



# Strategic Transport Forum

24<sup>th</sup> January 2020

## Agenda Item 5 – Local Connectivity

*Recommendation:*

**It is recommended that the meeting:**

- a) Considers and comments on the conclusions of the EEH first mile last mile study, which explored the potential for a user-centred transport system across the Heartland**
- b) Identify what additional ambitions are required to achieve improvements in urban and rural mobility across the Heartland, including how we can best support a pan-regional high performing bus network.**

### **1. Overview**

- 1.1. The scale of transformative growth in the Heartland, and the strategic ambition for the region (as captured in the Transport Strategy vision and principles) provides a once in a generation opportunity to embed internationally recognised first mile last mile connectivity principles into our investment decision making frameworks.
- 1.2. The region's economic potential, shaped in an environment of innovation, coupled with the requirement to achieve a net zero carbon transport network and the high propensity of so many Heartland residents to make sustainable travel choices provides a unique situation that enables a bold approach to future transport connectivity. A high quality, multimodal first mile last mile offer that offers genuine choice is fundamental to achieving the change required to meet our strategic ambition. As important, is the potential that a bold approach provides in terms of supporting business productivity and growth, as well as being a catalyst for new operating models that can be exported.
- 1.3. New forms of technology, new mobility models, and advances in data require a strategic approach to their planning and delivery. England's Economic Heartland has been charged with championing the region's connectivity aspirations, and in doing so, creating a network of accessible, inclusive places which connects communities to amenities through friction free transport.
- 1.4. Sustainable connectivity improvements along key corridors have the potential to transform travel patterns and deliver planned growth in ways that are transformational by expanding access to labour markets for business and increasing opportunities for our people. Journeys by public transport should 'break the mould' of traditional, radial, north south routes, and consider how orbital, east-west connections can rebalance economies and provide viable alternatives to motorised transport.
- 1.5. Heartland residents and businesses require transport choices that are an attractive and viable means of assuring end-end access for a range of journeys – not just the traditional commute to work focus of traditional approaches. Part of the way must be achieved through a strategic approach to the 'first-last mile' element of daily journeys.

## **2. First Mile Last Mile Study Commission**

- 2.1. To achieve the ambition for First Mile Last Mile provision across the Heartland, the Forum has previously recognised the need to develop a richer understanding as to the impact that personal behaviour, and the nature and density of the place have on travel choices within the region.
- 2.2. As a result, EEH Business Unit commissioned a study to analyse the role that a strategic approach could play, and make recommendations on how this might fit within the work of an STB. The work was to be taken forward working with its partners and sought to identify the strategic opportunities for realising improved first/last mile connectivity.
- 2.3. As part of this work we have reviewed the existing movement and place based characteristics within the Heartland and their conduciveness to different models of first mile last mile solutions.
- 2.4. The commission also included a global best practice review that can inform the work of England's Economic Heartland and its partners. The Heartland is at the heart of the UK's science and technology based innovation and has the potential to be a key to achieving a world-class approach to improved local connectivity.
- 2.5. With access to international best practice, including high quality design standards in spatial form, urban design, location and density, the Heartland is well placed to create the right infrastructure templates based on local need that will provide people with choice to make smarter decisions.
- 2.6. The principles that have defined the study are:
  - Building on the ambition for responding to need, the project has adopted a people, place and connectivity approach, rather than traditional approach of mode and movements.
  - The place descriptions within the study are defined by density and connectivity rather than the traditional approach of size of place.
  - The final outcome does not categorise places in the Heartland, but instead provide a data-driven mix of communities, from which individual partners can diagnose their own place typology and identify comparison locations within the region.
  - First Last mile solutions have been mapped to both place typologies (defined by connectivity and density) as well as the types of people living there (defined by their personas). Adopting two tiers of analysis provides more outcome benefits to partners.
  - Partners can use the evidence to consider the right first last mile solutions and their market potential based on typology (town centre, suburb, rural village, business parks) and demographic profile.

## **3. Next Steps**

- 3.1. The Forum is invited to consider and comment on the conclusions of the study, as presented to the Forum during the meeting.
- 3.2. Alongside development of the toolkit and best practice review, England's Economic Heartland is proposing to work with partners to identify a series of pilot locations in which to apply innovative First Mile Last Mile thinking and explore the most effective application of the toolkit in specific locations.
- 3.3. Working with the staff and funding resources available, pilots will be developed in a staged approach. EEH Business Unit is currently working with Government to explore the potential, and funding available to support the development of pilots in this way.

## **4. The role of local buses in enabling pan-regional connectivity**

- 4.1. Forum Members will be aware of the significant role that local bus services play in providing local connectivity.



- 4.2. Across the Heartland region, there are areas that are enjoying growth in the bus sector and, alongside that, continuing to strengthen relationships with bus operators in a way that will ensure a more sustainable future for bus in their areas.
- 4.3. Given the pan-regional nature of journeys within the Heartland area, exploring the way that England's Economic Heartland as an STB can best support the bus as a mode is a key consideration in taking forward our work on first mile last mile.
- 4.4. In July 2018, the EEH Bus Operators Association was formed to allow bus operators from across the region to collaborate with England's Economic Heartland over our long term planning of the transport system.
- 4.5. The England's Economic Heartland Bus Operator's Association includes Stagecoach, Arriva, Oxford Bus Company, Thames Travel, Carousel Buses, City Sightseeing (Oxford), Go South Coast, Centrebus, Grant Palmer and UNO bus.
- 4.6. The creation of the Association has ensured that this Forum benefits from the strategic perspective of the bus operators informing its work. In addition, the collaboration of bus operators marks a real commitment to improve transport users' choice and journey experience.
- 4.7. The EEH Bus Operators Association has been invited to provide a short presentation on the potential role for bus in delivering the First Mile Last Mile ambitions of the Heartland region.

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