

BEDFORD TO NORTHAMPTON RAILWAY LINE REOPENING

Summary of a presentation given by Capita Symonds in 2006.

History of the Line

- Opened in 1872 by the Bedford and Northampton Railway Company - relatively low construction cost. Operated by the Midland Railway
- Three intermediate stations: Turvey, Olney, Piddington
- Line closed in 1962 but remained open for freight between Northampton and Piddington. Brackmills to Piddington closed in 1981
- Line still open between Northampton and Brackmills

Capita Symonds Ltd – Initial Work

- Appointed by Connex to assist them in their 2000 bid for the Thameslink Franchise
- Carried out a brief engineering study into the potential for reopening the Bedford – Northampton Line. Considered likely reopening cost to be around £220M in 2000
- In 2003 authorised to use work carried out for Connex to assist others who were looking to reopen the line. Reopening cost revised to £275M in 2004

Connex Specification

- Double track railway. Electrification at 25kV. One intermediate station at Olney

Capita Symonds Assumptions

- 75mph running throughout
- Crossovers at Olney to allow trains to terminate/start there
- Grade separated junction at Oakley (with Midland Main Line)
- Signalling for five minute headways and for bi-directional movements

Options

- No electrification
- Single track railway with one or more passing loops
- 90mph running
- More stations:
 - Bromham & Oakley Parkway, Northampton Stadium, Great Houghton, Brackmills, others?
- Initial reopening Olney to Bedford

Engineering Observations

- Formation is generally intact throughout. Most underbridges have been removed
- Some overbridges will need to be raised to provide sufficient clearance for electrification
- New alignments will be necessary at Olney and Turvey
- Steep gradients may affect station location

Running Times

- Gradient and speed restriction information input into performance modelling software
- Rolling stock assumed to be Class 319 on 25kV (as existing First Capital Connect – formerly Thameslink - trains)
- Running times calculated as 25 minutes Northampton to Bedford with a stop at Olney. Olney to Bedford takes 11 minutes. Olney to Northampton takes 13 minutes

Timetable Options

- Extension of existing Brighton to Bedford services to Northampton
- Further extension to Rugby, Coventry and Birmingham New Street (replacing existing Northampton – Birmingham shuttle service)
- Half-hourly or hourly interval service. Additional peak hour services
- Connections with future East-West (Oxford – Cambridge) services at Bedford
- Through services from West Midlands/Northampton to East Anglia

Potential Journey Times (Through Services)

- Bedford to Birmingham New Street: 1 hour 30 minutes, (currently 2 hours, change at Leicester)
- Northampton to Luton Airport Parkway: 50 minutes, (1 hour 35 minutes, change at Bletchley and Bedford)
- Coventry to Gatwick Airport: 2 hours 45 minutes, (2 hours 25 minutes, change at Euston and Victoria)
- Olney to London City Thameslink: 1 hour 15 minutes

Journey Opportunities

- Towns & Cities: Birmingham, Coventry, Rugby, Northampton, Bedford, Luton, St Albans, London, Croydon, Brighton
- Airports: Birmingham, Luton, Gatwick
- Connections:
 - Birmingham: West Midlands, Wales and the North
 - Rugby: The North
 - St Pancras: CTRL International services and Underground
 - London Bridge: SE London and Kent
 - East Croydon: Sussex Coast

Next Steps

- Protect alignment
- Gain support of stakeholders: Local Authorities, Train Operating Companies, Network Rail, DfT, etc.
- Include in Regional Transport Strategies/Local Transport Plans
- More detailed engineering study to refine capital cost estimates
- Initial environmental assessment
- Assess timetable options
- Demand forecasting and cost-benefit assessments
- Consider likely operating costs
- Prepare the business case
- Consider Funding Options: Capital and Operating
- Detailed design
- Transport & Works Act – powers to construct and operate
- Construction
- Reopening!

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