

# March to Wisbech Modal Appraisal: CPCA Transport Infrastructure Committee update



Prepared by: Network Rail for Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority

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## 1. Background:

Network Rail are considering opportunities to introduce a shuttle passenger service between March and Wisbech in Cambridgeshire to improve transport connectivity and access to the commuting markets nearby to support job opportunities and the economic regeneration of the region. The objective of these enhancements is to facilitate the following project outputs:

- A balanced modal appraisal of all rail options to facilitate a passenger service between March and Wisbech based on a shuttle service
- Transport options considered to include conventional rail, Tram-Train, light rail and very light rail

Network Rail's Engineering Services team are working with Network Rail's Light Rail Team to identify the proposed infrastructure enhancements required. The output of this is a Strategic Option Appraisal Report.

The Strategic Option Appraisal Report will inform the development by Network Rail's Sponsorship team of a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) including cost and economic analysis for the provision of a passenger service between March and Wisbech in Cambridgeshire.

This work is commissioned by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

## 2. Progress to date:

### 2.1 Strategic Option Appraisal Report by Network Rail's Engineering Services and Light Rail Knowledge team:

Four options are being considered based on a minimum credible infrastructure solution approach with the intention of developing enhanced infrastructure requirements that can be developed when a decision on further funding is agreed. By considering only core requirements, the minimum credible infrastructure solution for each solution can be set as a baseline, with non-core requirements noted. This approach sets a lower bound Capital Expenditure (CAPEX) balanced with Operational Expenditure (OPEX). Assuming further funding is agreed relevant identified 'non-core' elements can then be developed further.

Four core options are considered in this report:

- Option 1: Provision of a heavy (conventional) rail transport link
- Option 2: Provision of a tram train (hybrid heavy/light rail) transport system (with sub-options relating to connectivity with existing local system)
- Option 3: Provision of a tram (light rail) transport system

#### Option 4: Provision of a very light rail (VLR) transport system

These are being considered cognisant of stakeholder aspirations that include uninterrupted connectivity to the wider mainline rail network and integration with local infrastructure. These stakeholder aspirations are set in the context of local environmental characteristics and the impacts of any solution. Other significant considerations are interfaces between rail and highway corridors, rolling stock and future maintenance and operation.

This Strategic Option Appraisal report includes a number of drawings to visually represent the current existing landscape and each mode of transport considered. Schedules of Quantities will also be provided to support cost planning.

The report framework has been created and existing information is being reviewed for applicability and potential referencing. Access to additional information has been provided by Fenland District Council representatives. The core reference drawing has been substantially completed and is attached to this update. The drawing is in draft. It is intended to provide a visual representation of the scheme area and the majority of the main points of interest along the potential rail corridor.

In early June, a combined site visit was undertaken. This has allowed us to see the corridor first-hand, the station interface at March and associated structures along the route. Points of interest have been highlighted and the site visit facilitated informed discussion on site. Representatives from the sponsorship, light rail team and engineering services attended. Points of note identified include:

- Interaction with March station and potential termination, connection and stabling facilities.
- Norwood Road bridge: This rail overbridge (road over rail) is located just outside of the curve to the north of March station. It is a bi-directional single carriageway currently restricted to single lane working (traffic controlled). The approaches are at a steep incline and options will be constrained by its location and the approaches. The interface with the proposed rail modal types will need to be considered further.
- Level crossings: Interfaces between a new/re-established rail corridor and the local road network (adopted and local farm access) are numerous. Engineering Services level crossing team working with the Light Rail and Knowledge team are considering these interfaces and their usage and need in any future scheme
- Chain Bridge and Level Crossing: A substantial river crossing and adjacent level crossing. Busy local road
- Wisbech Bypass Level Crossing: Busy highway interface
- Weasenham Lane Level Crossing: Busy highway interface and adjacent to numerous heavy/haulage traffic. Both Wisbech Bypass and Weasenham Lane level crossings are near/adjacent to a potential employment zone identified by the local authority.
- Wisbech: Traffic weight restrictions on highway network influences/dictates traffic flow to level crossings in the vicinity.

- Integrity of support structures: In terms of collision protection, this will need to be considered including from derailed rolling stock and from errant road vehicles using the highway network.
- Bridge and culverts: All identified overline and underline structures including culverts will require assessment as part of the reinstatement of the line, with the potential for extensive strengthening/reconstruction work.
- Under bridges are assumed to have been designed for heavy rail rolling stock (both in service and rail mounted maintenance vehicles). This capacity will need to be assessed. It is anticipated that all underline structures will require remedial works (including strengthening) and increased/renewed maintenance to bring them into operational use.

Information has been obtained from a number of Network Rail sources and databases including GeorINM, various structures databases and environmental mapping sources. This is in ongoing.

Only core information is given in the Strategic Option Appraisal report interlaced with elements of the scheme plans.

The outputs from this Strategic Option Appraisal Report is intended to inform the sponsorship team's overarching report.

## 2.2 Final report

The final report will encompass a balanced modal appraisal of all rail options based on identified stakeholder aspirations, cost planning and economic considerations together with benefits and differences identified for each option.

The final report delivered by the Network Rail Sponsor will include:

- The outputs from Strategic Option Appraisal Report;
- Cost planning and economic analysis for each modal option