

# English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)



**Patron:** Sir Edmund Verney +  
Others welcome of professional,  
business or other acumen and of  
good standing.

~ Contributing towards  
retention and improvement in  
better public transport. ~



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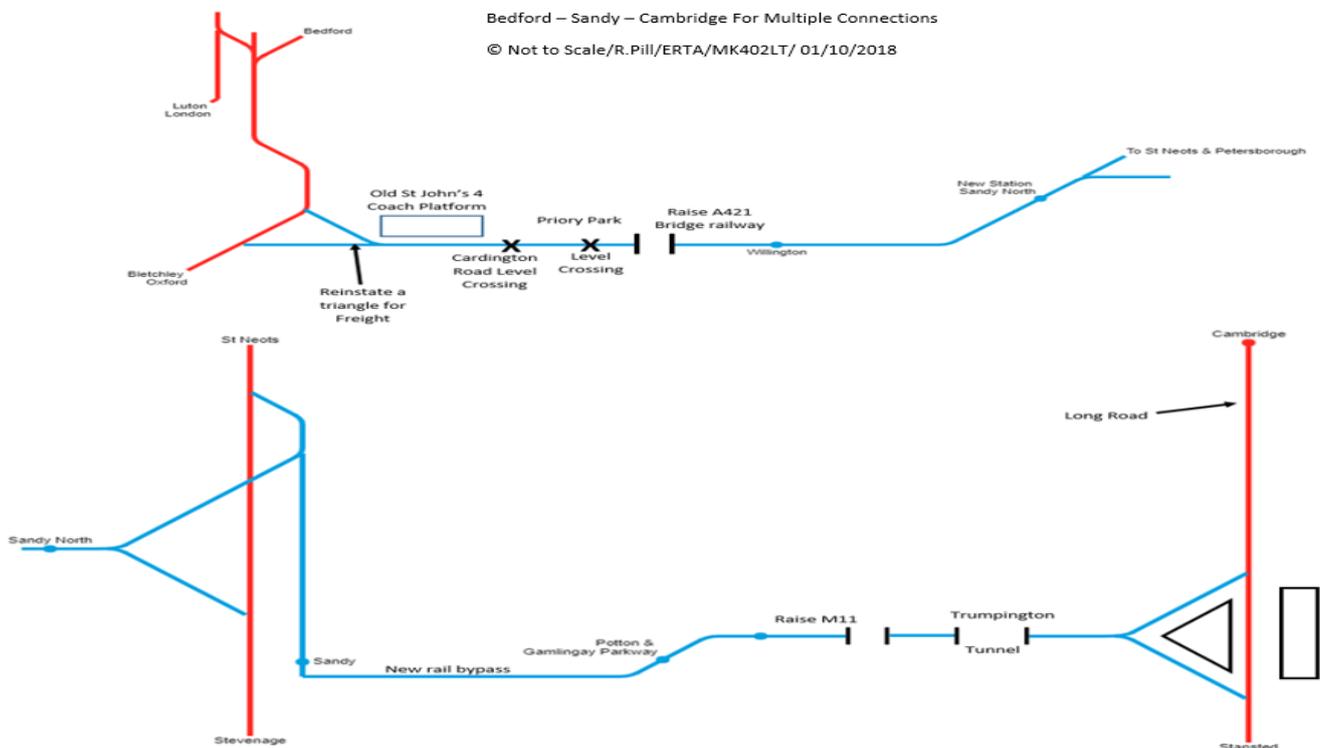
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## Bedford-Cambridge East-West Rail Link Reflection (see page 2)

Bedford – Sandy – Cambridge For Multiple Connections  
© Not to Scale/R.Pill/ERTA/MK402LT/ 01/10/2018



## Bedford-Cambridge East-West Rail Link Reflection – continued

The diagram on page 1 is not perfect but gives an idea of intent. The original route ran from 1862-1967 and was closed within an eclipse of Milton Keynes being launched. 1973 we joined the E.U. and trade shifted from previous Empire West Coast Ports to the East and Southern ports as trade grew over 40 years hence with Europe. Now the Bedford-Cambridge rail link closure was curious if not spurious to say the least. First, Dr Beeching said it should remain open and other east – west rail lines north of London were closed instead like Leighton Buzzard-Luton-Hertford, Hitchin-Bedford-Northampton, Northampton-Wellingborough-Peterborough and with Kettering – Huntingdon-Cambridge meant 100 miles north of London without any east-west rail link and the only ones standing were the North London Line and Peterborough-Leicester-Nuneaton. This meant that all movements east west in the area had to go largely by road. Growing new markets were lost to rail and the trends, patterns and adjustments in the 50 years since closure with growth means that road solutions have been a mainstay with the A14 trunking many juggernaut lorries between Felixstowe and the West Midlands and all in between, the A421 has been dualled between the A1 and M1 trunk and motorways with Bedford roughly half way. It is proposed to create a new road from the A421 Great Barford Bypass trunk road to Caxton Roundabout with some kind of new configuration at Black Cat Roundabout. However, the lesson of all these £millions poured into road solutions is that traffic jams at junctions and urban interfaces and causes congestion and ultimately gridlock. Bus solutions fall down as they get caught in congestion and face delay. But without a rail link that is all there has been. Now, after 50 years and 30 years of the rail link campaign for a new Bedford-Cambridge rail link, we have the spectacle of a final route yet to be made public and consulted on whilst laissez-faire policies fluidly allow piecemeal development which just about blocks every conceivable route somehow, somewhere. In short there's no panaceas only swings, roundabouts and rails! Action top-down is needed now.

ERTA has supported reopening of the traditional old route with realignments where blockages exist, modest deviations but linking main centres. So, for example, East Bedfordshire reunited with the County Town of Bedford and vice versa. Bus takes about 1 hour, rail would take 20 minutes. Bus and rail can feed each other – the real challenge is to offer time, price and access to lure drivers out of cars and have a railway capable to carry freight by rail more. Likewise, St Neots-Sandy-Cambridge makes sense to share the same tracks. Thameslink's from Stevenage, now joined up at St Pancras via new tunnels, could link to Bedford and Bedford-Peterborough is only about 35 miles via the rail link via the East Coast Main Line (ECML) at Sandy, contrast 70 odd miles via a restored Manton Curve.

Yet, we understand that the new railway would leave the Bedford-Bletchley line and link with the Main Line at Wixams (near Elstow) and cut across country to Shepreth somehow. There would be new stations and development, but shaving the time, cost and hassle of coming into Bedford and out via St John's would speed end to end Oxbridge timings. Indeed, a local person said recently "Richard, it can take 20 minutes to drive from Kempston to Prebend Street to Bedford Midland, there's hardly any parking and you pay through the nose, by hitting the bypass we would be half way to Cambridge. So, accessing a train at a Wixams Station would be easier and save time and money." So, is there a trade off? Threats of housing abound in South Cambridgeshire and NIMBYISM is seeking to block the route accessing Shepreth where the current Hitchin-Royston-Cambridge railway crosses the Rhee-Cam valley.

The old route would require a bypass and possibly shared station at Potton and Gamlingay due to extensive interim development. All routes have blockages and costs associated, so there is a trade off to be had. Any railway east-west means some modal shift and thus some overall gain, but the footfall and spend an east-west both directions coming into Bedford Town Centre is £'s not to sneezed at and ability to cater for freight by rail a key consideration in design. We will continue to engage as we may, interjecting for local links. It really does matter.

**March-Spalding In-rails!** ERTA made 3 local newspapers calling for protection of the remaining route from piecemeal development and arose the local MP RT. Hon. Sir John Hayes CBE MP to write a letter to South Holland Council supporting our calls. For this we are grateful. Others waded in and a bit of coverage in Rail Magazine showed we were making waves. All welcome to our **Spalding Forum:** Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May 1.00pm food and social, 2.00 – 4.00pm business, The Ivy Wall, 18 – 19 New Road, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 1DQ. We want the councils to agree a new railway is needed and to pool resources to commission a study which could look at varying route options. We are not calling for every dot and comma of former rail route to be recovered, rather use it as a basis where complimentary to a restored railway link for all.

**News and Notes: ERTA reaches out** and grows in all directions. Our events and forums are listed on our website and opportunities exist to help and get involved. Please do recommend us to your friends and colleagues and help us to grow even more. Our membership stands around 30 constantly and our reach is now from interest in supporting Woodhead in the Pennines to Guildford-Horsham in the South.

**News and Notes: Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> March,** Friends Meeting House (Quakers) 5 Lansdowne Road, Bedford, MK40 2BY starting 1.,30pm ERTA is facilitating a ‘Transport Users Forum’ – a chance for public transport users and interested persons to come together and compare notes on public transport matters. Bus cuts, rail chaos, cycle and pedestrian issues are all up for discussion with a light refreshment. Our meetings are open to all!



**Caption Above:** Class 108 Diesel Multiple Unit at what is now Danes Camp at Willington 1962 heading eastwards. This was published in the BR Eastern Regional Journal celebrating the lines centenary in an article titled ‘West of Cambridge’ by Roma Branton. Efforts were made over the years to contact original people but were unsuccessful.

In reopening a Bedford-Cambridge or Wixams-Shepreth rail link, problems abound for both options as well as any other. 50 years is a long time of fallow and the world doesn’t stand still. However, to give up and say “it will never happen” consigns the Oxbridge Arc to incompleteness and unsustainability. The railway came first, it should never have been closed, it must be restored fully.

**Quote:** “But in the late twentieth century, city authorities have prioritised the building of more roads to cater for a projected growth in motorised transport, rather than managing health and environmental issues. This has led to the development of a so-called ‘windscreen view’ of transport planning that sees the problem from the car driver’s perspective only. It puts car use first, then public transport, with walking and cycling as afterthoughts. There is no focus on travel alternatives and little attention paid to the environmental and health impacts. “

**Source:** Fuller, Gary., (2018) The Invisible Killer  
The Rising Global Threat of Air Pollution – and How We Can Fight Back.

**Conference Invite!** With this newsletter you will receive a booking form for our conference. Please use it or go on line and book for what promises to be an informative and useful networking fun day of opportunity. See: <https://ertarail.com/conference/>

You must pre-book and it is on a first come, first served basis. Take advantage of the any 5 for £50 special offer and why not use the Bedford-Bletchley railway to get to the venue at Fenny Stratford on the day to make a really ‘public transport’ statement?

If this event proves a ‘success’ we hope to make it an annual get-together to strength fellow campaigns and reinforce the role of ERTA as a bringer together and force for good in society.

**ERTA now has it’s 2 main publications for sale as either hard copy or pdf downloads on our excellent sales page on our website:** <https://ertarail.com/sales/>

**Use form below. Please Join or Renew your Membership of ERTA and help us help you!**

✂ \_\_\_\_\_

**Tear Off and Send with Your Subscription or Renewal or go to on-line:**

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

Tick if a New Member:  \_\_\_\_\_ Tick if renewing as an existing member:  \_\_\_\_\_

Membership of ERTA costs £12 per annum. I/We wish to join  \_\_\_\_\_

**Name (Please Print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tel/Mobile:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email** \_\_\_\_\_

I/We hereby give consent to our data being used and stored for the purposes of communication with ERTA and its purposes compliant with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)  \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Dated:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please send completed form and payment to ERTA Membership:**

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