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Date: 30 December 2020

UNION CONNECTIVITY REVIEW – CALL FOR EVIDENCE

England's Economic Heartland (EEH) brings together political and business leaders in a pan-regional strategic partnership, with a focus on the planning, development and delivery of strategic infrastructure. It is the Sub-national Transport Body for the region. Its membership stretches from Swindon to Cambridgeshire and from Northamptonshire to Hertfordshire, and includes the area identified by Government as the Oxford to Cambridge Arc.

Our location at the heart of England places a unique importance on the quality and reliability of our strategic connections with neighbouring regions and the rest of the UK. Historically our principal transport arteries run north to south providing strong links to London, the Midlands and the north of England. Our transport network performs a nationally significant role in enabling flows of people and goods to reach centres of economic activity and population. The region acts a gateway to much of the UK and subsequently the operational resilience and capacity of our road, rail and air links is integral to the UK economy.

EEH shares coterminous borders with four Sub-national Transport Bodies, plus Transport for London. We enjoy strong collaboration with these bodies and all seven STBs to collaborate on cross-border connectivity issues of wider national interest. A key advantage of working regionally lies in the ability to align essential transport investment that can deliver transformational change across multiple economic geographies, in doing so driving the levelling up agenda.

Assessing the need for cross-border connectivity

EEH's ambition is:

'To support sustainable growth and improve quality of life and wellbeing through a world-class, decarbonised transport system which harnesses the region's global expertise in technology and innovation to unlock new opportunities for residents, businesses and the UK as a whole'.

EEH's Transport Strategy sets out the policy framework that enables that ambition to be realised. It also identifies the infrastructure requirements that are essential to lead a green economic recovery whilst meeting the requirement for net-zero carbon as early as possible. It identifies how improvements in strategic connectivity are essential to raise productivity and maximise business, leisure and employment opportunities. In developing the investment pipeline, we recognise that improvements to regional connectivity will stimulate economic growth and quality of life beyond our geography and across large parts of the UK.

The radial nature of the Heartland's road and rail network has its genesis in the historical need to serve London and these corridors continue to provide an essential movement function for journeys to/from the capital. In recent decades, corridors such as the A34, M1 (Junction 13 north), M40 (north of Oxford) and the A1 corridor have become significant conduits of freight either originating or destined for national distribution centres in the Midlands that serve the

whole of the UK. The logistical significance to the UK of the 'Golden Triangle of Logistics' coupled with an increase in intermodal freight has seen the importance of resolving constraints along the route between Felixstowe and the Midlands/North grow. Traffic along this section of railway is set to rise and so investing in the removal of bottlenecks is essential to provide direct access to other parts of the Union as part of a pan-UK supply chain. These interventions will reduce the carbon intensity of freight and help relieve London's rail network capacity.

EEH supports the need for new and improved transport links between the nations of the UK. Whilst it is unclear how the UK will change post CV-19 and leaving the European Union, one constant is the need to produce, trade and supply goods. One potential scenario is an increase in the domestic movement of goods and services spurred on by a shift to nearshoring/reshoring manufacture and a rise in e-commerce. However, even in this scenario it will continue to be important to invest in the strategic connectivity to/from the UK ports that act as global gateways – in particular the ports of Felixstowe, Southampton and London Gateway.

Further, despite the rise in more flexible working patterns as part of the country's response to CV-19, there remains a need to invest in strategic physical connectivity to unlock sustainable growth, connect labour to markets, provide connections to supply chains and support education and training. Investment in multi-nation transport links will help provide the agglomeration of ideas and economies which are essential in responding to this economic uncertainty.

Opportunities for improved transport connectivity between the nations of the UK

The delivery of East West Rail provides the over-riding opportunity to transform strategic connectivity not just for this region, but for large parts of the UK.

Across the Heartland what was previously a series of individual economic and housing market areas will become one. The core focus for the East West Main Line is to achieve a step-change in east-west connectivity, linking Ipswich and Norwich with Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Oxford and beyond that towards Swindon and onwards to Bristol and South Wales.

However the benefits of the East West Main Line is not limited to improved connectivity along the spine of the route, but extends to create new travel opportunities where the railway crosses the historic (radial) main line routes. Realisation of the scheme's full potential will create opportunities for new multi-national freight and passenger flows. Plants in South Wales producing steel for destinations in the East Midlands could utilise an East West Main Line to avoid routing via Birmingham-Leicester and containerised traffic bound for Daventry Rail Freight Interchange (which serves the Scottish market) originating from the port of Southampton or Felixstowe could route directly through Oxford in the west or Cambridge in the east, avoiding London.

Maximising the potential of a new East West Main Line will act as a catalyst for a step-change in longer-distance travel for people and commodities that are not located on the core route. Passengers are brought within one interchange of destinations in Scotland, by changing at Milton Keynes or Peterborough for high-speed services serving Edinburgh and Glasgow or Swindon serving Cardiff. Though each section of East West Rail brings with it an improved connectivity offer, the full transformational benefit will only be realised through the delivery of all three sections that create the East West Main Line.

International connectivity will remain essential to connect businesses with global markets and attract inward investment. The Heartland has some the world's most important airports located in or near its border that are strategically significant to the UK economy. Luton Airport located in the region is a focus for European services and a key hub for private business aviation services. Heathrow Airport located just outside the region is the UK's global hub airport and a key gateway for business travellers, Stansted is one of Europe's fastest growing major airports.

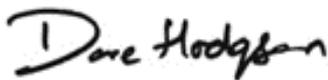
As the aviation industry recovers, the UK's departure of the European Union will place a newfound importance on these global gateways; connecting the union economically and enabling trade links to be established domestically and internationally. Any increase in airport



throughput must be matched by infrastructure schemes that provide a step-change in sustainable surface access connectivity, epitomised by the Western Rail Access to Heathrow scheme. EEH supports public and private sector investment to decarbonise the aviation industry and the recently established Jet Zero Council as a vehicle that will drive the delivery of new technologies to cut aviation emissions.

EEH support plans to develop a national strategic transport network to replace the European Trans-European Transport Network. A national transport network would ensure that connectivity gaps are addressed, and investment targeted at removing strategic pinch-points whilst aligning investment to strengthen economic geographies across the union. EEH recommend the Department for Transport work closely with Sub-national Transport bodies and their respective evidence bases to define any such network.

Yours sincerely



Mayor Dave Hodgson
Chair, Strategic Transport Forum