

# Benefits of East West Rail

**East West Rail (EWR) will connect people in the towns and villages between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford, and Cambridge with the region's main centres of employment and cultural heritage. It will bring a wealth of benefits to the region including opening up new journeys, cutting travel times, easing congestion on local roads, and bringing more jobs within reach of local people.**

The new railway is also a catalyst to support the UK's economic growth. The area that runs from Oxford to Cambridge has become a global leader in life sciences, digital technology, and innovation, giving it a unique character with global influence and massive potential. This vital economic artery supports over two million jobs and generates wealth for the whole country, contributing more than £120 billion to our economy every year.

But current transport links between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge are letting the

region down. The Economist singled out the region as the top priority for investment in the UK. It has the potential to turbocharge the UK economy, adding £100+ billion extra GVA by 2050, and securing the UK's future as a world leader in science and technology.

East West Rail is a once in a generation opportunity to help the area meet its huge potential. By providing a new, reliable, sustainable way to travel, EWR will boost the economy, while making the region an even better place to live and work for local people.

## Get in touch

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## What are the main benefits?

EWR is designed to deliver positive outcomes for communities, businesses, the environment, and the UK economy. In summary, EWR would:



### **Cut travel times**

East to west public transport is currently inadequate. For instance, it can take nearly an hour to travel just nine miles by car from Cambourne to the centre of Cambridge in the morning rush-hour, or around 50 minutes by bus. Travelling with EWR would reduce this to just 15 minutes. The journey from Bedford to Cambridge would be reduced from an approximate 75-minute journey by car or 90 minutes by bus, to just 35 minutes by train.



### **Bring more jobs within reach of local people**

EWR would considerably expand the number of people within commuting distance of high-quality jobs in the region. The region supports over three million jobs overall and by joining up the currently siloed individual jobs markets, whether in logistics in Milton Keynes, Agri-Tech in Central Bedfordshire, or life sciences in Oxford and Cambridge, EWR will make all these jobs more easily accessible for everyone living in the region.



### **Open up new areas for businesses to grow**

Growth in Oxford and Cambridge is constrained. Connecting them with the fast growing and less constrained towns and cities in between, such as Milton Keynes and Bedford, will make these areas more appealing to people who want to start and grow all types of businesses. It will help attract and retain the best talent in the region and bring businesses closer to their supply chains, workers, research sectors and other sectors, creating wealth and jobs for an area of over 3.95 million people.



## Improve quality of life

Affordable, reliable, and faster public transport will mean less time spent in traffic and less air pollution resulting from congestion, improving quality of life for local people. It will also mean people can choose to live in a more affordable area within an easy commute, rather than having to pay premium house prices that often involve long commutes. This is particularly important for key workers.

Housing costs in Oxford and Cambridge are the highest in the country outside London, which makes it more difficult for businesses to attract talent. In fact, in 2022, house prices in Cambridge peaked at 13.3 times the local average earnings, higher than London's 12.5 and the national average of 8.13. The region does have more affordable areas, such as Bedford and Milton Keynes, but for people to be able to take advantage of this, connectivity must be improved.



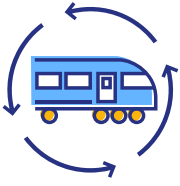
## Ease congestion

By offering rail travel as an alternative, EWR would help to ease traffic on local roads. It would also give people more choice, offering more sustainable ways to travel and opportunities to relax or work while travelling.



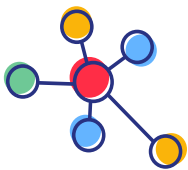
## Open up new journeys

EWR would offer new journeys to local communities because of its key intersections with most of the UK's main rail lines – including the East Coast Main Line, Midland Main Line, West Anglia Main Line and West Coast Main Line. With easy interchange, people from across the route could get to international airports at Luton and Stansted, or visit cities across the UK such as Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, Derby, and Leeds, and enjoy multiple connections into London.



### **Provide a greener way to travel**

Travelling by rail is more environmentally friendly than travelling by road. EWR would help take cars and lorries off local roads, resulting in cleaner air, safer roads, and less congestion. EWR would be a new, environmentally sustainable way to travel across the region, and the aim is to become a net zero carbon railway.



### **Unlock inward investment locally, and for the benefit of the whole UK**

The region already adds more than £110 billion to the UK's economy every year. Both Oxford and Cambridge are in the top 25 cities around the world for venture capital investment. Research carried out in this part of the UK is creating high value jobs elsewhere in the country too. As EWR unlocks the constraints on growth, and enables world leading sectors to expand, that will attract increased investment locally, which will be felt not just in Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford, and Cambridge but across the country too.



### **Provide employment**

Delivering the line between Oxford and Bletchley/Milton Keynes is currently employing around 1,000 people and supports a further 500 in the wider supply chain, contributing an estimated £1.1 billion into the local economy in 2021/22. For later stages of the EWR, this could grow to over 8,000 jobs.

## **Support**

Support for the project is high, with over 70% of local residents surveyed supporting the development of a new transport connection between Oxford and Cambridge. There is also strong support for the Project from businesses and universities in the area,

including AstraZeneca, Oxford University Science Park, the University of Cambridge, Confederation of British Industry and Advance Research Clusters, as well as Local Enterprise Partnerships across the route.