What we’ll cover today

- Introduction to the consultation
- What we’re consulting on
- How to get involved
- Next steps
What we are consulting on

This 10-week consultation is an opportunity for you to share your thoughts on emerging proposals for East West Rail and your views on the broader scheme.

The consultation document covers the following key sections:
- Customer experience and railway operations
- Proposed infrastructure development
  - Oxford to Bicester
  - Bletchley and the Marston Vale Line
  - Bedford
  - Clapham Green to The Eversdens
  - Harlton to Hauxton
  - The Shelfords to Cambridge station
This part of our consultation focuses on what future customers want from their railway experience.

We want to hear your views – from individuals and organisations – on the customer experience you would like from East West Rail.
What we’re consulting on

Customer experience and railway operations

As part of developing the customer experience, we are keeping our minds completely open about what we might be able to offer.

We are looking for feedback on what our customers think would make positive differences to their customer travel experience.
East West Rail represents a once in a generation opportunity to provide a reliable, frequent train service for communities along the Marston Vale Line.

Communities have an opportunity to protect the line, whilst making sure it meets the needs of local people today and into the future.

It is not possible to introduce a fast, reliable and frequent service between Oxford and Cambridge without making a significant investment in the Marston Vale Line.

More information can be found in Section B of the consultation document.

Along the Marston Vale Line, we are considering:

- How vehicles and pedestrians cross the railway, replacing level crossings with safer alternatives
- Which stations future services will call at, and how frequently they would operate
- How we could upgrade and construct the Marston Vale Line to accommodate future services
Why are we proposing this work?

• The signalling system is obsolete and has, at times, been unreliable. This has led to train services having to be suspended on occasions

• The existing infrastructure means the line is slow, with just one train an hour, taking 42 minutes to do 16 miles – an average speed of just 25mph

• The stations are all unstaffed, and are very constrained in terms of the facilities they can offer passengers

• Many of the stations have amongst the lowest usage on the national network. Indeed, three of the ten stations see fewer than 40 passengers on average each day.
We have identified two ways this part of the line could be upgraded:

- **Concept 1:** The existing hourly stopping service would continue to serve all Marston Vale Line stations, with a new limited-stop EWR service calling at two stations – Woburn Sands and Ridgmont – four times an hour.

- **Concept 2:** There would be five new merged stations on the Marston Vale Line – all five would benefit from at least two EWR services every hour, and some would have four. This would mean more communities have access to more frequent and faster services, direct to more locations.
The existing hourly stopping service would be largely unchanged.

Some shorter journeys on the route would take slightly longer – but end-to-end journeys would take roughly the same time as today.

Woburn Sands and Ridgmont stations would benefit from an increase to five trains per hour.

The four new EWR services would complete the journey between Bletchley and Bedford in around 22 minutes.

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Concept 1

Retain the existing hourly service that stops at all current intermediate stations, and introduce fast limited-stop Oxford – Cambridge services alongside it.
What could concept 1 mean for local communities?

- Most communities excluding Woburn Sands and Ridgmont would not benefit from these increased fast services and direct services.
- Existing communities could continue to access the train service as they do today – although passenger use at some stations is some of the lowest in the country.
- Most station facilities would remain largely as they are today – many of the stations are on constrained sites so they cannot easily be expanded to improve accessibility.
- There is the possibility that some villages would experience increased traffic and additional cars being parked in the vicinity of stations.
Concept 2

Provide more people easier access to more frequent, faster and direct trains at five merged stations on the Marston Vale Line.

Local communities would benefit from having East West Rail services calling at all five new stations, rather than just two of the existing intermediate stations.

More people would have access to more frequent services.

The relocated Woburn Sands and Ridgmont stations would have four trains per hour in each direction.

More people would have access to direct train services going further afield, including Cambridge.

What could concept 2 mean for local communities?
What could concept 2 mean for local communities?

- More communities would have access to faster services - two trains each hour would complete the journey between Bedford and Bletchley in around 22 minutes, the other two trains – that stop at all 5 stations - each hour would take 27 minutes
- All journeys on the route would be quicker than they are today, without the need to change trains
- The services are likely to be more reliable in this concept than in concept 1, as there is no need for trains to overtake each other, which can cause delay
- Communities and users would benefit from new stations which would be purpose built with improved facilities
- Concept 2 would help avoid the risk of village roads being adversely affected by additional traffic and rail users’ cars being parked in streets close to the existing stations
Bedford
Improvements to the existing railway and a new section of railway

- Bedford station is already an important transport hub in the region.

- The introduction of East West Rail services means the station and supporting infrastructure need a range of improvements to make sure sufficient capacity is available.

- In restoring a vital rail connection between Oxford, Bedford and Cambridge that was lost to local people in the last century, these improvements can support local stakeholders’ future aspirations for more jobs, prosperity and growth in this lively, diverse town.

More information can be found in Section C of the consultation document.
**Bedford**

Our developing plans

- **Bedford St Johns station**: a new station on a different section of track into Bedford, either closer to the hospital or to the south west of the existing station, close to the Ampthill Road – Elstow Road Pedestrian Link bridge.

- **Bedford station**: building new track to Bromham Road Bridge. The existing station building is proposed to be demolished and a new station building would be built.

- **North Bedford**: building new track in between Bromham Road Bridge and Clapham Green, creating the new connection to Cambridge.
Information for landowners

To construct and operate the new East West Rail line, some of the proposals put forward for consultation will affect people’s homes, businesses and farms.

• In developing our proposals, we aim to minimise the negative impact these may have on people’s land and property and mitigate any impacts we cannot avoid

• While we don’t yet know for certain which land or property will be needed, we know that publishing our plans could potentially affect people needing to sell their home, agricultural holding or small business.

• We are consulting on a discretionary purchase scheme, the Need to Sell Scheme, that, if introduced, would support owner occupiers once the announcement of the preferred route alignment for the railway has been made.

• We have a dedicated team in place who are focused on how the proposals will affect people’s homes, businesses and farms. More information on how to contact them is available on our website at eastwestrail.co.uk.
Public consultation

Working with you

Two meeting sessions with your neighbouring councillors during consultation:

- **Next week** – A session to run you through in detail all the elements we will be consulting on that are relevant to you

- **Late May** - A more discursive session – once you’ve had a chance to read through the documents and liaise with your constituents and residents - designed to raise any questions you might have.
How your communities can get involved

There are lots of different ways to get involved in the consultation, including:

**Virtual consultation rooms** – open from 12 April 2021 until 9 June 2021 which provide more information on each section of the consultation, including a full list of documents and maps available via the central table.

**Online public events** – we are holding twelve online events for communities right the way from Oxford to Cambridge. There will be two lots of six events covering geographical areas along the route.

**Live chat events open to the public** – a series of twelve, two-hour live chat sessions held via the virtual consultation rooms, where participants will be able to discuss key topics directly with members of the project team.

**Dedicated phone line** – the EWR Co telephone line will be available throughout the consultation period to enable those not wanting or able to engage online or in writing to speak to members of the Project team. The telephone number is **0330 134 0067**
How to respond to this consultation

We’re keen to understand what you think about the emerging proposals for the Project, and your views on the broader scheme.

Feedback forms can be submitted online by emailing us at consultation@eastwestrail.co.uk or sent by post to Freepost EAST WEST RAIL

For further information, or to request a paper copy of the form to be sent to you, speak to the team by emailing us at contact@eastwestrail.co.uk or by calling us on 0330 134 0067
What next?