

Vision for a Coastway railway

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Railfuture Coastway's vision for SoCoMMS has been developed as an example of what is needed on a national scale for Britain's passenger rail network.

It forms part of a proposal for developing the Rail Network for the Government of the South East (GOSE) Region which may be reviewed in the next Railwatch.

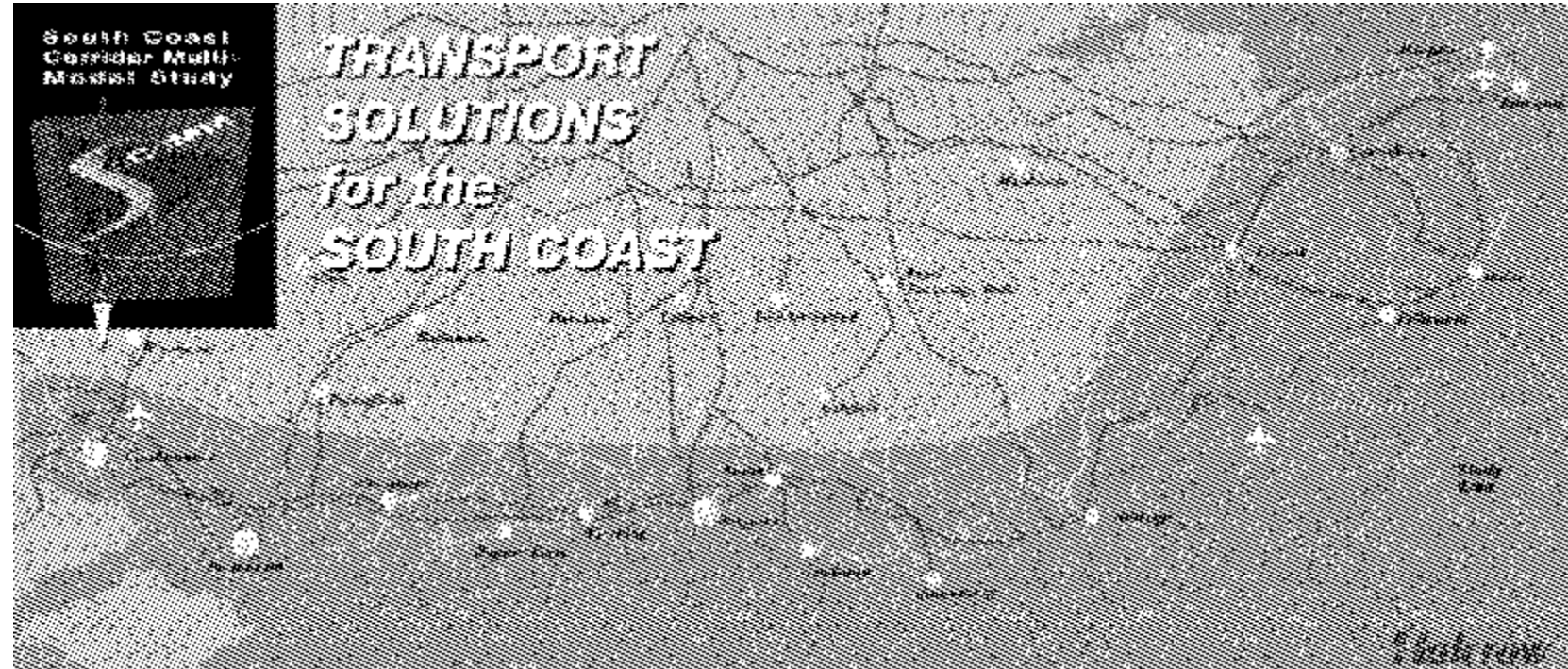
Railfuture Coastway's vision is for essential improvement to the heavy rail network, to include electrification throughout, improved signalling systems and better provision for fast trains to pass slow ones.

Currently through travel from Southampton to Ashford is only possible with multiple changes and needs reversals at Brighton and Eastbourne. There is only one direct route to London from Lewes, Eastbourne, Bexhill, or Newhaven, via the Brighton main line bottleneck through Balcombe.

Heavy Rail

The "total" proposal considers three heavy rail travel service categories:

1. Principal fast strategic "heavy" rail services: East-West; and by six routes North to London: via Horsham/Dorking, Horsham/Crawley/Gatwick Airport, Hove/Gatwick Airport, Lewes/Gatwick



Airport, Lewes/Uckfield/Oxted, and Lewes/Uckfield/Tonbridge

2. Urban "metro" frequent stopping "heavy" rail services.
3. Rural area and other stopping "heavy" rail services.

Railfuture's proposals also develop the concept of improved public transport services to and from rail heads along the length of the corridor. Light rail and

other public transport services giving access to the rail heads must support reliable, comfortable and good value for money heavy rail services matched to the needs of the travelling public

The proposals also reflect the latest South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), plans for the establishment of "enterprise hubs" and for redevelopment areas.

Strategic railhead/interchange stations would become the hubs for local area transport systems.

Hub stations would be "kiss and ride" not "park and ride", with access by public transport geared to rail timetables, or for drop off/pick up by taxi or private car.

Private car parking would be limited. Well-timed connections are important not only for route to route changes but also, for stopping to fast and fast to stopping changes. Truly "seamless" journeys will attract people out of their cars.

Light rail and other supporting public transport services

Two light rail schemes are proposed: one for the urban areas between Southampton and Portsmouth and the other for those between Littlehampton and Brighton and Hove.

The two networks would link the most densely populated urban areas and workplace/activity centres with the principal strategic railhead/interchange stations along the main South Coast route, including some new stations.

The first phase of the South Hampshire

Rapid Transit System - from Portsmouth through Gosport to the railhead at Fareham - should be extended, not only westwards, via the existing heavy rail route through Netley to Southampton but also eastwards, through the streets of Southsea to a new strategic railhead/interchange station at Farlington - for Portsmouth.

From Brighton and Hove to Worthing and Littlehampton a new network is envisaged linking with strategic railhead/interchange stations; existing, at Brighton, Hove and Worthing, and new; at Shoreham Airport and to the West of Rustington - for Littlehampton.

Heavy rail service timetables

Notional timetables for "Priority 1" (pre 2008) elements have been developed and submitted for the three categories of "heavy" rail services between Southampton and Ashford.

The nominal design basis for these timetables along the length of the Southampton-Ashford corridor is for 15 minute clock face interval services to be

New trains

There are now 700 air-conditioned Electrostar coaches with onboard CCTV on order from Bombardier to replace South Central's slam-door trains by the end of 2004. The order is worth £657million and the 100mph trains will be built at Derby. Fifteen of the four-car train sets will be dual voltage.

provided, as far as possible both for category 1, fast, and category 2, stopping services. Category 3 services are included on a less frequent basis.

"Priority 2" elements have not been taken into account in the proposed timetables. They were designed for the SoCoMMS requirement for planning for 2008 and beyond.

These long-term proposals include building a Brighton station avoiding line to allow through working of East - West services without the need for reversal at Brighton.

The timetables included with the proposals are based on current day point to point timings, with services to and from London integrated with those as at present on the Brighton - London main line.

Times could further benefit from differing levels of investment in track, signalling and rolling stock improvements.

A summary of the "heavy" rail infrastructure developments required to deliver the services proposed is presented, right.

These developments are intended to increase capacity for the integration of fast and local services; to improve time keeping and to reduce journey times, particularly for the strategic routes.

Comment is also included on possibilities which might be developed for freight along the corridor.

Finally, the submission recognises that the task of realising the potential of rail as the core of an integrated transport network through the length of the SoCoMMS corridor should be driven by the establishment of a "transport authority/executive" organisation.

What we want

The nominal design basis for these timetables along the length of the Southampton - Ashford corridor is for 15-minute clock face interval services to be provided, as far as possible both for category 1, fast, and for categories 2 and 3 stopping services.

The core of the fast services is an hourly service between Bournemouth and Ashford, linked to two other services, offset by half an hour, one between Bournemouth and Hove, and one via Gatwick to London Victoria, with the second, a connecting service between Hove and Ashford. In between these services, are other fast and strategic services:

- Alternate two hourly fasts, (Wessex) between Brighton/Portsmouth Harbour and Bristol, and (South West) between Brighton/Portsmouth Harbour and Reading, these connecting with each other at Fareham;
- Half hourly fasts (South West, with Wessex) between Southampton and Portsmouth Harbour;
- Hourly fasts (South Central) between Portsmouth Harbour and Brighton;
- Hourly fasts (Thameslink) between Portsmouth Coastway and London via Horsham and Gatwick Airport, joining/dividing at Arundel with part of the London service for Worthing and Brighton;
- Hourly (South Central) between Bognor Regis and London Victoria via Horsham and Dorking;
- Hourly (South Central) between Littlehampton and London Victoria via Horsham and Dorking;
- Hourly fasts (Thameslink) between Littlehampton and London via Haywards Heath and Gatwick Airport, joining/dividing at Haywards Heath with part of the London service for Lewes and Eastbourne;
- Hourly fasts (South Central) between Brighton and Eastbourne;
- Hourly (South Central) between Seaford and London Victoria via Uckfield and Oxted;
- Hourly (Thameslink) between Seaford and London via Uckfield and Tonbridge;
- Hourly fasts (Thameslink) between Eastbourne and London via Haywards Heath and Gatwick Airport;
- Hourly fasts (South Central) between Hastings/Eastbourne (joining/dividing at Polegate) and London Victoria (joining/dividing at Haywards Heath with the Bournemouth - London service);
- Hourly fasts (South Central) between Eastbourne and Hastings.

The proposed 15 minute frequency "metro" stopping services, integrated with the fast services, are all South Central operated, between: Littlehampton Coastway (alternately from/to Arundel/Littlehampton) and Brighton; Brighton and Lewes (alternately to/from Eastbourne/Seaford); and, Cooden Beach (Bexhill) and Ore (Hastings).

Other stopping services include a half hourly shuttle Bognor Regis-Barnham-Littlehampton, and hourly services between: Southampton and Portsmouth Harbour; Eastleigh and Portsmouth Harbour; Portsmouth Harbour and Chichester; Arundel and Horsham; Lewes and Tunbridge Wells; Lewes and Oxted; Eastbourne and Hastings; and, Hastings and Ashford.

The proposed "heavy" rail infrastructure developments are primarily to increase capacity for the integration of fast and local services; to improve time keeping and to reduce journey times - in particular for the principal fast strategic services.

To accommodate the proposed timetable the most important developments include a general upgrade of the track and signalling for increased capacity. More specific measures include: a new West to South chord at Eastleigh, with increased capacity for all Southampton-Fareham services to be routed via Botley; the reopening and electrification of the Wealden Line, for through services between Lewes and Tunbridge Wells; a new east to west chord at Willingdon, for direct through services between Lewes and Hastings; and, the new/redeveloped stations referred to above.

There is also the possibility of building a Brighton station avoiding line to allow through working of east-west services without the need for reversal at Brighton; although this would be highly desirable, to avoid conflict with main line operations, this has not been taken into account in the proposed timetables.

Railfuture makes the running

At the most recent round of consultation for the South Coast Multi Modal Study (SoCoMMS) participants at the meetings were invited to put forward their ideas for transport solutions in the future considering 8, 16 and 30 year timescales. Railfuture's Coastway Division has submitted its vision for these and for placing rail at the heart of an integrated public transport system for the SoCoMMS study area.

As a follow-up to this process South Central, the train operator most involved with the SoCoMMS study area, when offering and agreeing to attend the Coastway Division meeting on 6 December 2001, was invited to put forward for discussion their vision for the South Coast railway in relation to SoCoMMS. Matthew Ball the recently appointed external relations manager for South Central attended this meeting and gave an interesting and open talk about the present South Central situation within the re-franchising process.

Unfortunately this was not very encouraging with respect to consideration of Railfuture's objectives and it included no vision for the future beyond what is already being considered by South Central and the SRA under the "heads of terms" agreed for the long term (20 year?) franchise still under negotiation.

In the absence of any information from South Central on their vision, Railfuture has now copied their proposals (as presented to Halcrow, the SoCoMMS consultants), to South Central, to the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA), to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) and to the Rail Passengers Committee for Southern England (RPC). Halcrow has given its assurance that our submission is being taken into account by their rail expert and that it considers it "so important that the study encompasses the views of rail-related organisations". Responses from the other organisations are awaited!