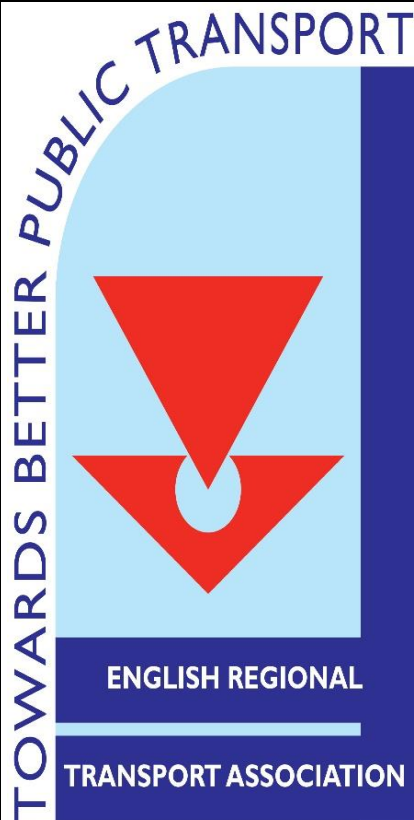
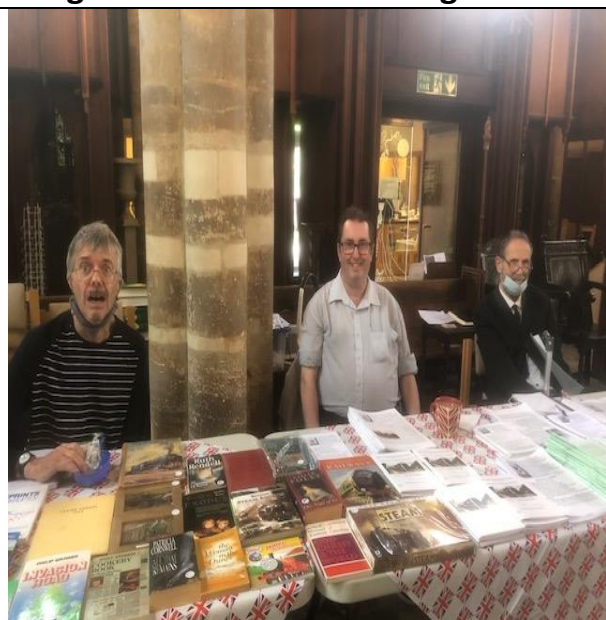


English Regional Transport Association (ERTA)

	<p>Patrons: Sir Edmund Verney, The Rt Hon. the Lord Newby OBE, Mr George Bathurst, Professor Andrew N Williams BA, BM BCh, MSc, PhD, MRCP, FRCPC, FRHistS, Mr Trevor Garrod, <u>+ Others welcome of professional, business or other acumen and of good repute.</u></p>	
	<p>Chairman, Campaigns Coordinator, On-line Marketing Officer, Bedford Area Rep/Forum/Coordinator, Publications/Newsletter, Events Team Player, Executive Committee Member, Social-Media/Media Officer and General Advisor: Mr Richard Pill, 24c St Michaels Road, Bedford, MK40 2LT T. 01234 330090 E. richard.erta@gmail.com</p>	
	<p>Vice Chairman, Treasurer; Business Link, Hertfordshire Area Rep (north of M25), Great Central Corridor Re-Rail Advocate/Contact, Skype/Zoom Host, Executive Committee Member and Railfuture Liaison Contact: Mr Colin Crawford, 21 Clunbury Court, Manor Street, Berkhamsted, HP4 2FF T. 01442 870904 Mobile 07836-693977 E: colin.crawford1@btconnect.com</p>	
	<p>West London and South East Area Rep, Executive Committee Member, Research, Field and Leafleting Officer, General Assistant and Station Advocacy including Midland Main Line, Roade and Claydon: Mr David Ferguson, 25 Virginia House, 19 Kingston Lane, Teddington, TW11 9HL T. 0208 9774181 E. daferguson1212@gmail.com</p>	
	<p>West Country, Central and South London Area Rep, Marketing, Events and Stall Officer, Membership Administration, Recruitment and Volunteer Liaison Officer, Admin Support Assistant, Consultations and Westminster Team Building Advocacy and Representative: Mr Simon Barber, 20 Fitzherbert House, Kingsmead, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 6HT T. 0208 940 4399 E. simon4barber@gmail.com</p>	
	<p>ERTA Northern/Yorkshire Area Rep: Mr Chris Hyomes, 10 Tythe Barn Road, Knottingley, West Yorkshire, WF11 9BU E. chris.hyomes@hotmail.co.uk T. 07971766207</p>	
<p>ERTA Leicestershire Area Rep and Executive Committee Member: Mr Kuljit Maan, Flat 4, 72 Kerrysdale Avenue, Leicester, LE4 7GL T. 07399541663 kuljitmaan74@gmail.com</p>		
<p>https://ertarail.co.uk/</p>		
<p>www.linkedin.com/in/richard-pill-erta</p>		
<p>https://ertarailvolunteer.blogspot.com/</p>		
<p>ERTA Newsletter No. 46</p>	<p>November-December 2022</p>	<p>£1.50 where sold</p>

ERTA works within its limits of resources human and financial. But we punch above our weight with a critical message! That is: Bring Back Our Tracks and Trains x Nationwide!



In an ageing society, ERTA too has to work within its means. If people want more, they need to join, be willing to take a bit of responsibility, give 1 hour per week and be reliable in contributing and serving to make things happen more and well. Meanwhile we do what we may. Northampton, Bedford, Horsham, Guildford, London and Rugby are core areas we have lined up and now the Ampthill-Flitwick Transport Forum and Bedford Forum are all outlets for people to get together, compare notes, join, offer to help, fill niches and enable growth. In far flung areas, our constitutional allowance of Area Repping enables people to recruit new members, table a forum and in collaboration with the Executive Committee, support our key policies and see what locally needs doing, advocating or indeed, challenging. We are as good as our members may inform. Growing ERTA also helps.

The opportunity is there. Ours is a flexible organisation, to be pro-active but it relies on people to be bothered. Fault finding is easy, but people who are reliable, honest and steadfast, are worth more than any specialist knowledge per se as those who turn out are the core and keep the show on the right tracks! **Caption above:** Left to right is Simon Barber, Richard Pill (centre) and David Ferguson at St Paul's Stall 4th June 2022. The St Paul's outlet has discontinued after several years sadly.

East-West Rail Turbulence: ERTA points the way for rail and save some money!

For reflections on the past, please refer to reference (1) below and scroll down and click! But the announcement that Grant Shapps may cancel East-West Rail (2), surely does not mean Oxford-Bedford which is a rebuild job, but the new construction 'gaps' between Bedford and East Anglia. On the one hand the problems were inherent with the whole project from the start. Disunity amongst the rail fraternity and on the other a post-rail culture developing where roads are the way for freedom. Carefully ignoring congestion blight, but seeing more roads as the answer to congestion, not rebuilding rail links.

Caption below: Bedford-Sandy trackbed at Goldington looking west 1985. Why build brand-new with up-hill/down-hill, when this flat land commends itself and you can always slew a cycle/footpath alongside in such an open-land context surely?



In 1985 that was very much the emergent case and in 1987 when the first organised effort to formally suggest the rail link east of Bedford should be supported, met with incredulity.

Interim, bypass building has been done and the volume of traffic has grown to fill the new vacuum of capacity created. Despite the views expounded and reified by media that bypasses offer relief from congestion, in fact, Bedford is very much congested today despite those bypasses. With the growth of development, that congestion will grow and be exacerbated and with roads everywhere, there will come a day when nowhere else to go transport-wise. In short, a rail link east of Bedford is essential to counter-balance the growth of traffic and bring some choice to the market of business on offer. ERTA has long argued that whilst we need them, buses are no good at luggage conveyance, bikes or

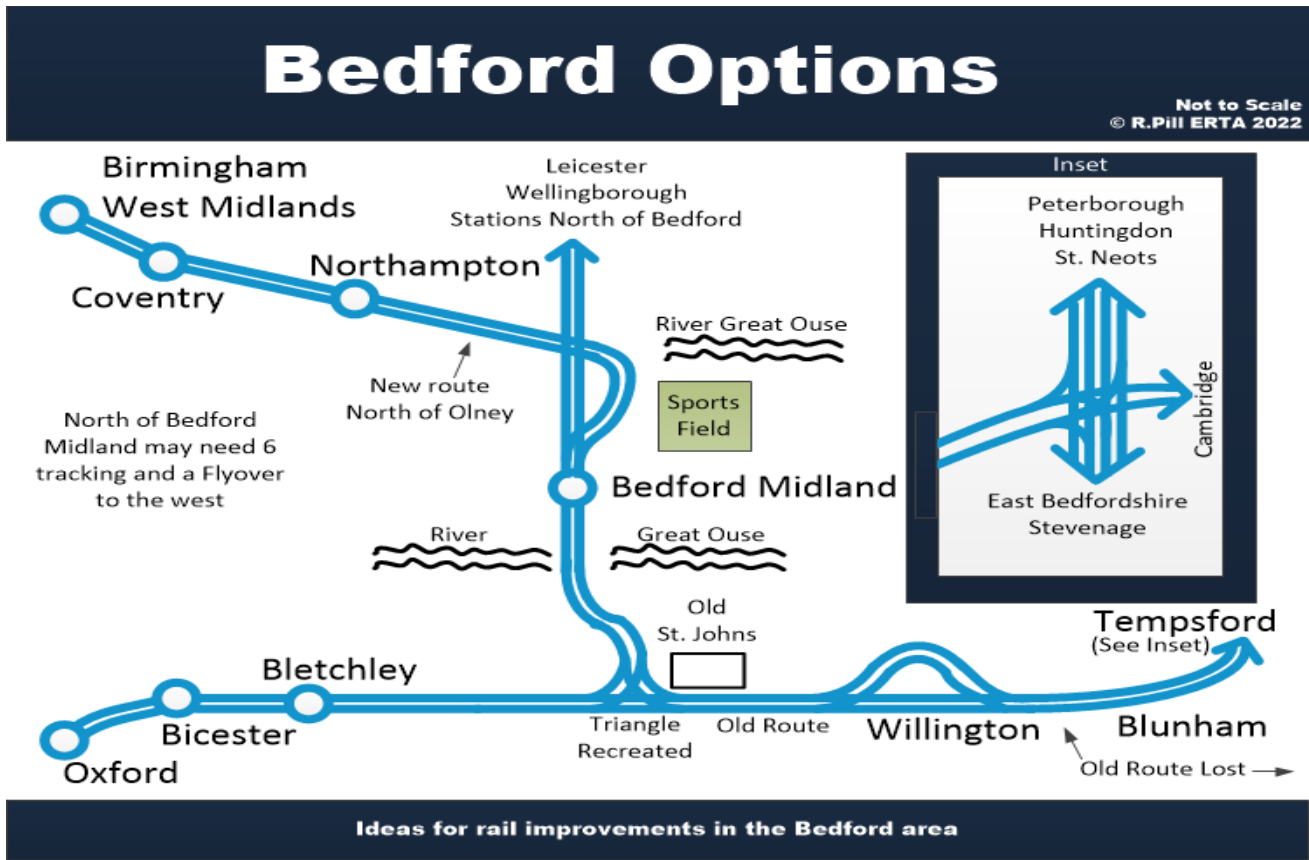
freight. Only the rail alternative can cater for this, to reduce the juggernaut volumes and give car owners a decent alternative to make them think public transport as a realistic and viable option.

Where things went wrong, apart from disunity at the start and counter-objections to a bridging of the former Bedford-Sandy trackbed east of Bedford with the A421 in 1993, the 1997 Steer Davis Gleave Consultants report made the case for a Bedford-Cambridge Railway, but Bedford Councils could not make up their minds! Some touted an inner route serving Bedford and faithful to the old route, others wanted a new-build outer railway avoiding Bedford. They wanted cake and eat it, the darn cheek being they had spent a decade saying things like “there’s no case or demand for a railway” and “blockages prohibit rebuilding” I paraphrase from letters I used to receive from them. They knew we lacked the resources to challenge their bigoted views. Then, here, 1997, the report of consultants, trained and experienced in such matter are saying “it can be done” and “benefits if done to...Bedford!” – again I paraphrase. All we had been saying was shown as ‘do-able’ being getting east of Bedford via the old route, realignment south of Blunham and a new route north (then) of Sandy with connectivity to the main north-south main line and new links to Cambridge via the Ickleford Curve. Alas it floundered, alas the disunity meant government following a post-Iraq financial deficit, took its money elsewhere and just turned the question back to focusing on the then ‘western section’ Oxford/Aylesbury-Milton Keynes/Bedford. East was abandoned, Central Beds Council as it became developed over the north of Sandy lands blocking off access for a new railway.

So, we come to the 2019 consultation whereby it comes up out-of-the-blue, with a new route east of Bedford. Our lay assessments showed that it was engineeringly challenging to put it mildly and ill-judged. On engineering, environment impact (knocking down houses) and fit for purpose criterion, it was dismissed by us in utter disbelief and disappointment and we counter suggested a new-build using the old route instead with realignments at Willington and instead of south of Blunham, to go north of Blunham. Their meeting point was ‘south of St Neots and north of Sandy’, which by my map means the Tempsford area, north or south of Station Road. But despite our efforts to warn the EWRCO that their new route north of Bedford would court a lot of opposition, they ploughed on and now it hits the buffers. That means we get the Oxford-Bedford link, but no rail link to East Anglia.

If we wait 10 years, rate of development means all options will be lost. A421 is growing like M1 with about 50% juggernaut lorries, so any new railway must cater for freight from day one, ideally in roll-on, roll-off/Piggyback terms, we must have vision for this and build accordingly. But the proposed new route had steep gradients, was circuitous and lacked connectivity with the East Coast Main Line (ECML) in the Tempsford area (Peterborough, East Beds and Stevenage for example in scope) and as for the new route to Cambridge, because and weaving between development, avoiding compulsory purchase and re-build,

it weaves to join the Royston-Hitchin line from Cambourne on new trajectory and against the grain of the landscape meaning new embankments of some size. It is a circuitous route, a controversial route and costly.



Our route to ECML from Bedford uses the old route to just west of Willington. A realignment is possible, but speed need not be the main consideration. Our route then goes north of Blunham to approach the Tempsford plains from the south-westerly direction with physical connectivity with the north-south main line for optimum passenger and freight reaches to the Bedford-Oxford corridor and vice versa. Our route is shorter and probably cheaper than Northern Route E and despite some councillors claiming to the contrary have yet to specify exactly what houses would need demolishing if any, whereas 40+ in the Poets area of Bedford would be required for the Northern Route E, which our route would be hard pressed to equal! Yet for all that, Dave the Mayor, for all his attributes, has failed to grasp these merits and lead from the front in asking our route to be assessed with a view to overcoming challenges, not building new housing on the old St John’s Station site which would scupper any rail link east of Bedford forever.

On east of Tempsford, we believe there is merit in connectivity to Cambridge principally for passenger requirements. However, if the link to the Royston-Cambridge line proves too much, we believe a new look at a new rail rebuild to link with Norwich, Ipswich/Felixstowe and Cambridge/Stansted lines from a new multiple linkage at the Ely area from the west. If we act now, lands can be acquired and the new link pushed through. A key objection from Cambridge is that loads of freight through the urban centre would be counter-intuitive and given the capacity constraints both there and Newmarket Tunnel, I can see their point. If all goes via a new link across to Ely and the Ely bypass being mooted but stalled by... government, whose Secretary of State for Transport as at 23-08-22 is still Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP despite Government agreement we are in a Climate Emergency, is pursuing roads and counter-intuitive policies to any environmental/land-use stewardship cares. It presides over ever-more uncertainty and seems to be wobbling like a jelly, rather



Continued/...

Caption left: Simon Barber captured the old St John's 'green site' in urban Bedford circa 2019. Why block an amenity for housing, when a railway + a green corridor could really add something in the urban context, including traffic reduction?

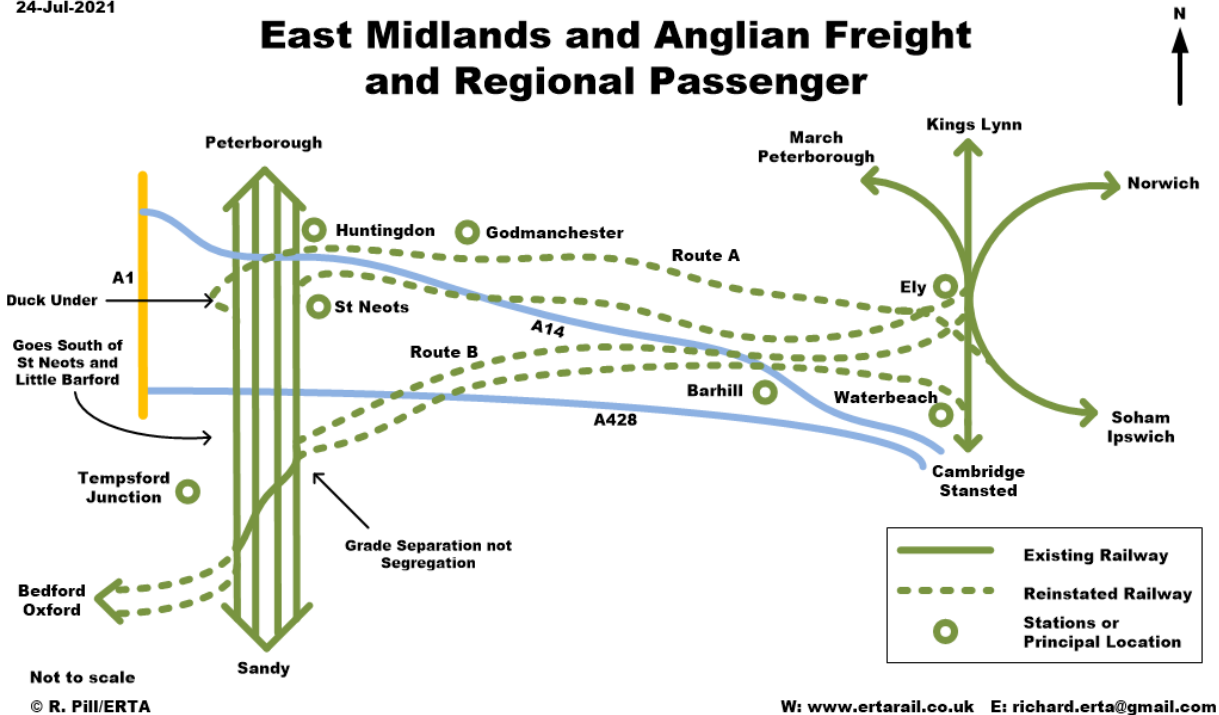
than a bull-by-the-horns and leadership, direction and cascading money from road to rail and an investment for a better future and lowering our emissions footprint at

one and the same time. When win, win stares you in the face and you ignore it, begs the question as to whether it has an objective and honest evaluation of the needs and situations this country faces. Suffice to say Government finds money for roads more easily than rail projects of an exact similar nature. If our route suggestion is less than Northern Route E, why not evaluate, compare and contrast and go for it to give hope of some traffic reduction relief to urban areas and land savings for rural ones? The £950 million Black Cat Roundabout (3) remodelling and dualling to Cambridge will, like A421 M1-A1 only fill with more traffic which then backs up at junctions and once capacity filled to gridlock, has no Plan B. Urban areas cannot accommodate it and so, unless we make the rail link a priority, we are in a dire situation of false premises. The railway is the right way to go, our route, not Northern Route E, which even lay people with some local knowledge could work out was not going to succeed except as some kind of vanity project which does not serve rail

well. We welcome all parties to round-table with us and crack on with a rail link east of Bedford.

24-Jul-2021

East Midlands and Anglian Freight and Regional Passenger



References:

1. <https://ertarail.co.uk/publicity/>
2. <https://cambridgeapproaches.org/secretary-of-state-for-transport-wants-to-cut-ewr-tranches-2-and-3/>
3. <https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/planning-milestone-hit-for-national-highways-950m-black-cat-roundabout-upgrade-22-02-2022/>

Action Stations! ERTA relies on people to join, give support, advocate and engage positively for the agendas we flag up from time to time. The ERTA Executive facilitate; it is for a growing membership to volunteer to take on chunks of responsibility and advocate/advance the causes we hold dear. That is the only way more and better can be achieved and we will continue to raise support and our opponents need to ask, what good urban and junction congestion serves if any? Therefore, the rail choices are essential and priorities should be about re-balancing in favour of a rail-based expansion agenda. Offers via richard.erta@gmail.com please. Join and offer today! Good news is we are growing and moving to more and better. Think what you can do? We need more admin support, help with leafleting, marketing and applying for bona-fide funding pots specifically. Get these moving slickly, and many obstacles will melt away! More and better, that is what we aspire towards, courting ever-more pro-rail support.

ERTA Accounts:

Summary	ERTA Accounts year to 31.3.22			
		£	£	
	Opening Balance	1133.18		
	Receipts			
	Subscriptions	234.00		
	Donations	521.12		
	Refund	206.20		
	Total	961.32	961.32	
	Expenses			
	Public Liability Ins	0		No invoice in period
	Printing postage etc	1508.24		
	Subscription Rail Future	25.00		
	Travel	11.25		
	Bank Charges	27.20		
	Total	1571.69	1571.69	
	Deficit		-610.37	
	Closing Balance	522.81		

These are the accounts as received from Treasurer Colin Crawford. Any questions, please ask him: Mr Colin Crawford E: colin.crawford1@btconnect.com Dated 20-09-2022 Thank you.

On the 24th of September at the Quaker Building in Lansdowne Road Bedford, we held an AGM and Public Meeting. Above are the accounts as presented. If anyone wants the full minutes, please email richard.erta@gmail.com We need our members to make every effort to attend meetings and the AGM is the internal workings of your association, where people can say what they want more or less and be willing to take some responsibility and help be the answer to more of what they may wish for in advancing campaigns, but also ensuring the proper administration and funding of our operations.



From the Chair:

Well, what a year it has been! A roller-coaster mentally and emotionally. The residues and foot-prints of the pandemic and aftermath, the emergence of some sort of 'normality', the cost-of-living crisis kicking in, the on-going Government stand-off with the Public Sector/Unions and then the death of Her Majesty the Queen and the end of an era albeit with the silver-edge of a new dawn with King Charles 3rd. With these and many other issues including wars on European soils, ERTA has sought to recover its own form and emerge with combinations of Zoom Meetings and going 'live' with our forums and other meetings again. We have a new Executive Member in Mr Kuljit Maan who is taking on being Area Rep for Leicestershire. He is finding his feet currently, but Leicester will be a place we visit more often. Then there's the Ampthill-Flitwick Transport Forum emergent based at The Swan Pub in Flitwick which is in the business not only of bringing people together in Central Bedfordshire but advocating and trying to galvanise support for an Ampthill Parkway Railway Station. Good news Wixams is still going ahead and 2026 seems a year to expect Oxford-Milton Keynes trains on East-West Rail to start running again. Still the debate on east of Bedford rumbles on, still the link between Aylesbury and East-West Rail rumbles on, still how a link to Brackley is being championed by us amidst the clamour of the what's there existing only brigades and the blinkered solo issue focused lobby, which rules all else out and collaterally, recovery mode will be long after our lives, which is for many too little, too late anyway. I sincerely hope 2023 will be a year of consolidation and growth and penny dropping in common sense terms where needed. We would welcome a dedicated representative to help ensure ERTA gets a look in!



Please Join ERTA Help us help you!

<https://ertarail.co.uk/become-a-member/>

Tick if a New Member: _____

Membership of ERTA costs £15 per annum. I/We wish to join _____

I/We wish to explore volunteering opportunities (optional) _____

Name (Please Print): _____

Address: _____ **Postcode:** _____

Tel/Mobile: _____

Email _____

I/We hereby give consent to our data being used and stored for the purposes of communication with ERTA and its purposes compliant with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) _____

Signed: _____ **Dated:** _____

Please send completed form and payment to ERTA Membership:

ERTA, 24c St Michael's Road, Bedford, MK40 2LT (01234 330090)

Join our free email loop for news and views:

E. richard.erta@gmail.com and see our website: <https://ertarail.co.uk/events/>