

# 75 per cent of people in Bedford support East West Rail, new survey shows

February 23, 2024



Three-quarters (75 per cent) of people in Bedford support a new east-west rail service – which **East West Rail (EWR)** will provide – a new survey shows.

The poll of 1,000 people – deemed by polling experts as a robust and accurate sample size – shows a huge number of people in Bedford believe a project like EWR will bring many benefits.

Asked about the impact of a new, frequent rail service from Bedford to Cambridge, Cambourne, Milton Keynes and Oxford, the survey found:

- 80 per cent believe it will improve access to jobs
- 75 per cent say it will boost access to education
- 78 per cent believe it will improve access to essential public services like hospitals
- 83 per cent say it will improve how people can travel around the area
- 58 per cent believe it will make it easier to visit family and friends

Beth West, CEO, EWR Company, said: “This new survey is strong testament to the support that Bedford

residents have for East West Rail and underpins how the project will bring such game-changing benefits to the local community.

“East West Rail has been designed to improve quality of life for everyone across the region. What this poll shows is that Bedford residents agree that EWR will do that by improving people’s access to quality jobs, educational opportunities and public services. We believe the route we have chosen, which connects the town centre and Bedford Hospital, is the one that will deliver the most benefits for Bedford. It’s clear from this survey that people do recognise the opportunities our line will bring.

“It’s important that a major transport project like ours has support from people who live and work in the town. We always thought this to be the case and now have strong evidence to back this up. We will continue to work hard with local businesses and communities in Bedford to ensure East West Rail improves their everyday lives, which includes working closely with local transport providers to maximise the potential of local and regional services.”

Richard Tunnicliffe, Regional Director, CBI, said: “New infrastructure can bring major benefits to businesses and help fuel local economies, so it’s vital that towns like Bedford and the businesses there get the transport connections they need so they can prosper.

“East West Rail will be key driver of economic prosperity in Bedford, providing businesses with the confidence to invest in the area with the prospect of greater connectivity, giving greater accessibility to more trade and a larger labour market. This project can only be a good thing for Bedford and we look forward to its many benefits becoming a reality.”

Suzanna Austin, Development Manager, FSB (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire), said: “Locally we are aligned with most people polled in this survey and support East West Rail in connecting Bedford to Cambridge. This connection will benefit the local business community with a much-needed modern rail infrastructure.

“Many businesses in the Bedford area currently suffer with the lack of connectivity, hampering their efforts to grow. This sustainable transport project has been a long time coming and by reforging this old connection, will aid in revitalising the local economy, increasing footfall and improving prosperity, all of which will bring a major boost to small businesses.”

East West Rail will provide significant benefits for Bedford. These include improvements to Bedford Midland station, which will drive regeneration of the area around the station and the town centre, and relocating Bedford St Johns station closer to Bedford Hospital, which will improve access for patients, visitors and staff.

The Marston Vale Line will see a three-fold increase in services, which will help boost the local economy, while EWR will make Bedford just 35 minutes away from Cambridge, creating business collaboration, expansion and job opportunities.

The new survey follows a rallying call in December by Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce who urged Government to accelerate full delivery of East West Rail. The Chamber said EWR is vital to revitalise the

town centre as a dynamic hub with better connectivity which will create jobs, boost inward investment and create a more attractive shopping, leisure and hospitality destination.

*Photo credit: East West Rail*