Full steam ahead for railway improvements

Plans to improve railway stations in Whittlesey and Manea have taken a major step forward, as detailed work to develop the preferred schemes for each gets underway.

Various options to lengthen the platforms at both stations and provide a footbridge between the two platforms at Whittlesey were put forward in an in-depth feasibility study.

Network Rail was commissioned to carry out the study by Fenland District Council on behalf of the Hereward Community Rail Partnership with funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

Now a preferred option for each station has been chosen after Network Rail's recommendation and public consultation feedback showed clear winners in terms of technical requirements, cost and operational effects on the rail infrastructure.

The chosen schemes will now progress to the 'single option development' stage (stage 4) of the GRIP (Governance for Railway Investment Projects) process. GRIP is used by Network Rail to manage projects that develop the national rail network, and has eight stages.

Funding for the improvement projects has already been secured from the Combined Authority as part of £11 million in funding over the next three to four years to improve Whittlesey, Manea and March railway stations.

Councillor David Oliver, Fenland District Council's Portfolio Holder for Transport, said: “It’s great news that both the Network Rail study and the public consultation showed clear preference for one particular option at each station. This makes progression to the next GRIP stage much simpler, and with funding for the improvements already secured from the Combined Authority, it’s only a matter of time before passengers start to see the benefits.”

Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, James Palmer, said: “The need for investment in our rail infrastructure is clear, especially in Fenland, where passengers get frustrated with services and capacity that don’t meet the demands of the 21st Century.

“Regenerating the railway stations at Whittlesey and Manea will enable the platforms to accommodate longer trains with more carriages, boosting passenger numbers, and improve facilities. Better connecting rail users will also open up more opportunities, giving them better access to jobs and the nightlife and culture of our cities.”

The chosen options for each station are:

Manea – Option 1: Both platforms will be extended at the northern end (towards the March/Peterborough direction). A new pedestrian access ramp with improved gradient will be provided at the southern end of each platform (closest to Station Road and the level crossing). This option has the advantage of maintaining the existing station layout and only extending one end of the platforms, thus requiring fewer work sites during construction.

Whittlesey – Option 1: Platform 1 (for trains to Peterborough) will be extended eastward (towards March/Ely) and Platform 2 (for trains to March/Ely) will be extended westward (towards Peterborough). A new pedestrian access ramp will be provided for each platform. A new footbridge will be provided to allow pedestrian access between platforms. The new
footbridge will include stairs and an access ramp. This option does not significantly change the existing station layout.

For more information on the chosen options visit the station enhancement web page on Fenland District Council’s website at: www.fenland.gov.uk/maneaandwhittleseastation The webpage also contains a link to Network Rail’s option selection report, and the results of the public consultation, which took place in April and May.

There is also a link to the very first Manea and Whittlesey Platform Extension Feasibility Study, conducted by ARUP in 2015.

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For more information contact Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226