

# Marpa

Mid Anglia Rail Passengers' Association  
[www.marpa.org.uk](http://www.marpa.org.uk)

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Edited by Peter Rutt

Tel: 01359 242464

e-mail: [peterrutt06@aol.com](mailto:peterrutt06@aol.com)

## Winter 2010 Newsletter

Welcome to the winter newsletter. We are in interesting times for our line at the moment as the December timetable changes bring better trains but the loss of the through London services. When I talk to people I meet out and about on the line, many are unaware of the timetable changes. Ross writes more below about the changes. The new government and the much publicised spending review also impacts on our line, read on for further information.

I would like to apologise to people who have sent me e-mails over the past year to which I haven't replied – I have mislaid a few e-mails that I thought I had saved under a Marpa heading..

**STOP PRESS - Due to the damage sustained when a train hit by a lorry on a level crossing near Sudbury it has been necessary to introduce some changes to the published timetable and these are detailed on the NXEA website. These mainly apply to the through trains to/from Peterborough**

**December (2010) Timetable Change** – John Drake (Chair) and Ross Taylor (Secretary) attended a recent User Group Forum arranged by National Express East Anglia (NXEA) in London and were briefed as to the changes being introduced. Broadly it will be along the lines of the proposals upon which we were consulted on in August last year and therefore there are no real surprises.

In brief, in respect of the Ipswich to Cambridge/Peterborough services the changes are;

1. All Peterborough to London direct services will terminate at Ipswich where a change will be required. The London to Peterborough service will start at Ipswich. These 'new' services will (continue to) be operated by three car class 170 units.
2. Most Ipswich to Cambridge services will be upgraded to two car class 170 units.
3. A connection will be created at Stowmarket for passengers travelling from Norwich along the line to Cambridge via Bury.
4. Better connections will be created at Ipswich for some trains on the East Suffolk line.

The following may help a little in putting some meat on the bones of the above changes. The numbering relates to the issues above;

1. Marpa reluctantly agreed to the termination of the Peterborough to London services at Ipswich as the change provides an opportunity to improve the services into London by providing many more seats at peak times. Additionally improvements to some rural services were also possible. A new lift and footbridge is being provided at Ipswich to improve access across the platforms as more passengers will need to change here for onward services to and from London.

2. This is really good news as it has long been an aspiration of our group to achieve two car units on all services on our route. The provision of Class 170 air conditioned units is an added bonus although it took some work on the part of Marpa to stop them being allocated on the Ipswich to Lowestoft route as favoured by Suffolk County Council. Our argument that the units could not utilise their 100 mph capability anywhere on the East Suffolk line but could between Ipswich and Haughley Junction on our line helped to strengthen our case.

3. Currently no connection technically exists within the clock face timetable as there are only three minutes from the arrival of the train from Norwich to the departure of the train for Cambridge. This will be increased to five minutes under the new timetable and so a connection will be advertised. A word of caution however is required here as NXEA have said they will probably not hold the Cambridge train if the service from Norwich is late! We will need to monitor this 'connection' and see how things are working out?

4. Ipswich to Cambridge services will leave Ipswich at 19 minutes past the hour (currently it is 16) and arrive in Ipswich from Cambridge at 00 minutes rather than 02 minutes as now. With a few alterations on services via the East Suffolk line (especially to Felixstowe to fit in with the freight trains) these few minutes may create sufficient flexibility to allow a train to be caught rather than being missed? Unfortunately the provision of an hourly service between Ipswich and Peterborough was not possible within this timetable change as there are simply not enough diesel units available to provide it. NXEA is aware of Marpa's aspirations here (and largely support us) and it is believed that had some spare units been available then some sort of enhancement would have been made. Marpa will not reduce the pressure on the operator and the Department for Transport to obtain this enhancement and we will be doing our best to ensure that this is reflected in any new franchise.

**Ipswich Chord** – Subject to receiving the 'go ahead' at the Government October Spending Review the Ipswich Chord linking the East Suffolk line from Felixstowe to the Ipswich to Norwich line will proceed as a two track construction. This Chord will allow freight trains wishing to travel to the Midlands and the North to continue with their journey without the need for a stop in Ipswich yard whilst the engine is 'run around'. This enhancement, along with both the gauge and capacity enhancements currently nearing completion, will allow more (and bigger) trains to run via Bury St Edmunds and avoid the heavily congested route via London. All works should be completed by 2014.

**Marpa walks** – Thanks go out to our member Roger Wolfe for completing all of the 'Marpa Walks' between all stations on our line from Ipswich to Ely. Some members did join Roger for some of the walks and my wife and I did for the journey from Thurston to Bury on what turned out to be a thoroughly enjoyable day. Roger hopes to repeat some of the walks later in the year and we will do our best to advertise these. Don't forget that the leaflet which accompanies each walk is available to download from the Marpa website [www.marpa.org.uk](http://www.marpa.org.uk) (Ross Taylor)

**Annual General Meeting** – For those of you who attended the AGM in April you will recall a couple of interesting talks by Andrew Munden the Route Director Anglia from Network Rail and Linda McCord from Passenger Focus. The notes from the AGM are attached for your information. We will shortly be planning the 2011 AGM and would like to hear if you have any suggestions for a speaker. Please let Ross Taylor know if you have ideas.

**New Greater Anglia Franchise** – In our last Newsletter we reported on Marpa's submission to the Department for Transport on what services and facilities we believed the new franchisee should provide for the rail passengers of East Anglia. Since then the new coalition Government has put the matter on hold whilst the re-franchising policy is re-examined. We are hopeful that the 'second round' of consultations will take place later this year or very early next year and Marpa will be ready to submit a response. It is anticipated that longer franchises will be offered so that investment planning can be more certain although it is likely that the franchisee will have to accept some more of the revenue risks involved. This ultimately will no doubt fall on the fare paying passenger?

**Bury Station** – There are a few issues that continue to attract our attention at the station in Bury; The ticket office opening hours continue to be sporadic at best and this has been raised with Alan Trett the new station manager. We are told that staff sickness is the main contributor and as this improves so too should the opening hours. We will monitor this with interest. Staffing generally is also a problem and whilst we would expect a staff presence at all times whilst the station is open and especially when the ticket office is closed (assuming it opens in the first place!) sadly there is not. Bury now sees nearly 400,000 passengers pass through the station annually and to have prolonged periods where it is not manned is a real risk. This will be raised again with NXEA.

The platform lights have still not been cleaned despite the promise last year to have them done by Christmas! At least one Marpa member offered to clean them himself but this was rejected as the 'insides' need to be done also.

The vegetation continues to thrive in between the two running lines making the area looking neglected and uncared for. We have raised this with Network Rail (not NXEA this time!) and we will continue to press for some action.

Did anyone notice the beautiful hanging baskets which were hung under the canopy on each of the platforms presumably in support of Bury in Bloom? They looked good for about a week until they needed a drink. Flowers need water but sadly none appeared and the plants died and the baskets have now gone!. It is not really rocket science is it?

Marpa continues to press for a refurbishment at Bury; nothing that is going to cost the earth in these cash strapped days but just a lick of paint here and there, maybe a cleanup of the pigeon guano on the platforms and a clean of the platform lights of course!? We are ever the optimists and so will be happy to work with NXEA in whatever way we can to achieve an improvement.

**Tesco Crossing (Fornham Road , Bury)** – By the time this Newsletter is published the crossing, for which Marpa has been campaigning for many years, will be complete. At last we will not experience people risking their lives to get from the railway station to Tesco and vice versa across this busy junction. We will continue to press for improvements at the other end of Station Hill with its junction with Tayfen Road which again is a very dangerous place for pedestrians to cross.

**E-Mails** – During the course of the year there are some messages, letters or consultations that could, and possibly should, be circulated to members for the committee to seek views. To date this has been difficult, not only in respect of time in addressing the required number of envelopes etc., but also in terms of cost especially for postage. Our Secretary is happy to circulate relevant material to members via e-mail but requires an up to date e-mail address. If you contact Ross Taylor ([secretary@marpa.org.uk](mailto:secretary@marpa.org.uk)) then he will create a distribution list for any future circulation. If you would be prepared to receive your Newsletter via this method it would relieve quite a bit of pressure on our dwindling financial reserves.

### **IPSWICH STATION LIFT**

Work on the Ipswich station lift has started, however we understand that it won't be completed by the time of the December timetable change. We look forward to the completion of this long awaited enhancement to the facilities.

### **DULLINGHAM STATION COUNT**

Marpa assisted Railfuture in carrying out a 'passenger count' at Dullingham Station on 18<sup>th</sup> September. There were 60 passengers in the up direction (56 on and 4 off), and in the down direction there were 67 (9 on and 58 off), making a grand total of 127 passengers. The general impression was that Dullingham is a very good little station and strategically placed as a park and ride station for people from North of Cambridge wishing to take the train to Ipswich.

## **COALITION GOVERNMENT SETS OUT IT'S TRANSPORT PROGRAMME**

Since the last newsletter there has been an election, change of government and some policy changes that impact on the railways. With thanks to 'Rail User's Express' produced by Railfuture, I reproduce below the rail relevant policy proposals

Transport statements from the new government's 34-page "Programme for Government" are set out below:

*The Government believes that a modern transport infrastructure is essential for a dynamic and entrepreneurial economy, as well as to improve well-being and quality of life. We need to make the transport sector greener and more sustainable, with tougher emission standards and support for new transport technologies.*

*We will mandate a national recharging network for electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles.*

*We will grant longer rail franchises in order to give operators the incentive to invest in the improvements passengers want – like better services, better stations, longer trains and better rolling stock.*

*We will reform the way decisions are made on which transport projects to prioritise, so that the benefits of low carbon proposals (including light rail schemes) are fully recognised.*

*We will make Network Rail more accountable to its customers.*

*We will establish a high speed rail network as part of our programme of measures to fulfil our joint ambitions for creating a low carbon economy.*

*Our vision is of a truly national high speed rail network for the whole of Britain. Given financial constraints, we will have to achieve this in phases.*

*We support Crossrail and further electrification of the rail network.*

*We will turn the rail regulator into a powerful passenger champion. We will support sustainable travel initiatives, including the promotion of cycling and walking, and will encourage joint working between bus operators and local authorities.*

*We are committed to fair pricing for rail travel.*

MARPA are interested to see how the above aspirations are put into practice.

## **RAILFUTURE**

A note that may be of interest, particularly to new members. Marpa is an affiliated member of the nationwide organisation Railfuture, which in fact was, many years ago, instrumental in setting up Marpa and many other Rail Users' Groups. Marpa members who wish to support the interests of rail users generally are always welcome to become also members of Railfuture. If you wish to join, the National Membership Secretary David Harby can be contacted at 6 Carral Close, Brant Road, Lincoln LN5 9BD or [membership@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:membership@railfuture.org.uk) If anyone would just like more information about Railfuture they are welcome to contact the East Anglian Branch Membership Secretary Clara Zilahi 31 Wimbotsham Road, Dowham Market, PE38 9PE [clara.zilahi@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:clara.zilahi@railfuture.org.uk)

Railfuture is holding a meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> December in Bury St Edmunds, further information from the contacts above.

## **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

A reminder to renew your subscription for this year if you have not already done so.

## **WEB SITE REMINDER**

A further reminder to visit/use our website [www.marpa.org.uk](http://www.marpa.org.uk)