

To Stansted airport by rail

By Trevor Garrod

More than 50 people attended this RDS-organised conference *Stansted Airport - A Transport Hub for the East*.

The event at Marks Tey Hotel, Colchester included representatives of local authorities, the Government Office for Eastern England, the regional tourist board, Air Transport Users Council and the private sector, as well as delegates from voluntary bodies, local rail users' associations, Friends of the Earth and the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

Two local MPs, Tory Bernard Jenkin and Labour's Alan Hurst, addressed the conference. Mr Jenkin commended Anglia Railways for their initiative in introducing a rail-air coach link between Colchester station and the airport, but questioned how viable a rail link would be.

Mr Hurst urged campaigners to lobby bodies like the Regional Development Agency, arguing that new residential development in the area would strengthen the case for a Braintree-Stansted rail link.

John Lamb, surface access manager of BAA Stansted stressed that, while Stansted was part of the London airport system, it also provided great opportunities for East Essex and East Anglia. He said there was spare capacity in the rail station built as part of Stansted airport.

Jonathan Chatfield of West



IT CAN BE DONE: This is the new Arlanda Express which serves the airport 26 miles from the Swedish capital of Stockholm. The new rail link to Arlanda airport opened in the summer of 1999. The project involved British companies Alstom and John Mowlem which also have a share in the private finance consortium which will operate the rail link for the next 45 years. The Arlanda Link involved building 13 miles of twin railway track and tunnels, some through solid rock, and three underground stations. It was constructed in an area of dense traffic. A shuttle service as well as inter-city and regional trains serve the airport. Seven 125mph four-car electric trains were built by Alstom, the bodysells in Barcelona, and bogies coming from France. Assembly was at Metro-Cammell's works in Birmingham. Stansted eat your heart out.

Anglia Great Northern was very upbeat about his company's plans to increase to 30% the number of air passengers travelling to and from the airport by train, making their service as easy as possible to use.

For example, passengers flying into Stansted by Ryanair can now buy their train ticket to London while still in the air.

Clive Tilley of Central Trains reported that his company's service from the Midlands into

Stansted was enjoying a 12% growth each month and Central was cooperating with BAA and key airlines in joint marketing initiatives.

Rufus Boyd of Railtrack explained how the West Anglia route modernisation would tackle bottlenecks and improve Stansted-Liverpool Street capacity. He considered this a higher priority than new railways at the present time.

Paula Whitney of Friends of the

Earth said, if we were serious about reducing pollution, the rail alternative to new roads in Essex must be considered.

A Braintree-Stansted link would not just serve the airport, it would also enable many people from Essex to travel to the Midlands, North of England and Scotland avoiding London.

For a full report, send £1.50 (payable to RDS East Anglia) to Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ.

Hub with only one rail spoke

By John Lucy

Although the recent RDS conference reported above some speakers declined to address the issue of Stansted as a transport hub, instead concentrating entirely on the movement of airline passengers.

Despite the Railtrack representative's relegation of a Stansted-Braintree rail link to the third division of priorities, the prospects for a new rail link in fact seem far from dismal. BAA

expects airline passengers at Stansted to increase from eight million a year to 15 million by 2006. Also, there are now 8,000 people working at the airport and the number is rising.

In the immediate future, WAGN proposes to operate four trains an hour each way to Liverpool Street, with the prospect of a further two trains per hour to and from Stratford. Additionally, Central Trains operates hourly services.

Current access to the airport is via a single-track tunnel with a capacity of 12 trains per hour. It is likely to be fully used before long and what happens when major maintenance is needed? The airport operates seven days a week, round the clock.

One solution would be to build a further tunnel and elaborate the triangular junction with the Cambridge line - estimated at £20 million.

Another approach would be to connect up with Braintree, thus allowing an alternative route, via Chelmsford and Witham, from both Stratford and Liverpool Street.

It would also provide a new rail route for Colchester and Ipswich, thus reducing congestion on the A120 road and bringing other benefits such as reconnecting Dunmow where many of the extra airport workers are expected to live.

When Stansted airport was

built, the tracks and platforms were designed to provide through-running to the east as a possible connection with Braintree, a link currently estimated at £42 million.

Apart from the convenience of airport passengers and workers, the Braintree connection would allow a substantial population in Essex use of Central Trains' services to the Midlands and beyond. These extra passengers would make trains viable at times when airport traffic alone might not justify such frequencies, and make not only the Braintree connection (to the east) but also a second tunnel (to the west of the airport) financially feasible.

With some of the present bus services to Stansted being inconvenient and unreliable, and the limited car parking at the airport, a Braintree rail link would indeed make Stansted a public transport hub for the East.

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