

## 7 Rail Strategy



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## COUNTY RAIL STRATEGY

### I INTRODUCTION

#### Aim

Although the County Council has no statutory duty to prepare a rail strategy, it wishes to harness the potential contribution that the heavy rail network can make to the overall transport network and to achieving its Local Transport Plan objectives. This strategy sets out how the County Council is engaging with the Rail Industry to deliver improved transport integration and maximise the benefits of rail travel to the community of Buckinghamshire.

The underlying aim of the County Rail strategy therefore is to support the delivery of the County Council's 20 year Vision for Transport as set out in its Provisional Local Transport Plan 2006/07 – 2010/11, namely 'to secure the strategic and local transport infrastructure and services to sustain and develop the economy; to facilitate growth; and improve accessibility; whilst balancing free, safe and efficient movement of people and goods with protection of the environment'.

### 2 BACKGROUND

#### County Rail Network

The County rail network, as shown in Appendix A, is unchanged from the last Local Transport Plan (July 2000) and is geared primarily to serving the needs of passengers travelling to and from London and intermediate communities on the radial routes from London.

Chiltern Railways (owned by John Laing plc) is the principal operator within the County and runs services over the two radial routes from London Marylebone to Aylesbury via Amersham and to Birmingham via High Wycombe, Princes Risborough and Banbury. In addition, a shuttle service operates between Princes Risborough and Aylesbury.

Silverlink County (a subsidiary of National Express Group) run services between London Euston, Milton Keynes and Northampton on the West Coast Main Line (WCML). The only station in the County on this line is Cheddington, although a number of our rural communities are

served by the stations at Milton Keynes Central, Bletchley, Leighton Buzzard, Tring and Berkhamsted. Milton Keynes Central is also an important railhead for north east Buckinghamshire for Virgin WCML services to the West Midlands and North West.

First Great Western Link (a subsidiary of First Group) took over the Thames Trains franchise in April 2004 and operates services from London Paddington through Iver, Burnham and Taplow to Maidenhead, Reading and Oxford together with the branch line from Maidenhead to Bourne End and Marlow. Slough station is also an important railhead for South Bucks residents accessing Great Western Main Line services to the West of England and South Wales.

London Underground (a subsidiary of Transport for London since 2001) operates the Metropolitan Line running from central London (Aldgate/Baker Street) to Amersham with a branch from Chalfont and Latimer to Chesham. London Underground own and manage the route between Amersham/Chesham and Harrow-on-the-Hill.

In addition to the passenger network, there are two operational freight only lines in the County – one running north west from Aylesbury to Claydon Junction serving the landfill site at Calvert and a second, West Drayton – Poyle serving the Heathrow T5 project.

The adopted County Council Structure Plan policy TR15 calls for the safeguarding of disused former railway lines for potential future transport use. These include:-

- East-West Rail (Bletchley – Claydon Junction – Bicester Section).
- Grendon Underwood Junction – Ashenden Junction.
- Claydon Junction – County Boundary with Northamptonshire (former Great Central Line).
- Princes Risborough – Thame – Cowley (Oxford).
- High Wycombe – Bourne End.
- Princes Risborough – Chinnor.

The table below lists the 23 stations on the County network together with the current operator and level of service based on the December 2005 timetable.

Chiltern Railways' carryings have been growing at about 10% per annum, prior to the 7 week closure of the tunnel at Gerrards Cross in

Summer 2005. Silverlink County is now experiencing volume growth following the completion of the first phase of the West Coast Modernisation Project in September 2004. FGW Link is also experiencing a steady rise in patronage running currently at about 5% per annum.

**Table I. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE'S PASSENGER RAIL STRATEGY CURRENT SERVICE LEVELS – WEEKDAY DAYTIME (BASED ON DECEMBER 2005 TIMETABLE)**

Station	Current Service Levels	Operator	Service
Amersham	Half-hourly	Chiltern	Aylesbury - London Marylebone
	Four trains an hour	LUL	Amersham - London Baker Street/Aldgate
Aylesbury	Half-hourly plus peak extras	Chiltern	Aylesbury - London Marylebone via Amersham
Beaconsfield	Three trains an hour plus peak extras	Chiltern	Stratford – Bicester – Princes Risborough High Wycombe – London Marylebone
Bourne End	Hourly plus peak extras	First Great Western Link	Maidenhead – Marlow/ London Paddington
Chalfont & Latimer	Half-hourly	Chiltern	Aylesbury – London Marylebone
	Four trains an hour	LUL	Amersham – London Baker Street
Cheddington	Hourly plus peak extras	Silverlink	Milton Keynes Central – London Euston
Chesham	Half-hourly	LUL	Chesham – Chalfont & Latimer/ London Baker Street/Aldgate
Denham	Half-hourly plus peak extras	Chiltern	Princes Risborough / High Wycombe – London Marylebone
Denham Golf Club	Hourly	Chiltern	Princes Risborough/High Wycombe – London Marylebone
Gerrards Cross	Three trains an hour plus peak extras	Chiltern	Stratford – Bicester - Princes Risborough/High Wycombe – London Marylebone
Great Missenden	Half-hourly plus peak extras	Chiltern	Aylesbury – London Marylebone

Station	Current Service Levels	Operator	Service
Haddenham & Thame Parkway	Two trains an hour	Chiltern	Birmingham Snow Hill/Stratford/Bicester North – London Marylebone
High Wycombe	Four trains an hour plus peak extras	Chiltern	Birmingham Snow Hill/Stratford/Bicester North/Princes Risborough – London Marylebone
Iver	Half-hourly	First Great Western Link	Reading – London Paddington
Little Kimble	Hourly	Chiltern	Aylesbury – Princes Risborough
Marlow	Hourly plus peak extras	First Great Western Link	Marlow – Bourne End/ Maidenhead
Monks Risborough	Hourly	Chiltern	Aylesbury – Princes Risborough
Princes Risborough	Three trains an hour	Chiltern	Birmingham Snow Hill - Stratford – Bicester North – London Marylebone
Saunderton	Hourly	Chiltern	Princes Risborough – London Marylebone
Seer Green & Jordans	Half-hourly	Chiltern	Princes Risborough/High Wycombe – London Marylebone
Stoke Mandeville	Half-hourly	Chiltern	Aylesbury – London Marylebone
Taplow	Half-hourly	First Great Western Link	Reading – London Paddington
Wendover	Half-hourly	Chiltern	Aylesbury – London Marylebone

15 Stations managed by Chiltern Railways.

4 Stations managed by First Great Western Link.

3 Stations managed by London Underground.

1 Station managed by Silverlink County.

## Industry Structure

The Railways Act 2005 has heralded a major overhaul of the structure of the railway industry. The strategic planning and franchising functions of the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) have been transferred to the Department for Transport (DfT) with the creation of a new Rail Division. DfT have confirmed that they will continue the programme of Regional Planning Assessments.

Network Rail is assuming a wider planning role in addition to its prime function as manager and maintainer of network assets. This planning role embraces responsibility for developing rail enhancement schemes in conjunction with third parties including local transport authorities. Network Rail also assumes responsibility for Route Utilisation Strategies.

The same legislation offers the prospect of some devolution to TfL for the Greater London rail network. Community Railways are also identified as a firm policy commitment.

### Train Company Franchise Re-mapping

Chiltern Railways is unique amongst train operators since it secured a new 20 year franchise from the SRA in February 2002. The franchise pledged an investment of £371m during the period covering capacity enhancements, trains, depots, station facilities and integrated bus services.

Elsewhere the policy introduced by the SRA from 2003 has seen a move toward a more tightly drawn specification approach and a gradual rationalisation of the franchise map.

First Great Western took over Thames Trains in April 2004 as part of an extended franchise until March 2006. A new Greater Western franchise is currently being procured by DfT. The outcome from the three short-listed bidders – First (the current operator), Stagecoach and National Express – was announced in December 2005. First has been successful and the new franchise will commence in April 2006 and run for 7 years but with an option to extend for a further 3.

National Express Group has been granted an extension of their Silverlink franchise from October 2004 until September 2007. In October 2005 DfT announced its proposal for a new West Midlands franchise which will subsume Silverlink County services as well as many of Central Trains'

local services. The new franchise will be procured with a start date of October 2007.

The re-franchising process provides for stakeholder consultation. The County Council actively engages in this process to seek to safeguard service levels and secure future improvements for the local rail network and the residents of Buckinghamshire.

## 3 RAIL STRATEGY

### SWOT Analysis of the Rail Offer

#### 3.1 Strengths:

- Chiltern Railways 20 year franchise agreement encourages them to invest in their network.
- Track record of successful partnership working with Chiltern Railways.
- Weaknesses:
  - The fragmented nature of the rail industry means having to work with many different constituent parts namely, DfT Rail, Network Rail, Crossrail, LUL as well as 3 different train companies which can inhibit progress.
  - The rail network is fixed and has several capacity constraints, notably Aylesbury – Princes Risborough, Chiltern Line south of Princes Risborough and joint lines Amersham – Harrow on the Hill.
  - Funding constraints – DfT hold the purse strings for the rail industry and the Government position is that there is limited funding available for major rail enhancement schemes in the medium term.

#### Opportunities:

- Chiltern Railways' £80m Evergreen 2 investment in infrastructure enhancements will facilitate improved Chiltern Line services from December 2006.
- Potential to exploit spare train capacity for local and longer distance journeys and encourage modal shift from car to train.
- Potential to encourage sustainable travel to rail stations such as walking, cycling and bus use.
- Re-franchising process offers some opportunity to secure local service improvements.

- DfT/ODPM Community Infrastructure/Growth Area Funds may offer scope for 'top up' funding for schemes supporting the Sustainable Communities Plan.

#### Threats:

- Chiltern Railways' franchise geared increasingly toward growing its London - West Midlands market.
- Restructured rail industry will take time to 'bed down' leading to short term planning and funding 'blight'.
- Creation and procurement of new West Midlands franchise will cause short term planning blight for Silverlink County.

### Key Strategies

#### **Achieving modal shift:**

Rail patronage in Buckinghamshire has been growing at about 10% per annum and each day almost 6000 commuters travel to and from London by train, whilst 9000 people use the train to reach other destinations from the County's 23 railway stations. A far greater number, however, still commute to and from London by car, and many of these might be persuaded to transfer to rail given better access to local railway stations. Not only would this relieve congestion on routes across the County, but would also help ease pressure on the road network in London.

Similarly, many people commute within the County along routes for which rail is a competitive and high quality alternative, especially on peak time contra flow journeys. Chiltern Railways are keen to develop this market as they currently have significant spare capacity on outbound journeys from London at peak times. Rail journeys that could make a major difference on some priority Congestion Management Corridors include:

- Amersham to Aylesbury.
- Beaconsfield to High Wycombe.
- Gerrards Cross to High Wycombe.
- Great Missenden to Aylesbury.
- High Wycombe to Aylesbury.

We will therefore work with train operators to promote and increase rail use, seeking to achieve

modal shift from car to rail in two specific areas:

- Peak time commuter journeys to and from London.
- Peak time local contraflow commuter journeys.

We recognise, however, that although these commuter journeys offer good potential for modal shift, the biggest obstacle is access to rail stations.

#### **Access to railway stations:**

On average two out of five of the County's rail passengers travel to the station by car and park in one of the 3,000 available parking spaces at Buckinghamshire stations. Typically, these car parks are 94% full on weekdays, with most spaces filled up well before 9.00 am. Chiltern Railways cite available parking levels as the single greatest factor restricting further business growth in Buckinghamshire.

To date, we have sought to increase access to stations for pedestrians, cyclists and bus passengers to encourage more sustainable travel to and from stations. We have worked hard to increase cycling levels by providing better storage facilities and targeting specific stations for proactive marketing and promotion. Our Silver Rider service in Aylesbury (developed in partnership with Chiltern Railways) has achieved significant modal shift from the car to the bus on journeys to and from the station.

We recognise that, as passenger numbers continue to grow, the parking spaces released by this changing travel pattern may be taken up by others driving to the station. However, if these journeys are transferring from car only commuting trips (either to London or other local destinations), then the benefits of this approach are being 'locked in' by reducing demand on interurban roads and relieving the pressure to expand station car parking. We therefore believe that our approach is a positive way of increasing rail patronage, without adding to congestion around stations.

#### **Developing sustainable access to railway stations:**

We will continue to develop and enhance sustainable access to railway stations during the Second Local Transport Plan period. Where

stations are identified as suitable for cycling, secure and sheltered cycle parking will be provided, whilst stations with target populations within walking distance will benefit from improved pedestrian facilities.

Where potential demand justifies investment, we will look to develop demand responsive or other feeder services, using Silver Rider as a model. These services can offer good value for money since a high proportion of new passengers were previously travelling by car. We will be considering the feasibility of and demand for services in Chesham & Amersham, Gerrards Cross and Beaconsfield, in partnership with Chiltern Railways, and will prioritise these projects based on their potential to achieve modal shift and the level of available resources. A second route in Aylesbury branded Waterider is already at the planning stage for introduction in 2006.

In addition, we also hope to develop a similar project in the Leighton/Linslade area in partnership with Bedfordshire County Council and Silverlink County Trains, as part of the wider package of sustainable transport measures made possible by the completion of the Stoke Hammond and Linslade Western Bypass.

Our plans to introduce demand responsive transport services in High Wycombe will focus on improving access to the railway station to increase rail patronage. As these services are developed, we will explore the scope for 'through ticketing' (i.e. one fare to cover both journeys). We will also assess interurban and urban bus services to determine if we can establish better connections with stations, and promote longer distance multi-modal journeys (i.e. Aylesbury to Birmingham using Haddenham Parkway and the Line 280 bus service).

New and existing sustainable access to stations will be promoted and marketed at appropriate locations. Posters, mail drops, leaflets and promotions at stations will be used to raise public awareness of travel alternatives and internet information will be developed to advise the public about travel choices to stations.

#### 4 FUTURE RAIL SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS

With the growth anticipated in and close to Buckinghamshire over the next 20 years, we are keen to explore the potential for further rail development to achieve modal shift and meet congestion objectives, despite the current national constraints on the development of new rail projects.

It is encouraging that Chiltern Railways are currently investing £80m in further capacity enhancements (Evergreen 2) under its franchise agreement. This scheme will provide extra capacity on the Bicester – Princes Risborough – London line and between Princes Risborough and Aylesbury together with 2 additional platforms at London Marylebone Station. The project will be completed late 2006 and enable further service improvements to be introduced in the December 2006 timetable.

Allied to Evergreen 2, Chiltern Railways have extended platforms at stations on the line via High Wycombe to allow operation of 7 coach trains. The Company is also expanding its fleet of trains to provide extra peak capacity. High Wycombe station interchange is another strategic franchise commitment on which development work is being undertaken in partnership with the County and Wycombe District Council. The recent fire which has destroyed the existing station building adds urgency to this initiative.

Chiltern Railways are also developing proposals to enhance the London Marylebone – Amersham – Aylesbury line, including longer trains, reduced journey times and increased line capacity. As the section of route between Amersham and Harrow-on-the-Hill is owned and managed by LUL, Chiltern Railways are dependent on agreement to a joint investment strategy with LUL and its PPP contractor, Metrolink. LUL have outlined their upgrading plans for the Metropolitan Line which include new trains, new signalling and station improvements from 2009 onwards.

One of our strategic priorities is the evolution of the East West Rail project, linking Oxford with Cambridge, particularly as we currently lead the Consortium of authorities promoting the western section between Oxford and Bedford (with a spur to Aylesbury). The completion of this

section, currently undergoing further business case development as part of growth agenda work (funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister), has the potential to contain traffic growth and limit congestion on both the A4146 / A418 (Aylesbury to Milton Keynes via Wing) and the A421 (Oxford to Milton Keynes via Bicester and Buckingham) Congestion Management Corridors. The key factors in delivering this scheme will be to demonstrate how it will facilitate sustainable growth and unlock private sector funding.

We are also working with Laing Rail and Aylesbury Vale District Council to develop the Aylesbury Vale Parkway new station and Park-and-Ride Scheme. This £11m project (which has gained outline funding approval from the Community Infrastructure Fund) will extend current Chiltern Railways passenger services to the northern edge of Aylesbury, providing a new station at Berryfields, adjacent to the developing MDA. Forecast to open in 2009, it will provide 400 car parking spaces initially for the rail station and bus-based Park-and-Ride service. This will effectively eliminate the need for existing and new rail passengers living north of Aylesbury to drive to the town centre to access railway services, significantly reducing traffic pressures on both the Bicester Road PCMC and in the town centre.

Aylesbury Vale Parkway station will be fully integrated with the Berryfields MDA, with a new high frequency bus service connecting directly to the railway and providing an 'express' Park-and-Ride service into the town centre. As well as further reducing congestion on Bicester Road, it will also improve the commercial viability of the MDA bus route, enabling more frequent and better quality services than would otherwise be possible.

A longer term aspiration for the County is to achieve a Milton Keynes – Aylesbury – High Wycombe – Thames Valley strategic public transport route. East West Rail Western Section would create the northern 'leg' of this route but the existing Aylesbury – Princes Risborough section requires substantial investment if through trains to High Wycombe are to be re-instated by Chiltern Railways. We will continue to press for this enhancement which could attract Growth Area funding.

The WCML Modernisation project is due for completion in 2008. The first phase, implemented in 2004, included a new turn back facility at Tring station and a more frequent service between Tring and London Euston. Hertfordshire County Council and Silverlink County are leading a partnership which includes Buckinghamshire to create a new multi-modal interchange and new station building / AONB visitor centre at Tring which would serve a wide catchment area including Ivinghoe and Pitstone.

The second phase of the WCML project will include an enlarged Milton Keynes Central Station, which will allow more Virgin high speed services to call giving improved connectivity to the West Midlands, North West and Scotland. In addition a new bay platform can be created to serve potential East West Rail services.

The Crossrail project includes provision of services along the GWML to Heathrow and Maidenhead. The latter would serve Iver, Burnham and Taplow stations in South Buckinghamshire and provide improved connectivity to central London and east thereof. The target introduction date for services is from 2013, but construction would take place from 2008.

### 5.3 COUNTY RAIL STRATEGY 2006-11 ACTION PLANS

A series of Action Plans have been drawn up to support delivery of the above strategy. These are shown in section 5.3

#### Action Plan 1

Promote modal shift from car to train for peak time commuter journeys to London and also journeys along contra peak flow routes such as:

- Amersham/Great Missenden – Aylesbury.
- Beaconsfield – Gerrards Cross to High Wycombe.
- High Wycombe to Aylesbury.

Mutual benefits of reducing traffic on some Priority Congestion Management Corridors and filling spare seating capacity.

How – Joint marketing campaign with Chiltern Railways.

When – 2007.

Milestone – Marginal shift in mode choice from car to train.

Review – Market survey in 2008 to measure success.

#### Action Plan 2

Promote sustainable access to key rail stations.

How – Cycling – suitable stations to have targeted cycle route improvements where practical and increased secure cycle parking provided together with local promotion campaigns.

Pedestrians – suitable stations to have targeted walking route improvements where practical and walking promoted within a 10 minute walking distance of the station.

Bus integration – new routes to be identified based on feasibility and demand potential using the Silverider model. Towns for consideration include Chesham, Amersham, Gerrards Cross and Beaconsfield.

How – Joint ventures with train and bus companies and, where appropriate, developers.

When – 2006 – 2008.

Milestone – Once firm business case established, two new bus routes to be implemented by 2010.

Review – 6 monthly review of progress.

#### Action Plan 3

Review potential for demand responsive integrated bus services at key stations such as Leighton Buzzard.

How – Joint research with train and bus companies and neighbouring authorities for cross-boundary opportunities.

When – 2006 –2007.

Milestone – Once a firm business case has been established, develop and implement on a route by route basis by 2010.

Review – 6 monthly review of progress.

#### Action Plan 4

Subject to outcome of CIF bid, to secure the delivery of Aylesbury Vale Parkway new station and adjoining bus-based Park-and-Ride service.

How – Partnership working with Chiltern Railways and AVDC through a joint project steering group.

When – 2006 – 2009.

Milestone – Service introduction April 2009.

Review – Project Steering Group will continuously monitor delivery of milestones commencing April 2006.

**Action Plan 5**

BCC to continue leadership role in progression of case to secure East West Rail – Western Section for the MKSM Sustainable Community.

- How – BCC to lead EWR Consortium efforts to secure Government backing for scheme and agreement to the most appropriate funding and delivery mechanisms (BCC takes on Chair role from January 2006).
- When – 2006 – 2011.
- Milestone – Delivery and funding mechanisms in place by 2007.
- Review – EWRC to monitor progress every 3 months.

**Action Plan 6**

To secure train service and station access improvements from Train Companies as part of existing and new franchising agreements.

- How – Step up partnership working with Chiltern Railways, First and London Underground to safeguard and enhance, where possible, train service and station offers. Engage in stakeholder consultation for the new West Midlands franchise which will subsume Silverlink County services from Oct. 2007.
- When – 2006 – 2011.
- Milestone – Will vary from one operator to another.
- Review – 4 monthly review meetings to be held with train companies and LUL to monitor progress.

**Action Plan 7**

To encourage community rail partnership working, where appropriate, on the County network such as Taplow and Tring stations.

- How – Work with Train Companies, other authorities and voluntary groups to identify and promote opportunities for more community involvement in enhancing the County network.
- When – 2006 – 2011.
- Milestone – To be set on a case by case basis.
- Review – To be reviewed on a case by case basis.

**Action Plan 8**

To engage with Cross London Rail links to secure the western corridor of the Crossrail project on the best possible terms for Buckinghamshire.

- How – To negotiate with DfT / TfL to secure assurances on local environmental, transport and heritage issues arising from the Crossrail proposals. Work with neighbouring authorities to achieve these aspirations using appearance at Parliamentary Select Committee as a last resort.
- When – 2006 – 2007.
- Milestone – All concerns to be met by end 2006.
- Review – 3 monthly reviews of progress.

**Action Plan 9**

To engage with DfT Rail Group in the Thames Valley Regional Planning Assessment (RPA) and influence its outcome to enhance long term investment prospects for County rail network.

- How – Input relevant County data to TV RPA and attend meetings.
- When – 2006.
- Milestone – Delivery of final RPA and its approval by SOS for Transport.
- Review – Meetings as arranged by DfT Rail.

