

Strategic Transport Forum

21st September 2018

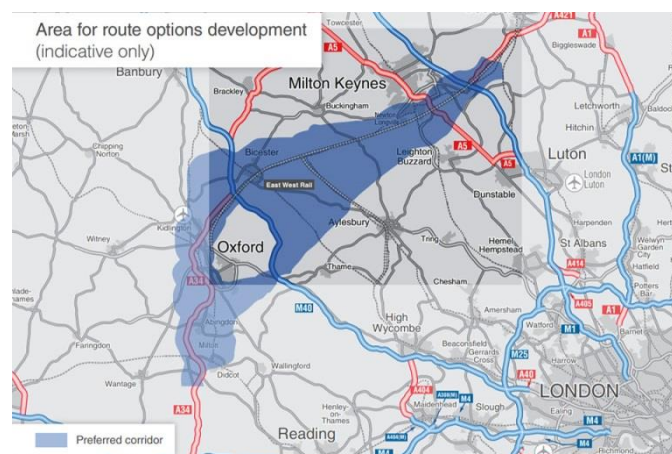
Agenda Item 3: Expressway and Connectivity Study

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Forum:

- a) Note the update on the “Expressway”, including the recent announcement of the preferred corridor choice for the section of the Expressway between Oxford and Milton Keynes.
- b) Endorse the proposed operating model for taking forward the Connectivity Study.

1. Context – The “Expressway”

- 1.1. An announcement on the preferred corridor for the section of the ‘expressway’ corridor between Oxford and Milton Keynes was made on Wednesday 12 September.
- 1.2. The announcement, made by Transport Minister Jesse Norman, stated that Corridor B had been selected because it was “able to support existing transport needs, as well as transformational growth, regeneration and redevelopment across the wider corridor”. Highways England reported that the corridor chosen would provide a southern bypass to Milton Keynes, with the aim of reducing congestion and supporting its continued growth”. By aligning the corridor choice with East West Rail, Highways England also stated that the road would allow for better integration between transport modes.



- 1.3. Options for the corridor choice around Oxford remain open, with options available to the east and west of the city. Highways England are keen to examine options for the route around Oxford further, to further explore environmental mitigation options and to take more evidence from local people.
- 1.4. However, Highways England’s work to date has ruled out one corridor option (corridor B2) towards the north east of Oxford. In Corridor B2, Highways England reported that the

environmental impacts around the Horspath and Wheatley areas were substantially more difficult to overcome and that there remained some major constraints to development of a route, including the Otmoor Nature Reserve.

- 1.5. Highways England is now moving the project into its next phase. Route options will be developed for public consultation in autumn 2019, with a Preferred Route Announcement planned for autumn 2020. Highways England has committed to continue its work with stakeholders during this next phase.

2. A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet

- 2.1. The announcement of the corridor choice for the Expressway between Oxford and Milton Keynes reinforced the need for a continued focus on the delivery of other priority schemes that form part of the expressway corridor.
- 2.2. Highways England's recent announcement in a delay to the delivery of the Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet scheme (with construction now scheduled for 2021/22) was extremely disappointing.
- 2.3. The scheme is a litmus test of the confidence that residents and businesses can place on ensuring investment in the corridor is delivered on time, which in turn is a key influencer in the level of support that local residents have for Government wider growth ambitions.
- 2.4. The date change for construction of the scheme is reported to allow the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon scheme to be completed before construction starts, and also to enable a more informed decision in conjunction with the progress and outputs to date of the A1 East of England Strategic Study. A preferred route announcement for the scheme is expected in late 2018.
- 2.5. The A428 scheme is one of 6 schemes identified in the Heartland's submission to Government ahead of the Budget on which action is being sought. In this particular instance the Secretary of State for Transport is asked to apply the same level of Ministerial commitment in support of the scheme as is being applied to the delivery of East West Rail project.
- 2.6. In the latter case the weight of the Ministerial office is being applied to ensure the earliest possible delivery of East West Rail. The submission to Government calls for a similar level of Ministerial commitment in support of the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet.

3. Connectivity Study

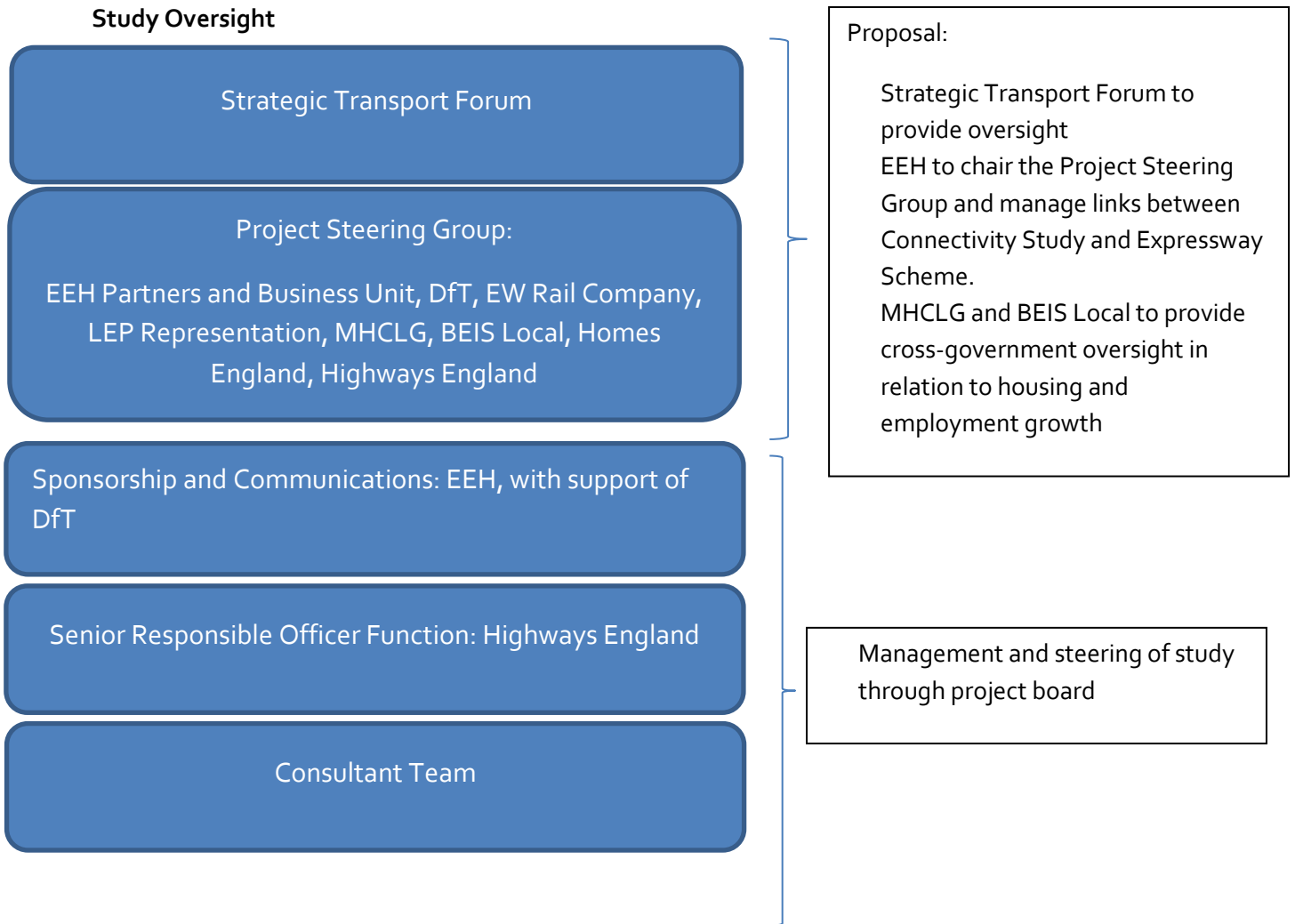
- 3.1. The EEH Business Unit has been working with officials from both the DfT and Highways England to take forward the 'connectivity study' that was announced in the Autumn Budget 2017.
- 3.2. The outline of the commissioning model for the study is shown in Diagram One. The expectation is that the Strategic Transport Forum will form the oversight body for the project, building on the principles for the Connectivity Study, agreed by the Strategic Transport Forum in March 2018 (see Annex 1).
- 3.3. Timelines are being refined but the intention is to have the study commissioned in the autumn, with an initial output from it available in spring 2019, and a final output available in summer 2019.

- 3.4. The timeline is important. In summer 2019 the Strategic Transport Forum will be asked to submit its recommendations for the first 5-year investment programme for the Major Road Network – this follows the Forum’s agreement at the previous meeting to submit two packages of proposals to the Government for consideration as ‘early entries’.
- 3.5. It is likely that the output from the connectivity study will identify a number of issues requiring attention and for which proposals will need to be developed. As with the approach adopted for the Roads Investment Strategy (delivered by Highways England), it is appropriate to identify schemes for development as part of the investment pipeline.
- 3.6. It is also important to bear in mind that a Spending Review is expected at some point during 2019. The output from the connectivity study, along with the work on the overarching Transport Strategy will form part of the evidence base on which the Heartland partners build their case for submission to Government.

Naomi Green
Head of Technical Programme
September 2018

DIAGRAM ONE

PROPOSED COMMISSIONING AND DESIGN MODEL FOR CONNECTIVITY STUDY



Annex 1 - Connectivity Study: Draft Principles

1. The connectivity study will form an input into the development of the overarching Transport Strategy.
2. The objectives for the study will be developed within the framework provided by the objectives for the overarching Transport Strategy.
3. The study will consider the strategic issues for the transport system supporting England's Economic Heartland for the time period upto 2050.
4. In order to consider how communities not on the 'expressway' itself can still benefit from it, the study will need to consider issues across the study area for the 'expressway' – i.e. from M4 Junction 13 across the Heartland to M11 Junction 14.
5. In considering the issues across the study area it will be appropriate to consider wider linkages – e.g. in considering connectivity along the A34 corridor between Didcot and Oxford it will also be necessary to consider the role of the A420 between Swindon and Oxford and the role of the rail corridor between Didcot and Oxford.
6. In considering the linkages between the 'expressway' and the wider highway network, the study will need to take into consideration:
 - Committed improvements to the Strategic Road Network set out within the current Roads Investment Strategy
 - The output from other Highways England led strategic studies – specifically A1(M) Corridor and M25 South West Quadrant
 - East West Rail – including the need for improved connectivity to/from rail stations along the rail corridor
 - The output of relevant Network Rail Route Strategies
7. In considering future connectivity requirements the study will consider the implications for future travel patterns and travel need arising from:
 - The transformational impact of delivering the 'multi-modal spine'
 - The implications of the digital economy and further development of digital infrastructure
 - The development of new business models for transport use and services

Use will be made of 'policy scenarios' to explore the implications of these and any other relevant factors.
8. The development of policy scenarios will build upon the regional evidence database assembled by the Forum.