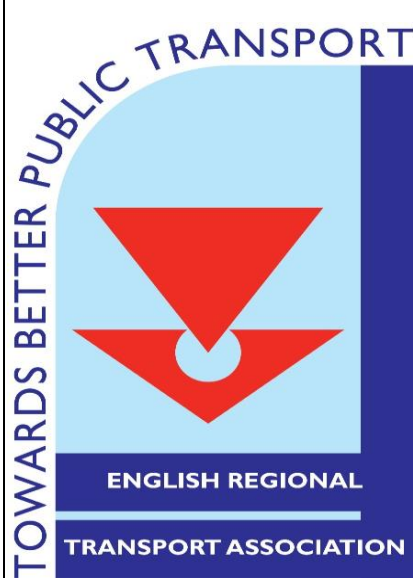


# English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)



**Patron:** Sir Edmund Verney + Others welcome of professional, business or other acumen and of good standing.

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## On Winning Lines: A Bedford-Cambridge Rail Route is chosen and announced!

We note on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020 the statement that the Bedford-Cambridge route has been approved and we now await the fine detail of principally:

- Will there be a physical rail connection with the East Coast Main Line (ECML) to enable Peterborough, Stevenage, East Bedfordshire and Thameslink integration with same east-west tracks and vice versa?
- What about freight – will the new railway be fully conversant from day one?
- Will you now consider electrification throughout?
- Will you include Northampton-Midland Main Line/Bedford-Cambridge in the frame?

On the one hand we're disappointed that it will not use the old trackbed east of Bedford via St John's and may now not serve Sandy/East Bedfordshire linkage with County Town. It will be a great way around and cost avarice sums. On the other hand, a railway is better than none and we welcome progression to the next stages. For readers around what is happening with and associated concerns and

agendas, please see our Blogspot and scroll down: <https://ertarailvolunteer.blogspot.com/> We are reliably told by a colleague, that Shepreth Junction with be with a flyover or grade separated junction and quadruple-tracking between it and Cambridge to accommodate more railways and trains is the good news! For further news please see: <https://www.eastwestrail.org.uk/> There will also be a new station 'Cambridge South' alias Addenbrookes!



Caption above: Site of Addenbrooke's new station circa 2011. Since this was taken considerable redevelopment has taken place. ERTA calls for East-West Rail to link with this station and restore Trumpington Junction! These tracks need quadrupling at design stages!

**Bedford dichotomy: We need radical change!** Complacency can come about by normalisation of the everyday as acceptable rote. Now Bedford has many good qualities but like many towns and cities across the land it suffers from gridlock congestion. Some roads bung up with traffic on a daily basis the whole of daylight hours. Car Parks overflow and frankly on current growth and trends it will get worse than better, sooner than later. What has been Bedford Borough Unitary Council's response to this even as Extinction Rebellion has highlighted in our area a Climate Emergency? It has come up with 'Transporting Bedford 2020'. With the aid of the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) and generous Capital Funds available for roads, not equally rail projects, some "£18 million...to tackle congestion hotspots in Bedford." Highlights include widening roads and narrowing pavement space adjacent to the main hospital (Britannia Road) and a large traffic generating school (Manton Lane) with similar lined up for Amptill Road and Bromham Road. Understandable! Money is available, it looks like 'something's happening', we've had 60 years of locked-in roads as a mainstay transport mode, inter-generations have grown up car-legged and car-petrol headed cultures as the presumed daily transport mode, even to get to the local station to commute and, well there's votes in it. It panders to popular appeal but...  
(Continued above)

**We campaigners know from bitter experience that:** a. Creating more road space only facilitates capacity for more traffic to fill compounding the gridlock further with nowhere to go.  
b. Pedestrians should be the primary focus and essential in all designs on highway layouts and access, then bus users, cyclists, better rail and finally roads, cars, vans and juggernaut lorries. We have this pro-roads agenda with consideration of dualling the A428 Bedford Western Bypass: why? It has not reduced urban traffic congestion, rather volumes are rising with more congestion and air pollution on the back of idling exhausts emitting fossil fuels pedestrians and cyclists are more exposed to. Argue the science by all means, but we'd settle for:  
a. Get the rail infrastructure in  
b. Get buses covering all main arteries  
c. Improve the directness of cycle paths/access. ERTA is reinstating the Bedford Forum to lobby for common-sense changes in the direction Bedford Borough Council is going. Chicken and egg, a rail desert, roads are everywhere, get the rails and stations in and some reduction and check and balance to growth has a chance. In short Bedford-Cambridge rail link should not be 2030, but brought forward as a priority to a 2025 delivery. That's right, it needs to start now! It is urgently over-due and would give a strategic, cleaner transport mode alternative. The model repeats in principle across the English Regions.  
**Details on our website:**  
<https://www.ertarail.com/events>  
**Source ref:**  
<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-travel/strategies-and-projects/transporting-bedford-2020/>

**Action Stations:** ERTA has produced a new flyer outlining some ideas which we believe if adopted by Bedford Borough Council would greatly benefit on and off the road users. It should be a spring board to area reps to design their own 'green clean transport' agenda and market it. If you want a copy email [richard.erta@gmail.com](mailto:richard.erta@gmail.com) or request by post in the usual way. It will be delivered around the town and we are tabling Forums locally to bring people together.

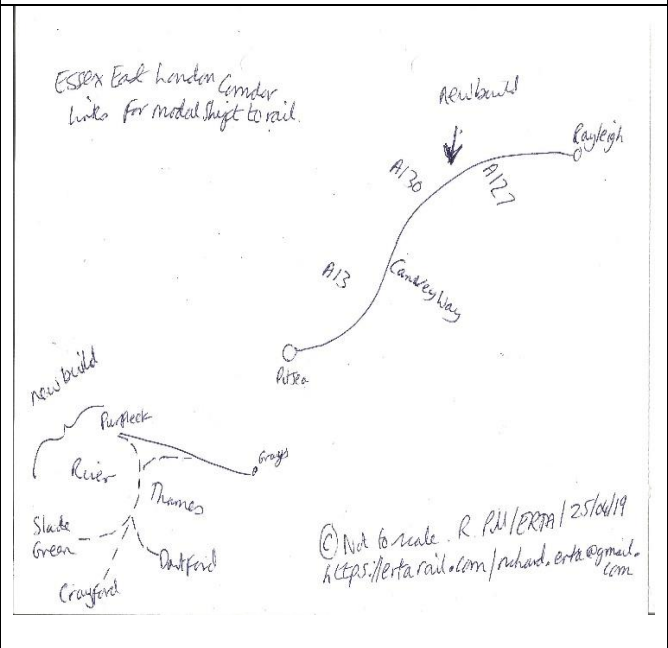
**Conference Invite:** With this newsletter you should receive another opportunity for our annual conference. A chance to meet together, compare notes and be suitably entertained by our kind visiting speakers. We battle all the time against professional snobbery whereby some will only talk to peers and will only do what they are paid for. What makes for difference is when professionals give of their time to voluntary organisations like ourselves, engage with the public and come to an accommodational view, not polemics. More the merrier for what promises to be a good day. Please do tell friends and pass on to others who may also be interested. See page 1 for details or <https://www.ertarail.com/conference-2020>.

**Route Protection Call:** Our pamphlet is available on request and our Westminster Team is aiming to engage politicians more as well as offices of Government to get the route protection matter taken more seriously in policy and action terms. For many routes have been allowed to be developed over and realignment spaces have not been protected, keeping options open. In some places it is a case of “if we do not reopen, we get more bads than goods”. A level playing field in accessing funds for working up schemes, making the case and studying what needs doing could assist too. The work continues. Please be willing to join our team/s and expand your horizons!



**Great Central News and Notes:** Picture left, by Steve Byatt shows the Great Central route part of which is a cycle-cum-walkway. These projects serve a double purpose, on the one hand protecting rail corridors for possible reopening and a meaningful use interim. However laudable goals like this have led to cries of objection to a reopening proposal on so called ‘environmental grounds’ and ‘loss of amenity’. Cycleways can be re-engineered and slewed, railways cannot necessarily and need to take the strain of volumes off the roads and with adequate widening of corridors and fencing could still coexist. HS2 could also signal the end of the campaign as an incompatible railway!

**London Calling:** ERTA has a London Forum which meets about three times per year. We have produced a London Agenda Flyer outlining ideas to help ‘Get London Moving’. It seems strange to us that gridlocked London and surrounds lack a Light Rapid Transport System (Trams) in the Central Zone and to the west. We need to start the process of restricting vehicular movements and saying “every able-bodied person should be using better public transport.” Alas it is a free-for-all and the mayhem has been normalised. Cutting fossil fuel engines would help cleaner air, but electric car switch doesn’t reduce the volume of traffic. More choices are needed. See <http://oecdinsights.org/2016/09/08/air-pollution-tyres-and-brakes/>



## Simon Barbers Column

### REX HORA Obituary

The ERTA was saddened to learn of the death of its member Rex Hora who had died from a heart attack aged 71 in November 2019.

After retirement from his position as a Laboratory Technician at the Grassland Research Institute (part of Reading University), he was able to indulge his passion for railways and engines, and embarked on several ambitious schemes, most notably the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Railway Revival (DNSRR) which he founded in 2014. He said that reopening the line would relieve pressure on local roads, and also provide direct passenger services between Oxford, Newbury and Winchester without the need to go via Reading. He said that a predicted increase in freight traffic would lead to a bottleneck at Reading Station, and whilst admitting that much of the track had been built on, he said that in the long term the line would be needed to cope with the growth in freight traffic between Southampton Docks and the Midlands. He wrote many letters and articles, and gave talks to local Parish Councils along the route, but the campaign was ultimately unsuccessful because of cost and too many civil engineering problems.

Rex's commitment to public transport led him to stand (unsuccessfully) for Parliament in 2005 as an Independent candidate.

### DELEGATED MEETING WITH TRANSPORT FOR THE SOUTH-EAST

Two ERTA members (Colin Crawford and I) had met up with two colleagues from Transport for the South-East (TfSE), which are at present based at the East Sussex County Council's headquarters in Lewes. TfSE are one of the seven regional transport bodies, who identify schemes across their area which will increase economic productivity and simultaneously identify 'pinch-points' on the current network. We met both the Strategic Transport and the Stakeholder/Engagement Managers.

They were both interested to learn about the ERTA and its aspirations, and in particular re-opening Horsham - Shoreham, which would bring capacity to the Brighton Main Line. They also strongly in favour Lewes - Uckfield and both the Heathrow Western and Southern Railways. The Strategic Transport Manager had kindly purchased a copy of the Great Central report, since it also refers to Heathrow, Guildford-Horsham-Shoreham and the Channel Tunnel, and had also given a copy of the route diagram covering the Guildford-Horsham-Shoreham corridor.

**Caption Right:** Surely with quadruple-tracking From Shepreth Junction to Cambridge Central Station and a 3-4 platform Cambridge South Station alias Addenbrookes in-between, the Guided Busway sitting on the former Bedford-Cambridge trackbed blocking Trumpington Junction, will be swept away? You could still run buses from Trumpington Park and Ride to Addenbrookes via Long Road, clearing the way for re-railing?

