

Press Release

Central Section Steering Group

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Statement on the Central Section

The East West Rail Consortium has recently completed its review of route options for the Central Section of the overall route, broadly the area between Milton Keynes and Cambridge. This work complements the progress that is being made on the Western Section (Oxford/Aylesbury - Bletchley - Milton Keynes - Bedford).

Following examination of the how well passenger services would operate on a variety of route and service pattern options and, following discussions with key stakeholders, the Consortium agreed the following at its meeting on 4th February 2010.

The Consortium welcomes the results of the technical work and thanks all those who were involved.

On the basis of the analysis of the operating case and infrastructure requirements, the Consortium believes there are two route options of sufficient merit to warrant further development. These routes are:

- Option 1: Bletchley - Bedford - Sandy - Hitchin – Cambridge.
- Option 2: Bletchley - Marston Vale - Luton - Stevenage - Hitchin – Cambridge.

The Central Section sub-group of the Consortium will therefore proceed with developing the business case for these two options, and it is envisaged that this work will be completed by the autumn.

It will include:

1. A full review of the vision for East West Rail in line with current Government guidance on Delivering a Sustainable Transport System;
2. Outline designs of indicative route options so as to provide a reliable cost estimate;
3. An analysis of the case for the scheme, including its potential role in delivering regeneration, growth and supporting the wider economy; and

4. Preparation of an initial business case to demonstrate the overall worth of the scheme.

Subject to the result of this work and ongoing discussions with the Department for Transport and rail industry, the Consortium intends to select the most advantageous option for further development.

ENDS

For more information please contact: Trevor Mason at Hertfordshire County Council on 01992 556117, or email on centralsection@eastwestrail.org.uk

Notes to editors:

East West Rail Consortium is a group of local authorities and government agencies with an objective of securing a new rail route from East Anglia to Oxford via the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area.

More details of the project can be found online at www.eastwestrail.org.uk.