

Route Prospectus

For the passenger train service between Bletchley and Bedford (The Marston Vale Line)

The line between Bletchley and Bedford (The Marston Vale Line) is one of the routes listed in the DfT Community Rail Development Strategy. This document sets out ideas for development of the service subsequent to the proposed formal designation as a Community Rail service during 2006.

A service designation does not include track or signalling or associated infrastructure, however stations on the route served primarily by the Community Rail Service will be included. The relevant stations are listed at the end of this prospectus

The key measures of success will be

- The contribution of Community Rail Development in achieving locally set objectives such as reducing road congestion and increasing accessibility in its widest sense.
- Reducing the call on taxpayers' funds for the service;
- Establishing the effectiveness of different methods for reducing the net financial loss of Community Rail services by increasing revenue and reducing costs where practicable.

This prospectus has been discussed with the Marston Vale Development Group (which presently consists of Bedfordshire County Council; Milton Keynes Council; Bedford Borough Council; Mid Beds. District Council; Bedfordshire Rural Transport Partnership; Forest of Marston Vale; Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users Association; Silverlink Train Services; Network Rail)

Designation of the service between Bletchley and Bedford as a 'Community Rail Service' will assist in the following tasks:

- Identification of the costs of operating the Marston Vale service and the passenger 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
- Evaluation of cost effective methods of delivering improvements in terms of Marston Vale services looking at all aspects of the current operation, including options for different types of rolling stock
- Establishing the potential viability of later evening services Monday - Saturday and the introduction of Sunday and Bank Holiday services on the route

- Identification of the most cost effective way of extending the service to Milton Keynes Central - including changes to the current stopping pattern (any service introduction being subject to value for money assessment and availability of funding).
- 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 innovative ticketing and marketing schemes with the aim of making it easier to buy tickets away from staffed stations, effective collection of revenue and higher service awareness and take-up by the local population.
- Working with local businesses, tourism, community and development agencies etc to identify opportunities for promotion of the line to raise its profile and increase patronage.
- Improving links to the local bus network to improve accessibility in the area by better integration of transport services.
- Joint working between the train operator and community to develop the service and prioritise any improvements to services.
- Development and implementation of Station Adoption opportunities.

It is intended to build on the work already undertaken on the route by the Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users Group, Silverlink and other local stakeholders in developing this service.

Designation is intended to be a permanent arrangement, but it can be reviewed periodically to assess whether the designation is still appropriate.

Stations included:

Fenny Stratford, Bow Brickhill, Woburn Sands, Aspley Guise, Ridgmont, Lidlington, Millbrook, Stewartby, Kempston Hardwick and Bedford St Johns.

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

September 2006