

# transport disaster



**HEAVY HAULAGE:** A freight train at Histon in 1978. Now the busway has killed any prospect of taking freight off the roads



**SPECIAL:** This March 1979 picture shows the RDS train which proved the railway could be developed and people wanted it



**ENTHUSIASM:** People crowded Swavesey station for the RDS special in 1979. Politicians and planners failed to respond

financial position. The original railway assets were partly owned by the taxpayers and any disposals, according to the Rail Regulator, should be "transparent".

Cambridge busway disposals do not appear on the ORR website but there is a reference in the Cambridge station document to "an agreement between Network Rail and Cambridgeshire County dated 19 November 2004.

That date was before the public inquiry closed and the Inspector's report had been written!

Taxpayers and transport users are entitled to answers to the following. If the county council had already negotiated an agreement with Network Rail, why spend £2.2 million on a public inquiry to acquire compulsory purchase powers, which were apparently

not used for the railway land? In addition to being misled by wildly optimistic passenger forecasts and cost-benefit figures, did the inspector have information that had been denied to the public?

Had the promise of funding from the DfT in 2003 prevented him from coming to any other conclusion? Was he in any way unduly influenced to produce such a flawed recommendation?

In June 2005 the Cambridge Evening News reported: "City's controversial guided bus proposal hit by new delay. Inspector loses final report on £2.2 million inquiry"

Did the "2004 agreement" include a realistic valuation of the railway infrastructure from Chesterton Junction to St Ives and Cambridge Hills Road to Trumpington Park

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## LOCAL ACTION

### London and South East

#### ■ ■ Franchise consultations

Our branch will collaborate with East Anglia to respond to the Greater Anglia and Essex Thameside consultations which were launched by the Department for Transport in January and needed responses by 19 April. The new franchise will probably run for 10 years.

#### ■ ■ Mayor's transport strategy

Several rail user groups, including the Chingford Line Users Association and the Cambridge Heath and London Fields rail users responded to the Mayor of London's draft transport in January.

#### ■ ■ Southern timetable consultation

With input from Railfuture's Coastway division, branch chairman Keith Dyll responded to Southern's timetable proposals for December 2010. Key changes are splitting the Ashford-Brighton service at Eastbourne, serving Winchelsea and Doleham stations throughout the day, and using ex-London Overground/Silverlink Metro 3rd rail stock to enhance capacity, if not quality! Network Rail's forthcoming London and South East route utilisation study, the first of the second generation RUSs, is expected in the autumn and may offer the opportunity to press for infrastructure improvements, such as doubling and electrifying the Ashford-Ore Marshlink line.

#### ■ ■ Tram-trains in Hertfordshire

Campaigners hope the St Albans Abbey to Watford line could be extended to serve the town centres at either end of the line, following proposals to convert the line for tram operation. The Department for Transport consultation into the idea ran until 21 March. It should result in a more frequent service.

#### ■ ■ Surrey reopening hope

There will be a public meeting on 17 April to try to promote the reopening of the Guildford to Cranleigh line. It was one of the schemes listed in the report *Connecting Communities*, published by the Association of Train Operating Companies last year. The meeting will be held in the Guildford United Reformed Church's Jubilee room in Portsmouth Road and will run from 14.00 and 17.00

#### ■ ■ Vital link

Save the South London Line campaigners have published *The Vital Link*, a report arguing the case for enhancing services on the South London line. John Stewart, co-ordinator of Lambeth Public Transport Group, said "The South London Line is a vital link for South London. There should be no question of scrapping it. Indeed, there should be more trains stopping in South London rather than fewer." More information from [www.southwarkrailusers.net](http://www.southwarkrailusers.net)

#### ■ ■ West London line

The Department for Transport has decided that from May, the once-weekly "ghost bus" between Ealing Broadway and Wandsworth Road shall be replaced by a once-daily train operated by Southern.

#### ■ ■ Chiltern

Chiltern's Evergreen Three plan will cut journey times from Marylebone to Birmingham and introduce a new service to Oxford but regrettably will offer no benefits to its London suburban users.

Contact details for branch chairman Keith Dyll: [keith.dyll@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:keith.dyll@railfuture.org.uk) or 26 Millway, Mill Hill, London, NW7 3RB

