

Secretary of State for Transport
c/o Transport and Works Act Orders Unit
General Counsel's Office
Department for Transport
Zone 1/18
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London
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please reply to:
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2018-09-07

Dear Sir,

Network Rail East West Rail TWA Order

Railfuture is the leading national independent voluntary organisation campaigning for a better railway across a bigger network for passenger and freight users in order to support economic growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities.

This submission has been led by our Thames Valley branch who are now experiencing the benefits of the Western Section Phase 1 for which they remained steadfast supporters throughout all its protracted and arduous processes to eventual completion. Colleagues in East Anglia have also contributed, in eager anticipation of the next, Central Section.

Railfuture (formerly the Railway Development Society) started campaigning for the East West scheme in 1986, directly and via our affiliate, Oxon and Bucks Rail Action Committee. It has been a long and often frustrating journey and we offer full support to this application for an Order under the Transport and Works Act.

We wish to express our strong support for the Western Section Phase 2 for the following reasons:

1. This scheme is deliverable; it has been well designed, has funding and is ready to go; the sooner the better.
2. It will support jobs and housing. Whilst campaigning for the scheme, over many years, economic growth in the Oxford - Cambridge arc has been strong but has been held back by poor connectivity. By way of an example, Oxford has a knowledge-based economy but too few people to work in it, while Milton Keynes has housing and land to build homes but too few high-skilled jobs. East West Rail has the potential to connect the two and lead to the UK's version of Silicon Valley.
3. It will transform connectivity:
 - providing much better connectivity for north Buckinghamshire by means of rail services between Aylesbury and Milton Keynes calling at Winslow, thus putting a large hinterland within reach of a railhead.
 - offering much improved journey times between Oxford and the wider Thames Valley area and the East Midlands, with quicker journeys to/from Leicester, Derby & Nottingham, for example, with a far more convenient change at Bedford than the present route via Birmingham New Street.

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- delivering enhanced connectivity with the midlands, north of England and Scotland more generally by allowing travel between Oxfordshire/Buckinghamshire via Milton Keynes and multiple destinations, and especially for residents and businesses of Aylesbury who will be able to connect northwards directly by train.
 - reducing the need, potentially for freight as well as passengers, to travel via London thus helping to relieve congestion on already-crowded networks there.
- Quite simply it will better connect people and places.

4. It has widespread public support. In 30 years of campaigning we have never encountered anyone hostile to the scheme; it has support from Councils, MPs, the LEPs and more importantly, the general public. The evidence of success is to be found in the Phase 1 scheme between Oxford and Bicester, which is moving towards four million journeys and has already delivered twice the estimated passenger figures at Oxford Parkway station.

5. East West Rail will provide a viable, attractive alternative to road transport, for freight as well as passenger journeys. Railfuture has been campaigning for modal shift for 60 years. The economic value of the benefits in savings of economic, social and other costs through reduced collisions and casualties, and through environmental gains arising from air quality improvements such as reduced emissions of carbon, oxides of nitrogen, other pollutants including particulates, and noise pollution, need to be factored-in to a holistic and measured consideration of the 'cost' of the scheme.

6. Experience of the Phase 1 Oxford - Bicester scheme has shown that user demand on Phase 2, and the complete Western Section, is very likely to exceed estimates. As such forecasting seems almost invariably to include an element of 'pessimism bias' we urge that passive/design provision be provided in the Order for:

- ~ longer station platforms for increased passenger train capacity
- ~ increased frequency of services both for freight and greater attractiveness for passengers from reduced average waiting-times
- ~ higher line-speeds for more attractive journey-times
- ~ future electrification for wider network benefits, operational efficiencies, and associated economic and environmental benefits.

Too often we have witnessed the scale of economic growth unleashed by rail schemes leading to congestion and crowding, and then the need for subsequent expensive, and disruptive, upgrades if those schemes have been built initially to a too-limited specification. Growing communities with a growing economy need a growing railway to support their aspirations for increasing opportunity and raising prosperity.

Yours faithfully,

Roger Blake BA, MRTPI (Rtd), MTPS
Railfuture
Director for Infrastructure & Networks
Vice-Chair, London & South East regional branch