

## EAST SUFFOLK TRAVELLERS' ASSOCIATION

[www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk](http://www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk)

Dear Sir / Madam,

The East Suffolk Travellers' Association (ESTA) is the long-established voluntary association for train and bus users in eastern Suffolk.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute comments to the Williams Rail Review.

Our submission will be based on members' experiences of the Ipswich - Lowestoft and Lowestoft - Norwich train services, which link several urban centres and a wide rural area in between them. This will, we are sure, apply to rail services in comparable parts of the country as well.

Freight operation only currently applies to a short section of route in our area and so we shall not deal with it in any detail. We would merely point out that there must be adequate capacity for it, so that expansion of one type of traffic does not lead to restrictions on another.

It is important for current and potential users to have a regular and reliable train service at reasonable cost, with good accessibility to and from the stations.

We do not take a position for or against public or private operation of the service or infrastructure, but we do consider that the operators and providers must be clearly accountable to national, regional and/or local government.

The review refers to the interests of passengers and taxpayers. We would respectfully point out that passengers also pay taxes.

The existing franchising system enables central government to specify minimum levels of service and facility and this is as it should be. At the same time, excessive micromanagement should be avoided, and local managers allowed the scope to respond to local needs. They should be in contact with their local communities and have good knowledge of the needs and aspirations of these.

Network benefits are also important. Many of the users of the Lowestoft - Ipswich and Lowestoft - Norwich lines are using these as part of a longer journey. A significant proportion are travelling beyond Ipswich or Norwich and indeed for some it is the start or finish of an international journey. It is therefore important that easy booking, information and ticketing, at least to and from anywhere in Great Britain, is possible, whoever is running the service.

The longer the journey, the more likely the passenger is to have luggage - and that includes for visitors to our area. It is therefore important that passenger comfort and flexibility are not sacrificed to a desire just to squeeze as many in as possible. That is especially relevant when newer, faster trains bring our area within easier reach of London.

Open access operators play no role in our area and we do not see any realistic scope for them. They have played a role in enabling through services to run from, for example, Sunderland and Hull to London; but the new bimodal trains will enable some through services to run from Lowestoft to London, fully integrated with the rest of the services of the existing or future franchisee.

The railway industry has been fragmented since privatisation started in the early 1990s and there are dangers in further fragmentation. The 2004 Railway Act transferred overall

control from the Strategic Rail Authority to the Department for Transport. Has this really been to the benefit of passengers?

It is important to have a Chief Executive Officer in charge of the whole railway industry. Passenger journeys on the East Suffolk Line, and indeed on the rail network as a whole, have grown over the past three decades and the future problems of the industry centre on capacity. Therefore someone equally experienced in the commercial and operational aspects of running an ever busier rail network is needed at the top.

We trust that these points will be helpful to you in reviewing the whole network, but especially concerning the regional routes such as ours.

Trevor Garrod

Chairman

02/04/2019