



# **Strategic Transport Forum**

19<sup>th</sup> June 2020

## **Agenda Item 6: Draft Transport Strategy - Launch and Consultation Process**

*Recommendation:*

**It is recommended that the Forum:**

- a) Considers and agrees the proposed communications approach to the launch of the draft Transport Strategy**
- b) Agrees the proposed approach to the consultation on the draft Transport Strategy**

### **1. Context**

- 1.1. The draft Transport Strategy will be published in digital form for consultation on 14<sup>th</sup> July. It will be a major milestone for England's Economic Heartland, demonstrating our long term ambition for a decarbonised transport system that puts the user at the centre of our decision making.
- 1.2. A series of further documents will be published alongside the Transport Strategy, including the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (for consultation); a summary of the EEH Regional Evidence Base and a suite of technical reports (such as the Pathways to Decarbonisation report and the Passenger Rail Study Phase 1 report).
- 1.3. To support the launch of the strategy, a wide-ranging communications plan is being produced with two central aims:
  - To raise understanding of both England's Economic Heartland and the draft Transport Strategy
  - To encourage people to take part in the consultation
- 1.4. The communications plan reflects the current context with COVID-19 and social distancing, with a focus on meaningful online information and engagement.

### **2. Strategy Launch – 14<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

- 2.1. A 60 minute webinar will be held on the day of launch: this will be a public event and therefore open to all. The webinar will be used to highlight key aspects of the strategy: in this it will focus on the vision, the key principles and the need to transform our transport system in order to realise the region's economic potential and achieve net environmental gain (including the need to achieve net zero carbon emission no later than 2050).
- 2.2. The Webinar will be chaired by the Chair of the Strategic Transport Forum, supported by the Programme Director and with a panel of invited guests drawn from EEH partners.
- 2.3. In addition, launch day will be marked by the release of short online videos from both the Chair of the Strategic Transport Forum, and the Chairman of England's Economic Heartland. The videos will cover:

- How the strategy presents a policy framework that is focused on harnessing the inherent strengths of the region as a means of addressing our transport challenges
  - The importance of Heartland region to the UK's economic recovery, and the crucial role that investment in transport infrastructure, together with digital infrastructure, has to play in enabling that to happen
  - Encouraging people to take part in the consultation.
- 2.4. Supporting communications actions will be carried out on the day to raise the profile of the strategy and consultation including: the release of an e-newsletter, social media posts and a news release targeted at national, regional and local media as well as industry media, and letters sent to a wide range of stakeholders.

### **3. Consultation**

- 3.1. The Cities and Devolution Act which created Sub-national Transport Bodies stipulates that in preparing a Transport Strategy, an STB must carry out a formal public consultation.
- 3.2. The draft Transport Strategy consultation will last 12 weeks, ending at midnight on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2020. In parallel, EEH will be seeking views on the proposal to seek statutory status for the Sub-national Transport Body (the framework for which was agreed by the Forum at its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> May). The draft Integrated Sustainability Appraisal will also undergo a 12-week consultation at the same time; this will be overseen by our consultants, WSP in order to maintain its independence.
- 3.3. The EEH Business Unit has been working with the Consultation and Engagement Lead at Buckinghamshire Council (as EEH's accountable body) to ensure best practice is followed with regards to the consultation approach and survey questions.
- 3.4. An online survey will be accessible from the EEH website. The survey will contain a small number of questions that will measure the degree to which respondents agree with the strategy's approach. There will also be space for freeform feedback in responses.
- 3.5. The consultation being developed builds on England's Economic Heartland's already positive and collaborative ethos in terms of engagement. The Outline Transport Strategy engagement phase during 2019 provided the ideal starting point for shaping and developing the draft Transport Strategy. In addition, EEH's creation of an Influencers' Group of external stakeholders has meant we have had continuous advice and scrutiny from a 'critical friend' throughout the development phase of the draft Transport Strategy.
- 3.6. All stakeholders are encouraged to give their feedback via the online survey. Where appropriate, the EEH team will welcome the opportunity to make presentations on the strategy or have one-to-one engagement. In addition, the Business Unit will hold a number of virtual meetings and/or Q&A sessions throughout the consultation period to provide the opportunity for further engagement.
- 3.7. There will be a wide range of communications activity throughout (and during the run-up to) the consultation period aimed at increasing consultation responses, including regular blogs, videos, newsletters, social media posts and news releases.

#### *Website*

- 3.8. During our period of engagement on the Outline Transport Strategy in 2019, the EEH website recorded a 137% increase in hits during the engagement compared to the same period in 2018. The Outline Transport Strategy document was viewed online nearly 4,000 times.
- 3.9. With COVID-19 limiting opportunities for physical meetings and public events, the website will become an even more important resource for information.
- 3.10. A dedicated website page will contain the suite of Transport Strategy documents and the consultation survey. It will aim to have the feel of a 'virtual drop-in event', breaking down information by topic and featuring videos from the EEH Business Unit explaining the background to the various aspects of the strategy and technical studies. This approach will ensure we are able to maintain interest and engagement.

#### **4. Annual conference**

- 4.1. Forum members will recall that the EEH annual regional conference was due to be held on 14<sup>th</sup> July in Luton. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a decision was taken to postpone the conference until 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020.
- 4.2. However given the on-going uncertainty regarding large public gatherings it is now planned that the conference will be organised as a virtual event. The launch event for the draft Transport Strategy on the 14<sup>th</sup> July and the 15<sup>th</sup> September virtual conference are being developed as a package, with the themes and content complementing one another.
- 4.3. The September virtual conference will take place during the consultation period, and will build on the key themes of the draft Transport Strategy, while also featuring speakers offering insight to the wider opportunities and challenges in the region.

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