

Yorkshire

By Chris Hyomes

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■ ■ Eureka timetable

Railfuture Yorkshire is monitoring reaction to the new timetable for the East Coast main line, planned for December. There has been widespread concern about the changes and some commentators suggest any changes may be delayed until May 2011.

Train operator East Coast – which is being run by the Department for Transport's Directly Operated Railways – says the new Eureka timetable will mean more trains and faster journeys for York passengers.

A spokesman said: "It will add thousands more seats, provide new services, speed up average journey times, improve connections, and make better use of available track space across the East Coast main line."

Most trains going north will in future terminate at Edinburgh not Glasgow. East Coast has invited Railfuture to presentations in Leeds and York.

■ ■ Northern rail utilisation study

Network Rail's draft Northern rail utilisation study is expected in September and will look forward to what infrastructure improvements will be needed over the next 30 years. Passenger Focus expects it to include an analysis of electrification proposals, for example from Manchester to York, the need for new and cascaded rolling stock, "unexploited capacity" of some routes, for example the Settle-Carlisle, and the need for signalling upgrades. It is also expected to give a judgment on reopening proposals for Woodhead, Colne and Bradford, restoration of through services between Wakefield and Manchester, smart ticketing, and restoration of double tracking. More information: northernrg2@networkrail.co.uk

■ ■ Council backs plan for more trains

Wakefield Council has reacted favourably to the Pontefract and District Rail Action Group's plan for a two hourly Leeds-Goole service, and for a possible proper service between Pontefract and York. The group plans to meet with Wakefield Council.

■ ■ Better stations

Friends of Hebden Bridge Station and the Upper Calder Valley Sustainable Transport Group have both sent in comments on the *Better Rail Stations* report produced for Transport secretary Lord Adonis by Chris Green and Sir Peter Hall. The Friends are worried that the Victorian nature of Hebden Bridge station has not been recognised and should be protected. South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive was delighted that the report labelled Barnsley, Doncaster and Sheffield as "world-class". The report said: "SYPTTE has delivered an inspired public transport access to Barnsley station. An upgraded station takes passengers via an escalator to the brand new bus station, which includes a travel centre and a 24-hour information service. Passengers wait for their buses at 18 airport-style gates in a warm, seated environment and the gate doors are opened by the arriving bus driver. Extensive real-time bus information is displayed in the train station and vice versa." The report can be downloaded from www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/passenger/stations/

■ ■ Rail is best for urban transport

Railfuture Yorkshire is also considering a report by the Prime Minister's strategy unit called *The Analysis of Urban Transport*. Initial reactions were that it was good in promoting public transport generally, but failed to consider the importance of rail.

■ ■ Rail for Bradford regeneration

Bradford Civic Society has produced a report *Common Sense Regeneration; A Plan to revive the fortunes of Bradford*. The society suggests there is a need for a cross-city rail link and a high-quality circular rail route serving Bradford, Leeds, Normanton, Wakefield, Brighouse, Halifax and Bradford again. It also wants improved inter-city links to bring in tourists and a railway to serve Leeds-Bradford airport.

Guided busway is a

By Mike Mason

During development of the Cambridge guided bus scheme, the DfT commissioned the Transport Research Laboratory to scrutinise costs and the bills of quantities.

These were quoted at £74 million in 2001 and rose to £86.4 million by the time of the 2004 public inquiry in 2004. In a funding statement in December 2003, the DfT had already promised £65 million.

At the Transport and Works Act Public Inquiry the Inspector and objectors, were unaware that TRL had reported errors in the preparation of costs.

Requests for the TRL report to be made public were declined, the Inspector subsequently concluding that the county council figure of £86.4 million was correct.

A freedom of information request later revealed that the cost-benefit ratio had been miscalculated by a factor of 4, bringing the previously published figure down to a marginal 1.21 to 1.

Furthermore DfT "optimism bias", normally applied to schemes of this nature, revised the cost to £106 million.

Was Alistair Darling, then Transport Secretary, made aware of the TRL report when he signed the TWA order in 2005?

"The decision letter said he was "satisfied" that the busway was "reasonably capable of attracting the funds to implement it."

The contractor's final "target price" rose to £116 million, to be funded by £92.5 million from the Government (a revised grant) and £23.5 million from developers by means of section 106 payments.

But both business case and passenger forecasts were dependent on housing development at Northstowe new town, Cambridge Northern Fringe (Orchard Park) and Cambridge Southern Fringe.

Critically important was the proposed redevelopment of the area around Cambridge station, comprising an interchange with guided bus stops and trackway leading to an underpass at Hills Road, adjacent to the Cambridge rail signalling centre.

Land assembly negotiations between Ashwell Group, the county council and Network Rail, together with section 26 disposal consultations, were supervised, in 2008, by the Rail Regulator.

Cambridge City Council granted planning permission in 2009. The developer was required to contribute £3.016 million to the guided bus project and £4.25 million to NR for station area improvements.

In a 2003 report, the county council had previously been warned that the Hills Road underpass route was a high-risk, high-cost option, necessitating replacement of adjacent electrification masts, signalling cables and equipment, at total

cost estimated at £9.7 million. Nevertheless the rail infrastructure work went ahead in 2008 with the Cambridge area network being shut down over four weekends. Nineteen months later, the Hills Road underpass remained unfinished and was blocked from both directions!

Late design changes, public consultation and discharge of planning conditions, and other factors have pushed the busway scheme towards total disaster.

The collapse of the house building market has delayed or severely curtailed major development around Cambridge and put in doubt the £24.7 million contributions the council hoped to receive from developers.

Years after the original conception, the government's Homes and Communities Agency is seeking a new development partner for Northstowe.

Orchard Park is the only development to provide an "up front" £2 million contribution so far.

The city council in November 2009 agreed to defer the first payment of the guided busway contribution from developer Ashwell amounting to £0.926 million, but Ashwell went into liquidation a month later.

Serious construction problems with the guideway at Trumpington may delay the section 106 payments, which include revenue subsidies to the operators.

Guided bus services were expected to start in spring 2009. Three publicised dates for the opening of the northern guideway section have come and gone. Now buses, without guidewheels, are being used on ordinary services, carrying the slogan: "We will be on the busway soon, will you?"

Meanwhile the situation for rail users at Cambridge station remains dire. The published busway map for Cambridge shows no connection with Cambridge station. There is chronic congestion for the six million rail passengers who use the station in a year. It's a daily reminder of mismanagement and planning blight.

What is the ultimate cost of the busway to the taxpayer? The hidden total may be over £200 million, although the council is officially expecting it to be £161 million.

Cambridgeshire has finally admitted that a decision taken in secret some months ago has authorised borrowing of an additional £41 million.

County taxpayers are thus already paying the interest on loans to make up the difference between "vision" and reality.

The "private negotiations" between the county council and NR, together with contributions from other regional government agencies such as Cambridgeshire Horizons, have obscured the