

# English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)

~ An unincorporated membership based association seeking reopening of select rail lines making for a better environment as a result. ~



Chairman, Mr David Ferguson  
 12 MacDougall Court, North Road,  
 KEW, TW9 4EH T. 020-8876-3340  
 E. [daferguson1212@gmail.com](mailto:daferguson1212@gmail.com)



~ Making a contribution towards retention and improvement in better public transport. ~

W. <https://ertarail.com/>

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## Great Central Dossier April 2017 by Richard Pill The following questions come to mind:

Questions	Associated Focus'
Why Reopen	Benefits of Reopening
What Reopen	Our Selection and Connections
How Reopen	The challenges and costs in an economy of scale
State of Route now and going forward	Blockages, Pinch Points and where realignments/new build is required
Links with Other Lines	Identifying Gaps in the network
Capacity Creation Scope	Existing trunking road and rail artery's
Passenger Use	Core Trunking and multiple aspecting accessibility to core trunk route if available
Freight Use	Now and generating new flows

### Introduction.

The mooted reasons for closures were many and diverse and putting one's finger on an exact reason or justification is an elusive exercise as one delves into minutiae. The Great Central was a 20<sup>th</sup> century main line employing the most modern thinking and construction of its time and was part of a dream to link the North of England and established cross country links with a southern portal to France and inter-continental flows of passenger and freight trunking. That ambition of model and design left a legacy of consistency in construction. The M1 heralded a change of Government policy and funding towards a road based main carrier and operations and the tossup was pitted that parallel routes are to be cut and so it was Midland Main Line v Great Central for closure.

Closure came in 1966 and since then the line has deteriorated in various locations more severely than others but in its wake, has flung new growth onto existing infrastructure – roads primarily and rails secondarily. The point is that as the M1, West Coast Main Line and elsewhere sees growth, capacity constraints and conflicting issues, something has to give, some more capacity becomes necessary and be it land use, environmental, sustainable balance or sheer change of policy and funding back towards rail agendas – the need for more rail north-south remains tabled here and elsewhere and thus our call to have potentially interested and beneficiary parties look at what a new and select reopened Great Central could offer is ever becoming a more pertinent consideration because the alternative of congestion, pollution, wear and tear costs eroding local authority budgets and the sheer waste and environmental cost, makes a relative cost-gain trade off advantageous with the wider strategic benefits a rail access and capacity facility could offer and thus moves to nurture it incrementally and implement it in top-down demand and supply mechanisms becomes ever more relevant and meaningful to consider. This is what this dossier aims to bring to the fore.

## **Why Reopen?**

- Existing north-south arteries to and from London and the Southeast are congested and at capacity
- Existing railways to and from London terminate there, we need orbital access to Kent, South Coast and the Continent and vice versa with the rest of the United Kingdom
- Widening the M1 would blight many residential areas and be environmentally damaging.
- Land is becoming scarcer; more expensive and thus land-use stewardship and prudence is ever more required.
- New commuter routes could be established
- growth corridor could be realised sustainably
- There's a glaring gap and a big opportunity needing a backer

## **What Reopen?**

- South of Leicester – East-West Rail and links to London, Southeast, South Coast and the Continent
- Former Great Central corridor recovery and return to rail use
- realignments where blockages exist including new construction such as at Brackley and Rugby
- A twin track railway for passenger and freight use
- north of Rugby a dual solution needs greater evaluation as well as serving Leicester
- Connections with other lines and existing lines and services is critical to optimum operational demand-supply fostering
- Bringing Daventry, Brackley and Buckingham back onto the rails creates capacity elsewhere and links growth areas to the rail network currently disenfranchised.

## **How Reopen?**

- Rebuild using old formation as a corridor basis for reconstruction
- realignments where blockages exist and major deviations such as at Brackley are required
- Integrating by a Parkway Station at Daventry and A43/Brackley and a new loop for integrating Buckingham
- A coming together from respecting angles, disciplines and customer basis' of Local Authorities, Rail Industry Players and Governmental Strategic Inclusion
- Whether HS2 or not, the wider connecting roles the corridor offers should not be under-estimated
- All beneficiaries have the onus to contribute in design, engineering, case making and courting the funding required.
- We have to see the case in a context of growth, congestion, capacity creation and demand-supply study and case making.

## **Links with other lines**

- East-West Rail
- Grendon and Old Oak Common
- Oxford-Reading-Guildford-Horsham-Shoreham-Brighton
- Rugby-London West Coast relief
- Midland Main Line – Western Rail Network (Leicester-Oxford)
- Feeds into Leicester-Burton (freight diversionary route for more passenger capacity at Leicester.
- Spinal Freight route for re-railing more freight by rail creates road capacity/frees up congestion, bolsters business operational efficiency and competitiveness.

## **Capacity Creation Scope**

- Relief to M1 end to end London-Leicester and beyond
- Interception with M1, M6 and A14 either at Lutterworth or within a nearby vicinity
- More freight by rail scope, including new flows and diversity nurture and development if initial start-up costs and infrastructure from wagons to depots can be funded and growth incrementally nurtured local-regional-trans-continental
- New commuter flows and sustainable community development growth fostering
- saving land for other uses which otherwise motorway development would swallow up

- If electrified can utilise spare and existing stock allocations/budgets and integrational trunking systems ensure costs on new rolling stock is mitigated.
- East Midlands-Heathrow-Continent potential 'not via London' frees up terminal capacity, M25 and orbital trunking and cuts emissions.

### **Passenger use**

- South-West – East Midlands direct access 'not via London' and vice versa
- Second London-West and East Midlands artery, choice and competition
- More seats, more trains, new flows
- Multiple operators can utilise same tracks with core station calling on the trunking route
- HS2, if at all, does not have a station between Old Oak Common and Birmingham, which leaves a 120 gap with brownfield creation with M40 corridor which will spill onto existing other roads and rail services creating overcrowding and price managed controls with winners and losers
- Great Central with Stations for Daventry/Southam/A425 locational presence of scope, Brackley/A43 and Buckingham would mop up that growth and development and ease pressure elsewhere as a direct result of HS2 passing through areas without providing the means to access that transport corridor but it is not a neutral development, it is intrusive with ramifications on wider areas 20 miles either side surely in development prospecting terms, domestic or commercial speculation?
- Rugby-London commuting route and West Coast diversionary capable of semi-fast operations.

### **Freight use:**

- London-West and East Midlands
- Southampton, West Country and South Coast/Chunnel -West Coast Main Line outside Rugby-Euston premium cordon
- generic line-side potential being curtain sided wagons for warehouses, pallet sized freight and casual regenerative from the corridor
- diversionary traffic
- extra capacity for new flows and double movements by rail currently on M1 and M40

### **Benefits of reopening**

- More off roads and onto rail
- cuts emissions and pollution
- cuts congestion and aggregate savings collective and individual pockets
- new commuting corridor opened up and served sustainably
- more capacity elsewhere on and off rails
- land saved for sustainable, rail served development
- careful development crafted to optimise rail use

### **Our selection and connections**

- Oxford and beyond-Rugby/Nuneaton and beyond/Leicester
- South Coast-Heathrow-West Coast/Midland Main Line
- East-West Rail-GC core trunking- East/West Midlands
- London -Leicester via alternative route
- Heathrow focused access/OCC and Reading/Thames basin
- West Country – East Midlands – North East diagonal cross-country core trunking
- HS2 back-feed line and link for routine stock and other operations off fast tracks

### **The challenges of costs in an economy of scale**

- Less than HS specification
- 125 mph capability between Calvert and Rugby/Leicester
- Twin Track
- Loop for Buckingham
- Link to East-West Rail near Claydon
- Stations for Daventry, Brackley and Buckingham

- Capability for Piggyback dedicated route from Chunnel-Guildford-Heathrow Tunnel-GC via OCC and Grendon link reinstated/new build

**To ascertain/do/develop:**

- State of Route now and going forward
- Blockages, Pinch Points and where realignments/new build is required
- Identifying gaps in the network
- Existing Trunk Road and Rail Arteries
- Core trunking and multiple aspecting accessibility to core trunk route if available
- Other options, but does it have to be either or?

R.B. Pill  
 richard.erta@gmail.com  
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**Above: The old Great Central route taken near Finmere early 1990's. If we can build HS2, at a fraction of the cost we could rebuild this line to give vital relief and capacity, choice and environmental sustainability currently lacking over a wide area, M1-M40 corridor.**

**Above: The M1 on a typical day between Luton and Leicester clogs up with traffic congestion especially around junctions. It is heavily used and need relief. Enter our call to look again at what the Great Central can offer.**

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**Membership Secretary, Mr Richard Pill, 24c St Michaels Road, BEDFORD, MK40 2LT**

**T. 01234 330090. E. [richard.erta@gmail.com](mailto:richard.erta@gmail.com) <http://ertarailvolunteer.blogspot.co.uk/>**