

Route Prospectus

For the line between Marks Tey and Sudbury (The Gainsborough Line)

The line between Marks Tey and Sudbury is one of the routes listed in the DfT Community Rail Development Strategy as having potential for line designation. Pilot projects have started to demonstrate how the Community Rail Development approach can increase revenue, manage down costs and encourage greater community involvement in the local railway. Designation is aimed to give the line operator and partnership greater freedom to build on the recent growth in passengers and take steps to further improve the reliability of the service.

The key measures of success will be

- The contribution of Community Rail Development in achieving locally set objectives such as reducing road congestion: increasing patronage and accessibility;
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- Reducing the call on taxpayers' funds for the service and ensure tax payers money is used efficiently.
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- Establishing the effectiveness of different methods for reducing the net financial loss of Community Rail lines by increasing revenue and reducing costs where practicable.

A remit for the project has been agreed with the Community Rail Partnership. This remit forms the basis for this Route Prospectus. Like the remit, it is expected that the route prospectus will be a flexible document that will evolve (in format and substance) as the project develops. The Community Rail Partnership referred to - Essex and Suffolk County Councils, Chelmsford & Colchester Borough Councils, Babergh, Braintree, Maldon & Tendring District Councils & One Railway.

The prospectus has also been discussed with Network Rail consists of and the DfT Rail Group.

Designation of the line between Marks Tey and Sudbury as a 'Community Rail line' will assist in these aspects of the remit:

- Identification of the costs of operating the Gainsborough Line and the revenue attributable to the line.
- Showing how Train Operating Company costs might be reduced on the line by changes to franchise management (including the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement arrangements), working practices and operation
- Exploration of opportunities of alternative fares structures to ensure the line is allocated a fair contribution of all through rail fares and that fares are appropriate to the local market.

- Exploration of ways to improve further revenue collection - noting that this is a busy, short line with three stations.
- In conjunction with the Bus Operator and Unitary Council provide and demonstrate the impact of quality bus links at all locations on the line to connect with other parts of the Island improving links to the bus network to improve accessibility to the area.
- Deepening co-operation with local business and others with the aim tapping into the tourism market.
- Improving the reliability of the service.

In the long term, there is a local aspiration for through trains to Colchester While this cannot be progressed in the immediate future, there may be potential to explore this further in line with Essex County Council's "Branch Line Study" undertaken by a consultant in 2000.

In taking forward all of this work, it is intended to build on the work already in hand and undertaken by the Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership on behalf of the Gainsborough Line including: promotion of the line to raise its profile and increase patronage

Without designation the project will not be able to deliver its aims and objectives. The project is expected to last up to 5 years. Designation is intended to be a permanent arrangement, but it can be reviewed periodically to assess whether the designation is still appropriate.

During the time of the project the designation may be reviewed and if there is a significant demand, then the consultation on designation can be repeated. This review process will enable designation to be reversed if there is significant demand once the pilot project has finished.

Community Rail Development
DfT Rail Group
76 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DR

8th September 2006