eight coach affairs. As Jerry Alderson points out, "I travel on the 17.45 and rarely get a seat...even the vestibules are full." Maybe this decision is linked with the fact that, initially, only Platform 1 at Cambridge station is being extended for twelve coach trains (this very month as it happens). Obviously Platform 4 will have to 'stretch' before Thameslink becomes reality, as indeed will all other stations to Kings Cross. So it looks like 'crush-pack' duty for a while yet, Jerry. CB/JA

Norwich to Peterborough Developments

East Midland Trains (EMT) tell us that from 14 December their Liverpool-Norwich service will make evening-only stops at Attleborough and Wymondham. At face value, this is good news for the 17.12 Cambridge to Norwich service which is usually a pressed-to-the-doors event on leaving Cambridge, let alone Ely. However, as EMT's services at this time of day are well loaded throughout the week and usually packed on Friday evening, the well meant 'improvement' may prove illusory to most passengers.

But let's not be churlish as this is just the sort of service development we advocate, so well done EMT (and DfT, presumably). One should add that the schedule is not being extended to accommodate these extra calls, which also include Aslockton and Bottesford further west. Capacity at Ely North Junction will have to be improved, however, before more trains can ply this route to Norwich. Many thanks to John Saunders for providing much of the detail. CB

Short but Sweet

We were very encouraged to learn that Wendy Otter, Transport Development Officer for Fenland DC along with Cambridgeshire Dcs, has set-up a Rail Policy Committee similar to that abandoned by Cambridgeshire CC's bus-besotted officers. To these meetings, as and when they occur, our Branch representatives is to be invited. We are arranging a meeting with Cambridgeshire CC at which this will be certainly mentioned. PW.

Strategy backs regional railfreight:

Our Secretary, Nick Dibben, reports that a draft regional freight strategy has rejected large scale road building as the answer to future freight growth. Instead it supports expansion of the rail network. The study, by consultants Steer Davies Gleave, commissioned by the Eastern England Regional Assembly, looked at ways to improve the movement of freight through the region.

About 9m tonnes of rail freight is currently moved in the region, mainly

containers and aggregates. This compares with nearly 400m tonnes by road, although half of these loads are short haul, less than 50km. The study has come up with a number of policies designed to encourage greater use of rail for the movement of freight including:

Capacity increases at Haughley Junction and Ely

Additional gauge enhancement schemes

Development of alternative routes

Additional road/rail interchange facilities especially close to London.

Network Rail, in its recent East Anglia Rail Utilisation Strategy, anticipated the desirability of some aspects of this EERA study, which also accepted that, even with a switch from road to rail, the number of lorries on the roads is likely to rise. Both our Branch and the Railfuture Freight Committee are actively working to advance this attitude. ND/CB

Community Rail Partnerships prove effective

Community Rail Partnerships work! They also provide excellent value for money. These are the headline conclusions of a study into the performance of the various community rail partnership schemes around the county set up to promote rural rail lines. Community Rail Partnerships involve the rail industry, local authorities, business and volunteer groups working together to promote a particular rural rail route.

The study carried out by Transport Regeneration Limited for the Association of Community Rail Partnerships found that rail routes which had partnerships had higher levels of passenger growth and higher passenger satisfaction figures than other routes. The study also found that the partnership had wider benefits to the community in helping to regenerate areas by encouraging tourism and getting more people involved in their communities. The study notes that these benefits are consistent with government and local strategies.

Many examples of good practice are highlighted within the report including successful marketing strategies, developing local tourist guides and encouraging green tourism, and helping people become confident with using the train.

The number of Community Rail Partnerships around the country is growing and many routes within East Anglia already have them. Indeed, The Bittern Line from Norwich to Sheringham is an original and shining example. They present a bright future for our rural lines and long may they continue to grow and flourish. ND

Norwich to Liverpool Street – Tony Albert recalls some history

Compared with Victoria, which was clean and the only steam trains seemed to go exotic places like Paris, Liverpool Street, to me as a child, appeared gloomy, shrouded in steam and covered in dirt from the masses of diminutive tank engines. I believe that the LNER planned the electrification of the suburban services radiating from Liverpool Street. The lines were electrified using an overhead line and at 1500v dc which required substantial cables made of copper. The services, being stopping ones, were limited to 60 mph and the

wires ran as far as Shenfield. Later extensions of the scheme brought electric trains to Chelmsford and Clacton. The voltage was altered to 6.25 kV AC by the expedient of changing the insulators for ones suitable for the increased voltage. When the wires were extended to Norwich the higher voltage of 25kV was adopted, this being the national standard for overhead electrification schemes. As this voltage was increased, so the insulators on the original schemes were changed yet again, being far cheaper than carrying out a proper modernisation.

The original wiring was designed for a local service running at reduced speeds and is not tensioned. This means that when the weather is hot the copper expands and the lines droop, making for speed restrictions. In the late 1940s, climate change did not exist and temperatures of 30°C were very rare. The subsequent extension to Chelmsford was, again, for relatively low speeds. Today the trains run up to 100mph and also include freight trains double headed with electric locomotives. The result is an overhead line that is simply not up to the job. There are frequent problems, especially in hot weather. Recently over a mile of overhead line was brought down resulting in chaos.

The Great Eastern Main Line is close to full capacity between Shenfield and Witham. Towards London it is four tracked which gives some flexibility of operation for the time being (Crossrail with its high density service is to take over two lines). Outwards from Shenfield where the trains to Southend diverge and the Metro service terminates, the route is one of the busiest two-tracked lines in the country. Commuters will readily testify that it is extremely unreliable. Infrastructure faults and train breakdowns happen regularly.

Network Rail is proposing to replace the existing dated overhead lines with modern equipment at some time in the future. This really needs to be done now. Happily the existing structures do not span the tracks on plain line (unlike on the East Coast Main Line) and this ought to make the task of replacement much simpler. However passengers attempting to use the GEML at present are faced with buses virtually every weekend. I am sure that NEXEA are heartily fed up with losing passengers and I hope that the line (which is bi-directionally signalled) will remain open during the works.

I do not hanker after the satanic gloom of Liverpool Street in the steam age but maybe we can look forward to a standard of reliability that emulates the Swiss railways. TA

And if you would like to submit a piece, no longer than the above, please do so, and if there is room I will be pleased to use it. CB(Ed)

NATIONAL EXPRESS EAST ANGLIA (NEXEA)

For some months now NEXEA have been in deep discussion with the DfOT about a new fleet of Diesel Multiple Units. This has now gone to Tender. So delicate is the prospect for this order that nobody at NEXEA would discuss any details. So, thus far, we have no idea onto which route/s they will be deployed or indeed, what design they will follow. On the latter, however, it's a pretty

safe bet that the Cl.172 light-bogie-weight design will be preferred as it offers lower Track Access charges than now, but with faster acceleration to a 100mph maximum speed. But as to whether they're to be replacements or additions to the current fleet, no one would be drawn. Is such secrecy truly necessary?

Whilst with NEXEA, early September saw an announcement that, as part of a £250,000 expenditure, the ticket office at Liverpool Street is to be substantially enhanced. Included will be adjustable height counters for wheelchair/disability scooter users, Induction Hearing Loops, plus new flooring, heating and lighting. All told, a very welcome investment. CB

Charles Taylor RIP

I feel sure that all our East Anglia members will be very sad to learn that Charles Taylor, possibly our region's longest serving and most persistent advocate of public transport, died on 10 August at the admirable age of 91. A founder member of the East Suffolk Travellers Association (ESTA) back in 1972, Charles was justifiably credited as being instrumental in saving the passenger service on the Felixstowe branch. The route now flourishes.

Many are the managers and politicians who waivered under the weight of his warm, well-informed and perceptive advocacy; which could also be wittily acerbic. You didn't forget contact with Charles; especially if you had indulged in public relations-speak, or jargon. Quite often, one was likely to leave a meeting smilingly recalling more of his 'vote of thanks' to the speaker, than the words of the speaker themself.

And it was from exactly these qualities which we in the Railway Development Society, now *Railfuture*, greatly benefited during his long and active membership. Charles was both a leader and a team player; a man who always offered encouragement and empowerment to colleagues. Indeed, I suspect his lobbying work was, in truth, just an extension of the classroom, and we the pupils whose outlook he had tried so enthusiastically to mould in his career as a schoolteacher. Such talent and humanity can only be greatly missed, not least by his wife, Joan, and family without whose support Charles would not have achieved what he did. We give thanks and heartfelt condolence. CB

History Man

I refer to Dr Terry Gourvish of the London School of Economics, *the* authority on British railway history since 1948. In September he publishes 'Britain's Railway 1997-2005 – Labour's Strategic Experiment', via Oxford University Press. If you are truly interested in this thorny period for our railway this is the man to read. Always objective, always readable. In previous volumes, covering the years right back to 1948, Gourvish had full access to official records and many of the top people involved. So there's no reason to believe that this tome will not be equally well rooted. At £30 for 328 pages he doesn't come cheap. But this is the price of serious research and analysis. CB

A Parting Thought

Is it not about time that National Express East Anglia diverted its stopping service from Cambridge to Liverpool Street, via Stansted Airport? I was recently reminded, yet again, of this need when a good friend of mine, who hates coach travel, was told through an internet inquiry, that changing trains at Bishops Stortford was the