

## English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)

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## Time to invest in the Bedford-Bletchley Railway!

ERTA lauds the collective combination of paid professional and voluntary inputs to making the railway as pleasant as it can be and fostering goodwill. However, ERTA believes that more needs to be done to make the line even better. Attracting passengers is a good thing, but can be a swing door if we lose them in equal measure. To stem the drain and ease off the constant pressure means people want the following:



- **Reliability!** People want to be able to rely on the train service to take people from where they wish to go and arrive safely at the destination of their choice. This means trains fit for purpose and which work, happy staffing relations, a healthy timetable and calling at places they wish to get to. Bank Holiday and Sunday services and later evening trains have long been called for here!
- **Buses are no substitute for railway services!** Since the 1960's it has been proven time and again that bus substitutes for rail services are unable to keep to the timetable and are laden with all sorts of bedevillments as a result. Every effort must be made to make the trains work and keep them working. Studies should be conducted to assess whether half-hourly at peak time would be used.
- ERTA believes that a new station serving and giving access to the Retail Park at Kempston, Bedford would be of benefit to attract more rail users for shopping, wider area access and employment opportunities more. It is disgraceful that the station was not opened in the early 1980's when the Retail Park opened and even worse that rail users have been denied access ever since.

## Wider vision to better integrate opportunities the railway offers:

- ERTA applauds the on-coming of the long-awaited East-West Rail between Oxford-Bletchley and Bedford and very much hopes in some shape or form it continued to Cambridge!
- However, it will need to be more than 1 train per hour, more like 2 per hour and 4-coach trains will soon need doubling to 8-coach capacity, given the bid for more users and modal shift back from road to rail.
- This means a redesign of Bedford Midland with more baying facilities for more trains off the Bedford-Bletchley railway with some track alignment to make the link between St John's and the Bedford Midland faster and more robust.
- ERTA believes the best future for the railway would be an infill electrification scheme and lengthening of halts to 4-coach capacity to enable more diverse services, perhaps exploiting the end-to-end aspect of the commute value the line offers. So, a Watford-Bletchley-Bedford-Corby service should also be looked at.
- The line needs a freight plan. Laudable that talks are about a rail link to serve new developments in some quarters, but the reopening of an investment in Forders Sidings for things like a depot for recycling by rail from glass to fridge's, from old cars to paper, materials could be collected and sent for processing by rail more serving a wide area. Think environment, think rail!
- ERTA believes that the old St John's site should not be sold off and redeveloped for housing, rather retained and used for rail-related purposes. A 2-track solution for trains to use for whatever purpose between Bedford St John's and Cardington Road could help numerous operations by rail. Bedford has a chronic lack of capacity for more trains and stabling for example.
- We need more land for parking for rail users. The possible use of Ford End Road old loco shed site for more parking and a second booking office could help. If they are lost to other development, it locks in problems, not solutions! Congestion across Prebend Street Bridge is rife both ways by road.

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

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**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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