



"ONTRACK"

Walton On Naze, Frinton On Sea, Kirby Cross, & Thorpe Le Soken Rail Users Association
Representing Clacton & Walton Lines Rail Users for over 20 years

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Dear Paul Plummer

A RESPONSE TO NETWORK RAIL CONSULTATION "IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY REPORT - SUBMISSION BY 31 JANUARY 2015"

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Network Rail (NR) have produced consultative report which proposes a "Hub" and "Spoke" concept to reduce numbers of through cross region train services and mainline trains with the rail industry operators using certain regional stations as core transport hubs and rail services connecting with a few key services. Comparison has been made to the arrangements that exist on the urban high frequency Docklands Light Railway and London Transport Services in the Metropolis.
- 1.2 At the NR consultative meetings it has been stated this was not about infrastructure. However, given the known capacity pinch-points and bottleneck constraints, and given the well publicised increasing demand for more frequent services and through services to destinations such as London, Cambridge, Norwich, Peterborough and beyond which are economic hubs and centres of employment one can only consider that this strategy can easily ride along with an agenda of not spending money to improve track capacity, or station capacity, in a region with a growing population and a long legacy of underinvestment in rail infrastructure.
- 1.3 The authors of the report although producing some potentially useful ideas clearly lack local knowledge and assumptions based on the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) estimates compound the problem. This is especially apparent in relation to Tendring and North East Essex. This is because a series of independent Headcount Censuses demonstrate that the official ORR Estimates based on ticketing information is woefully inadequate. If independent census headcounts at the smaller intermediate stations along Ipswich - Peterborough corridor were undertaken we would not be surprised that if a similar situation might apply. There are several reasons for this one are the failings of the ticketing accounting system to accurately record and credit transactions and the other is ticketless travel. It should be noted that local headcounts have demonstrated that there is a significant amount of ticketless travel at all stations from Colchester Town to Walton-on-the-Naze and that official ORR figures based on ticket sales cannot be relied upon. It can be difficult, sometimes impossible, to purchase a ticket at many stations and the conductor guards do not have sufficient time move along the train the check and sell tickets to all passengers. Therefore it is not too difficult to evade purchasing a ticket when travelling between most pairs of stations



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- 1.4 However, a given the ad hoc unreliability of mainline and branch line connections as they exist in much of East Anglia and also given the problems in creating a “guaranteed connection” allied to punctuality and reliability regimes that operate, which effectively mean one in ten trains are subject to delays, cancellation and termination short of the intended destination or even diversion, such a hub and spoke strategy on East Anglian Rail services will be counterproductive to generating traffic. It will be very likely detrimental to the passenger’s journey experience and overall interests and will therefore to be also likely to adversely impact on revenue and passenger patronage.
- 1.5 Also the situation which may apply across much of Europe also does not apply in East Anglia, as at various key transport nodal junctions it is not possible, since the Beeching cuts, to take an alternative service to reach one’s destination. Experience of this in action was witnessed some years ago, when travellers from the Hook of Holland Service at Amsterdam West, got lost finding their way to the correct Platform to board the service to Amersfoort (border station) and transfer onwards onto Deutsche Bahn service direct to Hanover. The Dutch Railways Station staff were able to put these unfortunates on board another service very shortly which reached Hanover by a different route. That option does not exist across much of the UK or East Anglia.
- 1.6 In our view that such a solution would be undesirable in East Anglia which is experiencing population growth – and the only other region driving the UK economy. Many of the cross country, outer services barely provide a half hourly service in the peak hours and many are served hourly at best
- 1.7 Those economic blackspots that exist in East Anglia are also blighted by poor rail services in terms of frequency, direct services to rest of UK, London and regional centre and also insufficient and/ or inadequate infrastructure such is found in the coastal areas of Tendring, North Norfolk and East Suffolk to deliver high frequency, high standard, direct speedy transport to London and rest of the UK.
- 1.8 The areas north of Braintree and Sudbury in fact currently have no rail link and campaigns have been mounted to extend and re-instate links closed 50 plus years ago when the population was but a minute fraction of current levels.
- 1.9 The Anglia Region is used as Case Study – but it seems strange that this was selected given that it is long recognised major investment is needed, to produce increases in frequency, journey times or paths for more trains. The comparison with London’s Dockland Light Railway Services is misleading as it takes a very high frequency service running every 5-10 minutes and where luggage, cycles, prams, baby buggies are a low percentage of overall traffic.
- 1.10 Therefore this reinforces the case for infrastructure investment in expanded track capacity to enable fast, intercity trains to be segregated from slow stopping and freight services. Further such money as being proposed to be spent on building hubs would be far better used to improve infrastructure capacity.

2. ACTIONS

2.1 Therefore we desire the following action

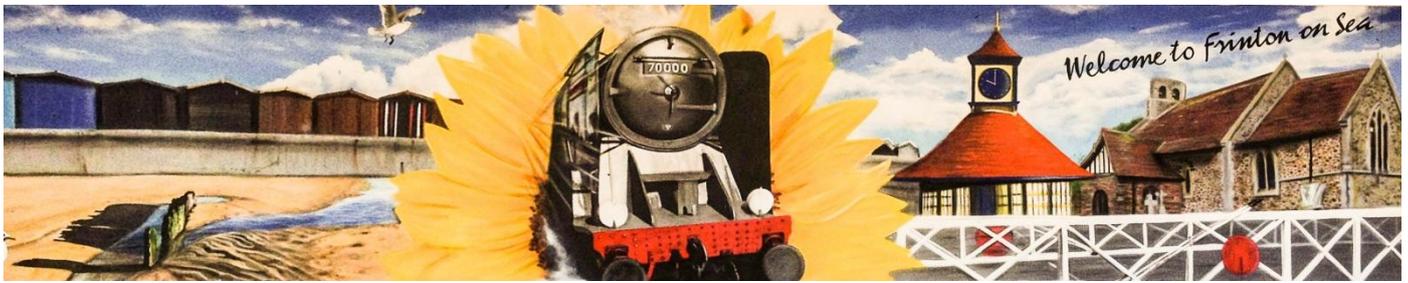
- **Re-instatement of cross country regional services**
- **Re-instatement or introduction of direct services to/ from London from NE Essex Coastal Areas and East Suffolk**
- **Investment in infrastructure such as track capacity and journey time acceleration measures on mainline and on subsidiary lines and at junctions**

3. CONCLUSION

Overall We believe the hub and spoke concept will introduce too many changes of train, on what are relatively low frequency services and delays and the problems faced by such travellers will mean a degraded service will undermine

4. FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 The Improving Connectivity’ document is presented as an early-stage concept report using the Anglia region as an illustrative case study – which if that what it was – then we would simply welcome the opportunity for public

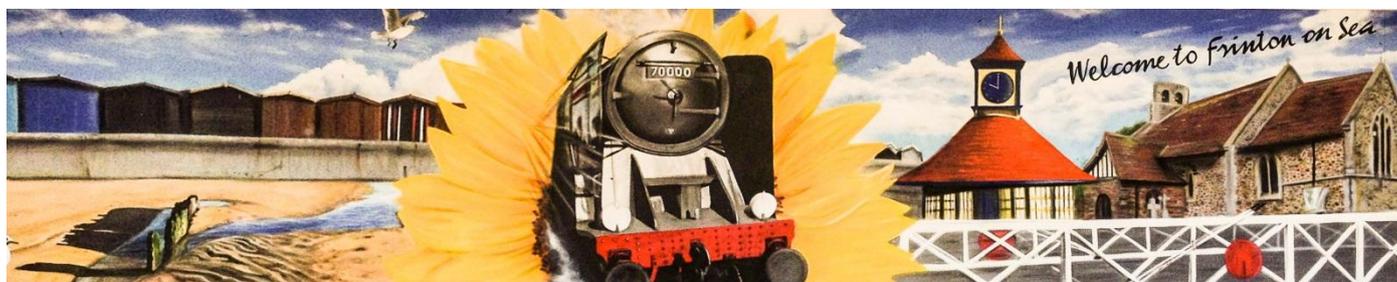


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comment on an idea for “hub” and “spoke” service strategy concept which might have some potential if there were no major problems to overcome.

- 4.2 However, this document, using Anglia as it does for the case study and the comparison with London’s DLR shows up major problems, and major cost issues which are very clearly exposed).
- 4.3 This response focusses on the clear short comings if such a strategy were applied to the Anglia Region. Although it might work in areas with urban high frequency services interconnecting at various nodal points on a compact network, it is not relevant to discuss the merits of such an situation which bears no relationship to the mainline network outside of London that does not enjoy even a half hourly service.
- 4.4 The Forward by Peter Wilkinson Dept. For Transport , and NR’s introductory comments at 3.1, refer to the possible intention of using this material in the consideration of the service pattern for the pending new Anglia franchise
- 4.5 Improvements which might be considered for increased train services / service frequencies could not be effected until some distant date after major infrastructure capacity improvements
- 4.6 However, although some of the DfT/NR suggested changes could be done much more quickly, they are likely to generate hostility and passenger dissatisfaction when presented with for example poorer journey scenarios, extended journey times, disrupted journeys and the logistical problems posed for those with either luggage or mobility issues etc.
- 4.7 These concerns will create negativity towards the report as a whole, undermining its proper role as a theoretical case study. But it is extraordinary that anyone should be thinking of using these very ill thought through ideas as a basis for any immediate decision-making, given the immediate problems in making them work in country areas. We wonder, if the authors have really used the mainline network outside London and been stranded by missed connections on remote up country stations with limited facilities.
- 4.8 Moreover these deemed ‘proposals’ are obviously in total conflict with the current NR Anglia Route Study, with its heavy emphasis on faster GEMM timings (supported by a widespread lobby) and the Greater Anglia Rail Prospectus . This ensures hostility.
- 4.9 It is extraordinary that two conflicting messages could be sent out simultaneously by DfT Rail Executive and NR . The originators of this concept should not have chosen the Anglia region for their case study as it brings connotations of continued cheap skate solutions to Anglia railways investment
- 4.10 Where money is proposed to be spent, it does not seem to offer a sensible value money solution, which improves customer experience.
- 4.11 This appears to be a wholly ‘top-down’ approach to train service planning by ‘HQ’ staff geographically remote from the local railway operating people and stakeholders. Such practice in the past has led to 300 school children massing on Ingatestone Station for up to an hour because there were no trains stopping to take them home after school finished. Or the massed “lynch mob” mentality as angry commuters are stuck at Thorpe le Soken because local trains not held for London trains in order to meet punctuality targets. This has been the driving force behind a long campaign to reinstate regular fast through London trains.
- 4.12 Those who seek to plan train services should not do so in isolation, lacking holistic and detailed knowledge of local circumstances and/ or of the locations in question. During the British Railway’s era. BR strategic management improved Inter-city services resulting in major growth in usage, and largely adequate London outer suburban services.
- 4.13 However BR and the subsequent Privatised Rail Operators have tended to be far too remote to ‘local’ or “up country services” elsewhere in the country. BR neglected investment and planning effectively to revive the old BR Docklands lines, or the North London Lines and others which have been since revived and regenerated by investment by Transport for London. The DLR uses much of the old BR Docklands line routes, which closed to passenger traffic between 1940s and 1970s. The Barking Gospel Oak was in the 1970’s a very basic hourly service – with not a very inviting service frequency, with rundown stations and rundown rolling stock.
- 4.14 The local train services from Tendring into Colchester, or London have also suffered from a lack of informed, focussed attention and investment to encourage new customers.. The shorter train journey is, the more important that the service is well planned and locally focussed to deliver a viable alternative to private road transport.



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- 4.15 Overall the suggested proposals for the Colchester / Clacton / Ipswich / Bury St Edmunds area services are not only largely inappropriate, but would result in a worsening of the service for many existing deter new users:
- 4.16 Other recommendations are mostly likely to simply result in derision at the greatly "improved train service" being 'offered'. such as stopping Intercity trains at all stations Ipswich to Norwich. Could one really call the service InterCity if one did?
- 4.17 The authors of a top-down plan are unlikely to understand the detail and nuances of local transport and road traffic problems, and/ or the ability how the railway can benefit from and solve those problems. The abolition of the former Area management on the railway has had an adverse impact on delivery the customer the service they want.
- 4.18 The Colchester-Clacton/ Walton 'proposals' would lead to the great exacerbation of local traffic problems, because travellers would dessert a service that offered a worse option, in terms of cost, time, delay, than by private road transport or bus whilst at the same time preventing the railway from attracting people from off the roads
- 4.19 Although regular travellers, might be able to cope and understand local connectional arrangements, these are a minefield to visitors – and especially relevant to Tendring and East Suffolk where tourist traffic is far higher than on Metropolitan urban branch lines

4.20 KEY CUSTOMER SERVICE POINTERS

- 4.20.1 Frontline railway employees and operations managers are aware of the importance attached by non-regular travellers to through trains, and as few changes as possible, even on the London Underground. Comparison with London's DLR is ludicrous: as the passengers are short-distance, mainly luggage-free. Those who get lost, miss the connecting train will be on their way on the next train five to ten minutes anyway.
- 4.20.2 In Para 3.1, much is made of the way in which making people change trains en-route can reduce train mileage and free up paths (For Intercity or Freight the focus of the applied rationale here is not clear).
- 4.21.2 IPSWICH – NEWMARKET/ PETERBOROUGH: These two services have very different functions viz.:
- The Ipswich – Cambridge service - an interurban service, connecting two major centres in East Anglia.
 - The Ipswich – Peterborough service is part of a long-distance route linking north Essex/south Suffolk with Yorkshire, the North-East and Scotland.
 - Until relatively recently, this long-distance travel requirement was fulfilled by other through services, e.g. Colchester – Glasgow and Harwich Town – Manchester.
 - The Ipswich – Peterborough service needs to be limited stop, calling at major stations only. The number of changes of train needs to kept to a minimum as passengers are likely to have heavy luggage. A change of train at Newmarket would increase journey
 - In respect of the 'Newmarket' example, reducing the current overall average of "1.5 trains" per hour between Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich to 1 per hour is cast as an 'achievement' (*But reduction of service frequency will make taking the train to Ipswich, the principal local destination, a very much the less attractive option given extended journey times versus the alternative of the A14 Trunk Road if passengers have access to private motor transport*).
- 4.21.3 Further on in this report it emerges that the proposal is to run 3 trains per hour on this section to Ipswich. anyway!
- 4.21.4 The obvious option for upgrading the service when justified – one per hour Ipswich to Peterborough, and one fast and one slow per hour to Ipswich-Cambridge – is never considered. Nor is it mentioned that enforced change at Newmarket would add circa 15 minutes to the through journey, which again detracts from the attractiveness of rail – it ignores the time element in peoples choices of transport.
- 4.21.5 This example is a poor advocate for the benefits of connectivity. If those travelling to/ from Ipswich to the Midlands and the North are faced with two or more changes of train, with delays, to get for example onto their East Coast Main Line or other train at Peterborough train would this would be a strong disincentive to using the direct route.



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4.21.6 Those passengers may consequently choose – if they are to remain with the rail travel option – to revert to travelling via London just as they had to before the Ipswich-Peterborough service was introduced. It should not be forgotten that passengers travelling via Ipswich may have already had to make one or two changes of train already, before boarding the Ipswich – Peterborough train.. To add further interchanges and potential uncertainty is not a recipe for increasing custom. It could divert patronage back onto the A14. In the Metropolitan London, road congestion for much of the weekday means road journeys are take longer compared to those using the underground or DLR. This time penalty is increased by the need for road traffic to circumnavigate the natural barrier that is the RIVER THAMES. Such a disadvantage does not apply across much of East Anglia and private road transport can often outpace cross country services, except in the peak commuting hours.

4.21.7 The whole purpose of this chapter seems to be to promote the net benefits of more enforced changing of trains and it is suggested that the PLUS is that 'Newmarket gains a direct service to Peterborough' and that 'Harwich gains a direct service to London'. BUT it should be pointed out that HARWICH had through services to/from London throughout the day under previous conventional timetabling arrangements which were only recently cut. One of the drivers for introducing such through services that passengers for cross channel services and cruise ships were delayed so often that they missed the boat.

4.22.1 NORTH EAST ESSEX – TENDRING – COLCHESTER: The proposals suggested for Colchester – Clacton / Walton and Colchester Town are an equally poor in advocating the cause of connecting services.

If there is a desire to increase branch services at large from one to two trains per hour, an equal improvement could be achieved within the current timetable by splitting trains a Colchester into separate portions for Harwich, Walton or Clacton or either of those via the Town Station. A suggested Timetable contained in an earlier study report is attached (Based on earlier research). The NR scheme proposed involves a significant reduction in line capacity if each Harwich-London train has to use the Down Main at Colchester (or cross it twice), or each Harwich-Colchester train has to wait departure time on the Down Main (or cross it once), and/ or each Clacton-London train having to cross the Down Main at least once.

4.22.2 The connectivity rationale in the report is based on an the assumption that trains will mostly run only on an hourly frequency, producing long waits for some people changing trains as things stand. But if the planning for all lines and stations are to have at least half-hourly service (Or quarter-hourly for some), that increase in frequency undermines some of the assumptions, and need for the 'connectivity' approach .

4.22.3 A railway which is unable to run be reliably punctually or reliably run a train is not an ideal candidate for such a strategy. Given that punctuality data is based on local trains arriving at key/ terminal stations within 5 minutes or long distance trains arriving with 10 minutes is not the real measure of punctuality the person on the Clapham omnibus would use. Ally this to the recorded punctuality on some routes as being circa 90% rather than 98-99% then actual punctuality is in in the order of about one in ten trains being late. Compounded with this are the unpredictably factors such as line closures due to Police Investigations, NR Infrastructure failures and NR Engineering work over runs which are excluded from the normal punctuality calculation and for decades demonstrative lack of timely, useful information for passengers at times of disruption (despite elaborate electronic systems to facilitate this), the dream of Swiss-style 'tight connections all along the route' basis are pure fantasy..

4.23 COLCHESTER - CLACTON / WALTON AS AN EXAMPLE

4.23.1 Apart from being our own principal interest, this line also serves as a splendid example of the total inappropriateness of the train service ideas that will result (in some cases) if there is no 'bottom-up' thinking.

4.23.2 The proposal for shuttle services to operate between Thorpe-le-Soken and Walton, fails on the basis of historic experience and logic. It has been tried in the past, from 1982 to circa 1990 and was a complete dismal failure, with huge passenger dissatisfaction at the inconvenience and disruption caused to journeys. A change of train, 5 to 10 minutes into one's journey or towards the end of it is not welcome. Then British Rail promised a seamless journey but failed to deliver. Journeys can be severely disrupted due to missed connections at Thorpe-le-Soken when there are



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operating problems on the Gt Eastern main line; and these problems can only be eliminated by very significant investment in the main line, including quadrupling from Liverpool Street to Colchester which was advocated by Chris Green who set up Network South east under BR..

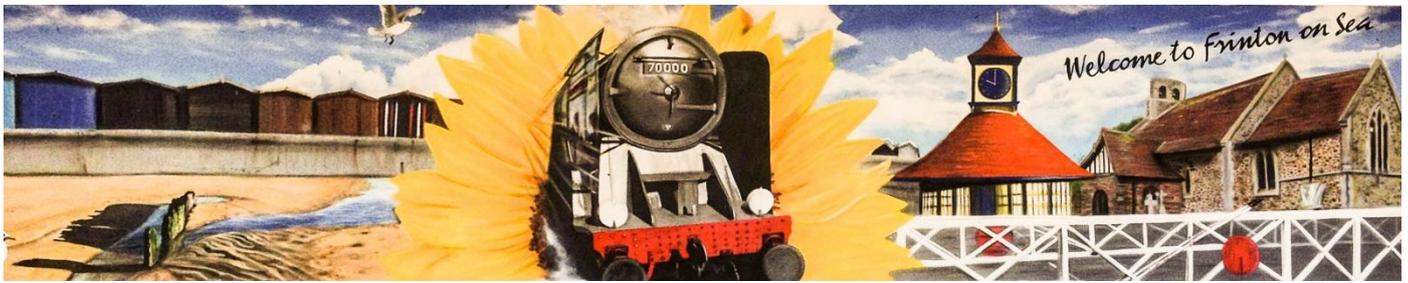
4.23.3 In summer, large numbers of tourists, crucial to the economic health of Tendring and local resorts passengers come from a wide area to spend a day out on the beach and enjoy the natural amenity. Up to 200 passengers at a time can be seen changing from the London train onto the local service to Walton at Thorpe-le-Soken, but the railway still carries only a very small percentage of the total visitors since the inconvenience is a serious disincentive to travel by train. However the Clacton Airshow August 2014 demonstrated that given through Walton – Clacton trains, a basic half hourly service through from London visitors flooded into the area by train, breaking all records.

4.23.4 Thorpe-le-Soken is a small junction station with extremely limited facilities situated a mile from the village which it serves. It generates only a small amount of traffic itself, its major function being to act as an interchange station for which it is quite unsuited. It has poor Disabled Access, its platforms are too narrow in some places to properly load or unload wheelchairs from trains. Independent Census Headcounts show that Thorpe-le-Soken sees more passengers interchanging than, for example, Norwich.

- Timetables should be re-cast to eliminate, as far as possible, Thorpe-le-Soken as an interchange station
- There can be no valid reason why through services should not operate to Walton, both from Colchester Town as well as from Liverpool Street as in the past.
- This local service has been left to fend for itself over the last 40 years by railway management: It is not a 100% commuter Railway, Nor a 100% Rural Railway, Nor a 100% Regional line, Nor a 100% Tourist Line. It is neither a principal route nor a London commuter service that produces vociferous complaints from the rich and famous.
- It is unique in the region in the extent to which it fails to achieve what it ought to be achieving, despite covering most years its costs, it has lacked proper marketing and services to harness potential
- Every other line in the region has seen major increases in train services over recent years, but this line has seen services, cut, services and rolling stock downgraded
- Even the County Council, and District Council (Tendring) have lacked interest. The railway in NE Essex is seen as something one uses to travel to London; but often not to travel to/from say Colchester town centre (despite the road traffic congestion). Moreover any interest in Rail Travel is dampened by infrequent trains, slow journey times (from Frinton / Walton), abnormally high fares (In an area where wages are lower than in Suffolk the fares are higher pro rata than in that County) and high car parking charges. In addition limited late night trains to / from the coast to Colchester or from Colchester to the coast impede demand
- Action is needed to institute a park-and-ride facility from appropriate local stations in the east Tendring to Colchester Town, to divert percentage of the road traffic to rail. This is only viable if direct, regular trains operate at least half hourly

4.24.4 SUMMER TRAFFIC FRINTON-ON-SEA/WALTON-ON-THE-NAZE

- During summer, on a fine day, around 15,000 to 20,000 people visit Frinton and Walton. There are BLUE FLAG SANDY beaches on the Essex coast and stretch from south of Frinton to north of Walton, with almost continuous rows of beach huts.
- At one time, the railway made special provision for this Summer Seaside traffic, with day time morning and afternoon trains geared to day family trippers, but were cut out of the National Express Franchise requirement, so that today, with an indifferent, poor train service the vast majority now come by road resulting in traffic congestion and serious parking problems
- Further the B1033 through Kirby Cross, the key main access road has had two fatal accidents over the Christmas 2014 period and it is forecast by Essex County Council to become severely congested within 10 years (And not just in summer). There is therefore no shortage of potential traffic, but is the railway interested in investing to catch it?.
- There is a clear need for additional summer through services from main line stations to from the coast and mid Tendring.



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4.25. SUMMARY

- The Liverpool Street to Clacton and Walton service in the 1960's and 1970's has been degraded since 1980. This has resulted in loss of passenger traffic with consequential economic damage to the Tendring District of north-east Essex, which now has high unemployment
- There seems a total lack of pro-active interest in services to Clacton and Walton, or
- The degradation in the standard of rail services is a consequence of:
 - Increase in journey times of 20% - 25%.
 - More intermediate station stops.
 - The increased necessity to change trains.
 - The provision of inferior rolling stock unsuited to long journey times .
 - The lack of refreshment facilities.
- The current timetable is unfit for purpose and certainly needs a complete overhaul to make it suitable for the 21st century.
- High quality rolling stock needs to be provided, with improved comfort and on-board facilities.
- Railways play a key role in solve the NE Essex travel and Economic Regeneration problem.
- Railway managers need to acquaint themselves with the finer details this part of the rail network and its passenger demand instead of each fresh management team having to be re-briefed by local stakeholder user groups..
- More detailed local knowledge is essential before making proposals concerning rail services in this or any other area.
- **The proposals will certainly not effect the changes necessary to reverse the decline in standard of service which has occurred over the past 35 years.**

Yours sincerely

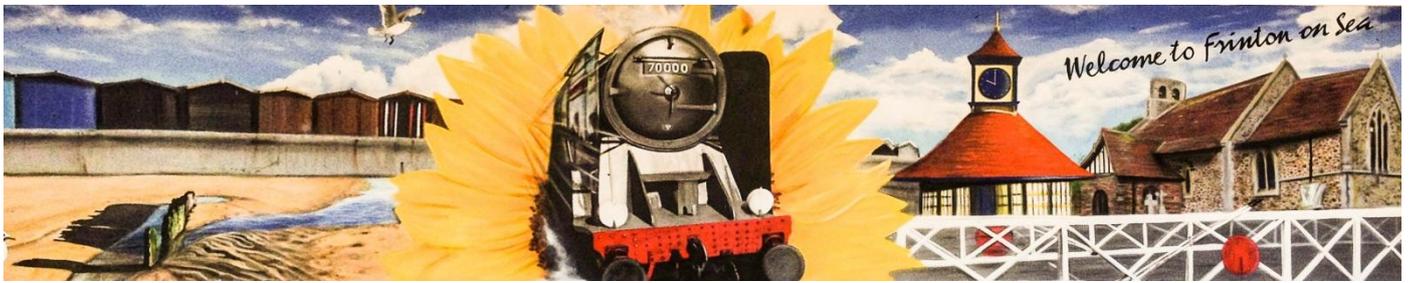
John Smock

Hon Chair "ONTRACK" Rail Users Association

P.S. We understand that Tendring District Council Chief Officer and TDC Cabinet Members did not receive notification of this Consultation nor of that for the Anglia Route Study, nor of the Anglia Franchise Consultation The contacts are Mr Ian Davidson Chief Executive TDC and Cllr. Mark Platt, Cabinet Member Tourism & Leisure.

Enclosures

- "ONTRACK" RUA Headcount Census Reports November 2013 Frinton On Sea, June 2014 Thorpe le Soken
- "ONTRACK" RUA Submission re Greater Anglia Franchise (To accompanied by a supplementary Update
- "ONTRACK" RUA Timetable Study Report
- ONTRACK POWERPOINT PRESENTATION THE WAY AHEAD



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*P.S - Header shows mural painted on wall of disused platform of Frinton Station