

## Press Release

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### **Work starts to complete design for East West Rail**

Milton Keynes Partnership (MKP) and the East West Rail Consortium (EWRC) have commissioned work to complete the design for the western section of East West Rail. Known as Guidance on Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) 4, this project will include a fully developed operating and business case and will be completed by December 2009.

Atkins Consultancy has been awarded the contract to provide a fully costed outline design of the civil and railway engineering infrastructure that is needed to run trains between Oxford and Milton Keynes and Aylesbury to Milton Keynes. A further review of existing train services between Bletchley and Bedford is also anticipated in order to improve connections to Bedford.

John Lewis, Chief Executive of Milton Keynes Partnership, said: "Over the next 12 months we're aiming to develop a robust funding strategy in co-operation with local planning and transport authorities, the South East England Regional Assembly and SEEDA to secure a significant proportion of the cost of the capital scheme through private sector contributions. We also want to develop this scheme by working in collaboration with the rail industry and our recently signed agreements with Chiltern Railways and Network Rail are a good example of this."

Consultation with key stakeholders will be an important part of the next phase particularly with regard to station locations, station improvements and the potential impact of the two proposed eco-towns in Weston Otmoor or North West Bicester and Marston Vale.

An additional design development work package to look at the implications of maximising the route capacity is included in the technical brief for this stage of the project. It will also help to better understand what would be needed to ensure that the route can accommodate freight services in the future. This work is being carried out in cooperation with the rail industry and funds for this have been requested from both Department for Transport (DfT) Rail and Network Rail.

The first phase of the programme should be completed by April 2009 at which point a review will be conducted with DfT Rail and Network Rail so that an agreement can be reached on a single option to take forward to GRIP Stage 4.

More news on the project can be found online at [www.eastwestrail.org.uk](http://www.eastwestrail.org.uk).

**ENDS**

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