East West Rail

Connecting people, building communities

Consultation

Consultation Response by Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably (POETS)

January 2025

POETS (Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably) is a group of senior planning, environment and transport professionals and academics focussed primarily on planning and transport in Oxfordshire.

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1. POETS **support** the development of the new East West Rail corridor to Cambridge as a critical component of an enhanced local and regional public transport network. In particular it will
   a) significantly improve the quality of public transport options both for local and inter-regional travel
   b) facilitate a significant modal transfer away from the congested road network
   c) offer the opportunity for substantial transfer of freight from road to rail, bringing significant relief to strategic roads such as the A34 and M40.
2. To fully deliver on its strategic objectives it is essential that the whole route is fully electrified at the earliest opportunity, to minimise future operational costs and maximise the potential operation of heavily loaded freight services.
3. POETS however **do not support** the closure of the London Road level crossing in Bicester as it will be detrimental to the economy of Bicester Town Centre, contrary to carbon reduction objectives as a consequence of the diversionary routes involving longer travel distances and would be inconvenient for hinterland populations. It is also considered that all the alternatives proposed have considerable disadvantages for pedestrians, cyclists and general traffic, creating significant impacts on local roads which do not appear to have been satisfactorily evaluated. In particular, the impact on local bus services has not been properly examined.

4. It is notable that level crossings are to be retained elsewhere on the route. Evidence from elsewhere in the country indicates that level crossings can operate successfully with levels of train movement higher than are predicted for East West Rail. It is also considered that the predicted delays and queue lengths of crossing traffic are overstated and with the scope to incorporate modern signalling and train management efficiencies, these could be ameliorated, whilst preserving high levels of safety.