

## **Northampton-Market Harborough Rail Link Call:**

ERTA (1) supports calls for a rebuilt Northampton-Market Harborough (MH) local rail link. Of all the benefits and case-merits, we believe these are to be considered:

1. East-West Rail (2) will inform Oxford-Bletchley which links, orbiting London, with places arcingly with Southampton, Bristol and Oxford and all in between to Milton Keynes, Northampton and with via the rebuilt rail link, Leicester (gateway to the East Midlands), beyond in all directions and east via Peterborough to Felixstowe and East Anglia generally. (3)
2. This would enable freight from the East Coast Ports to Northampton to serve the new depot, Brackmills (needs re-railing) and with a new north-west curve, run direct to the Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal (DIRFT) and vice versa and all in between.
3. Add 1 and 2 directly linked, that is a huge scope for more freight by rail and the only missing bit is Northampton-Market Harborough rail link. (4)
4. The new-built rail link would also relieve capacity and pressure on everything going into, across and out of London via the West Coast Main Line (WCML) south of Bletchley, which enables more other rail usage be it passenger or freight or both. The reopening could be done relatively cheaply contrast new roads and quicker than HS2 for example.
5. The rail link would take-on and give modal challenge to the busy and congested A508 and M1 as well as with east-west rail, the A43 which links Northampton with Oxford via Brackley.
6. Northampton and Leicester like many places suffer from congestion and without the improved rebuilt rail links, it will only get worse with compounded emissions, pollution, waste and hazards for pedestrians, cyclists and other road users.
7. Yes, Oxford-Bedford-Leicester will exist as well, but it is a great way round! Bedford Midland suffers from passenger workings and others waiting time for a route through the busy Bedford Midland Platform interfaces and these delays are unacceptable. We must keep trains moving and Northampton-Market Harborough offers a quick and strategic link which is currently missing for want of action!
8. Yes, there's blockages on most closed rail lines. Some we need a wider 'green corridor' with room for a twin track railway, a fence and segregated walking and cycling. Elsewhere it may be a need for single bi-directional working with passing loops. These things need to be worked out. In last resort cases, given the imperative to get more going by rail from busy roads for the people and environment's sake, to say "here's the cheque, relocate package, move please" It is not ideal, but we are not in ideal circumstances. The failure to protect this corridor which only had tracks lifted post 1982, is a disgrace and a lack of foresight, when calls for reopening have been as long as it has been closed. Public transport (bus) is waning, but road usage and traffic volumes keep rising!

9. ERTA wants people to join, offer to assist reliably and get involved to help protect the route, get councils with others working together, investing in neutral cost studies, making the case and courting Government support moving the agenda to delivery of the railway in as timely a manner as possible. Realignment at the MH end, is another aspect, but a new Parkway Station at Brixworth, could help with local and regional modal shift to rail.

### References and Further Reading:

1. English Regional Transport Association (ERTA) Website: <https://ertarail.co.uk/>
2. East-West Rail (Oxford-Milton Keynes)-Bedford: <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/>
3. Midlands Connect: <https://www.midlandsconnect.uk/>
4. Background history of Northampton-MH railway: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northampton%E2%80%93Market\\_Harborough\\_line](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northampton%E2%80%93Market_Harborough_line)
5. Simon Heffer's article in the New Statesman: <https://www.newstatesman.com/long-reads/2017/08/new-age-train>
6. Building more roads is not the answer! <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/building-new-roads-just-creates-more-traffic-heres-the-proof/#:~:text=It's%20called%20'induced%20traffic'%2C%20and%20it's%20a%20real%20problem&text=Most%20recently%2C%20research%20on%20British,doubling%20traffic%20within%2020%20years.>
7. Tyres damage our health, beat fossil fuel or EV's: <https://blog.greenflag.com/2019/tyre-particles/>
8. Air pollution affects mental health: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/study-supports-link-between-traffic-related-air-pollution-and-mental-disorders>
9. Respiratory and other health issues from road traffic: <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/888/PHW%20Air%20pollution%20report%20%28final%20English%29.pdf>
10. The cost of congestion to the economy and environment £6.0 billion in 2019 – an annual problem and toll, we could all do without. What could £6.9 billion do to a rebuild a Northampton-Market Harborough rail link and others? That then reduced aggregate congestion which in turn saves money, lives and communities blight. It is time to change our government's transport and funding policy from road to rail! <https://www.automotiveworld.com/news-releases/inrix-global-traffic-scorecard-congestion-cost-uk-economy-6-9-billion-in-2019/>