



# **Strategic Transport Leadership Board**

9 December 2021

## **Agenda Item 4**

### **Supporting delivery of rail priorities**

*Recommendation:*

**It is recommended that the Board:**

- a) Agrees to part-fund work to create an evidence-based, regionally-led strategic narrative for East West Rail**
- b) Subject to amendments, agrees to send a letter to the Secretary of State for Transport confirming the region's full support for East West Rail**
- c) Notes the need to continue to press more broadly for rail investment in the region, particularly preparing for Great British Railway's expected call for evidence on a 30-year plan for rail**

#### **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1. To update members on how EEH can further support the case for rail investment in the region, including confirming the region's full support for East West Rail.

#### **2. Key points to note**

- 2.1. Delivery of East West Rail is a fundamental part of EEH's transport strategy.
- 2.2. Current pressures on public funding, along with emerging government priorities such as levelling up means that the case for East West Rail has to continue to be made as strongly as possible.
- 2.3. It is proposed that EEH part-fund work to update and strengthen the evidence-based narrative for East West Rail.
- 2.4. It is also proposed that EEH writes to the Secretary of State for Transport confirming the region's support and commitment to East West Rail.
- 2.5. There is an additional need to continue to invest in the rail network beyond East West Rail. As well as immediate priorities, to be fed in through the Control Period 7 process (underway during 2022), the region should prepare for further engagement with the Great British Railways transition team as they begin developing the 30-year plan for rail. EEH's transport strategy and passenger rail study work means we are well placed to provide the evidence required for a well-considered response.

#### **3. Context**

- 3.1. EEH's agreed transport strategy, published in February 2021, states that poor east-west connectivity acts as a constraint on the Heartland realising its economic potential. Delivery of East West Rail in full is therefore a fundamental policy of the transport strategy and key to the region's growth and decarbonisation ambitions.

- 3.2. The section of East West Rail between Oxford and Bletchley is currently under construction and expected to be operational by 2025. The East West Railway Company is responsible for designing and delivering the next stage of East West Rail to Cambridge.
- 3.3. While the government did not take the opportunity to publicly restate its commitment to East West Rail as part of the Spending Review and Budget, it is expected that funding for the East West Railway Company to continue development of the next phase of East West Rail will be confirmed by the DfT shortly following an internal process of fund allocation.
- 3.4. However, the Spending Review (and subsequent announcements regarding HS2 in the north) do demonstrate the need for continued emphasis and reaffirming of the need to invest in our region.
- 3.5. Current pressures on public sector finances, plus the political commitment to 'levelling up' is making it more necessary to set out the case for delivery of East West Rail in full, and to remind government of the benefits that can be accrued for the region, and the country as a whole, through this investment.
- 3.6. The East West Rail Consortium of local authorities and local enterprise partnerships (now called the East West Main Line Partnership) made the original business case for East West Rail. However, in recent years the impact of East West Rail has been analysed through the lens of 'top down' reports such as 2017's 'Partnering for Prosperity' by the National Infrastructure Commission.

#### **4. Strengthening narrative and showing support**

- 4.1. There is a need for a local and regionally-led piece of work which provides new and updated evidence to re-emphasise the strategic case for East West Rail in full.
- 4.2. EEH and the East West Railway Company are together reviewing the evidence and ensuring the transformational benefits of East West Rail on the region the country are accurate and well defined.
- 4.3. The proposed work will focus on the place-based benefits of East West Rail. This will include the specific benefits of East West Rail on sustainable growth and the economy; its impact on GVA; reducing private car trips/ emissions; and how it will open up new housing and labour markets to parts of the region that were previously geographically out of reach from each other.
- 4.4. If agreed, the work is expected to complete by spring 2022.
- 4.5. In addition, it is also proposed that now is the right time for the Board to write to the Secretary of State for Transport, confirming the region's full support for East West Rail.
- 4.6. The draft letter, for consideration by the Board, also reinforces the region's commitment to maximise the opportunities that East West Rail enables. A copy of the letter is attached at Annex 1.

#### **5. Securing long term investment in the region's railways**

- 5.1. The 'Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail' was published in May 2021. A conclusion of the review was the creation of a new public body, Great British Railways (GBR). GBR is intended to integrate the railways: owning the infrastructure, collecting fare revenue, running and planning the network, and setting most fares and timetables.
- 5.2. Alongside the creation of GBR as a body, there is a commitment that GBR produce a 30-year strategy for rail. The long-term plan will be a key mechanism that ministers will use to set clear direction for the railways in terms of approach and funding.
- 5.3. The Secretary of State has begun this work by commissioning a 'Whole Industry Strategic Plan' that will become the first 30-year strategy. The first strategy will be ready in 2022, with partners across the sector and beyond consulted as it develops.
- 5.4. It is expected that formal engagement on the 30-year plan will begin shortly, with sub-national transport bodies being a key stakeholder.



## 6. Rail Priorities in England's Economic Heartland

- 6.1. EEH is well placed to respond and input into the 30-year plan.
- 6.2. Through the transport strategy and the outputs from its 'Passenger Rail Study', phases one<sup>1</sup> (published July 2020) and two<sup>2</sup> (published July 2021), EEH has a solid, respected evidence base to build on. Both stages of the report were agreed by the Strategic Transport Forum and are published on the EEH website (some copies will also be available for members attending the Board in-person).
- 6.3. One of the core findings of the Phase 1 Passenger Rail Study, was the need for two additional east west corridors where improved public transport connectivity (rail or mass rapid transit on road) would support the delivery of planned economic and housing growth in the region. These were:
  - A northern corridor that links north Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough which provides more direct connectivity across the northern Heartland, potentially by rail
  - A southern corridor that links Buckinghamshire with Hertfordshire and parallels the southern border of the region providing an orbital route of London between the Chiltern Route and West Anglia Main Line, potentially by rail.
- 6.4. Delivery of high quality public transport in these corridors was a policy priority of the transport strategy.

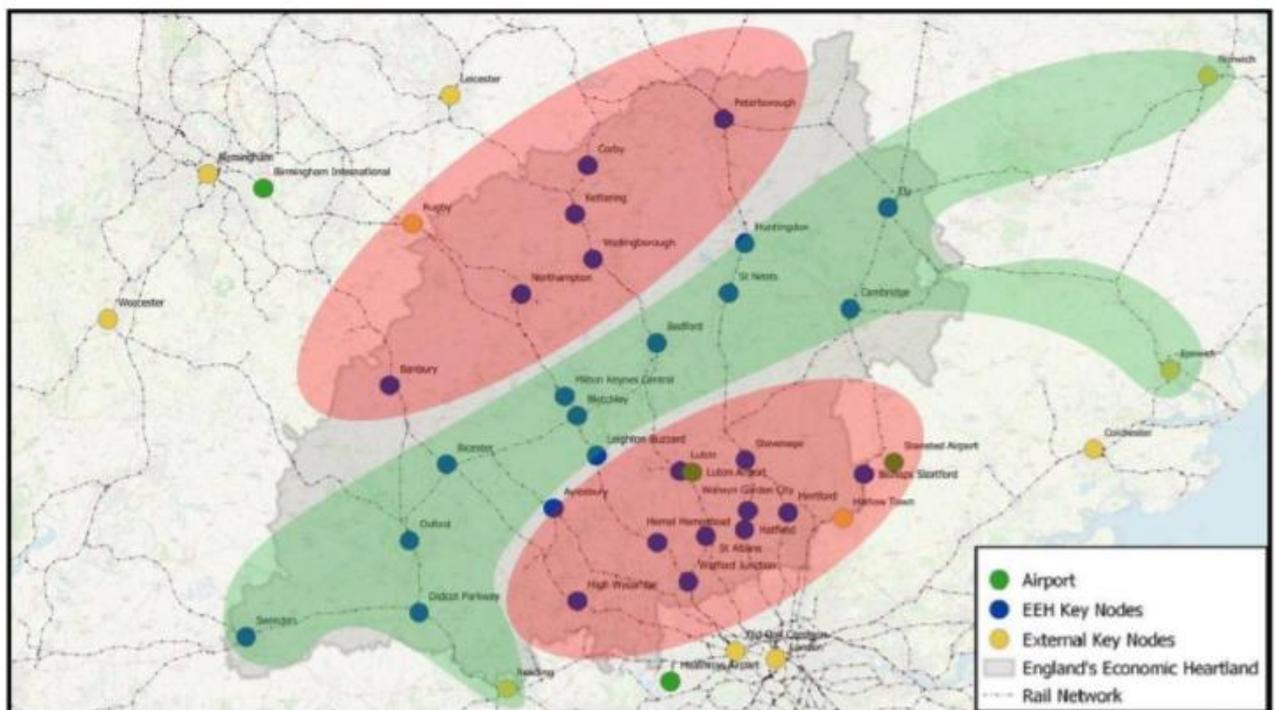


Figure 1 – Key EW Connectivity corridors by public transport

- 6.5. In addition, the passenger rail studies produced in partnership with Network Rail, identified and prescribed aspirational service level outcomes for priority journey pairings across the Heartland. They identified where analysis demonstrated that stronger connectivity by rail could generate a significant return on investment.

<sup>1</sup> [https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Passenger\\_Rail\\_Study\\_Phase\\_One.pdf](https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Passenger_Rail_Study_Phase_One.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/EEH\\_Passenger\\_Rail\\_Study\\_Phase\\_2\\_Report.pdf](https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/EEH_Passenger_Rail_Study_Phase_2_Report.pdf)

- 6.6. The modelling used assumed that East West Rail (Oxford-Cambridge and Aylesbury-Milton Keynes) was in operation. It did not consider flows into and out of London termini. This is to prevent the duplication of Network Rail's London Rail Strategy.
- 6.7. The outputs have provided EEH with an evidence-led assessment of which strategic regional and long-distance journeys have most to gain from an incremental uplift in connectivity. Where applicable, service level targets support existing rail and transport strategies adopted in EEH. The high and medium value flows are illustrated in Figure 2.
- 6.8. The conclusions of the study have reinforced the strengths of the rail network in connecting locations along north-south main lines but falling short of supporting east to west travel unless via interchange at London termini. Travel demand in the Heartland is much more diverse than the radially-focused rail routes into London serve.
- 6.9. The study is serving as the touchstone from which future work and/or business cases development will emerge from to identify precise options for intervention.

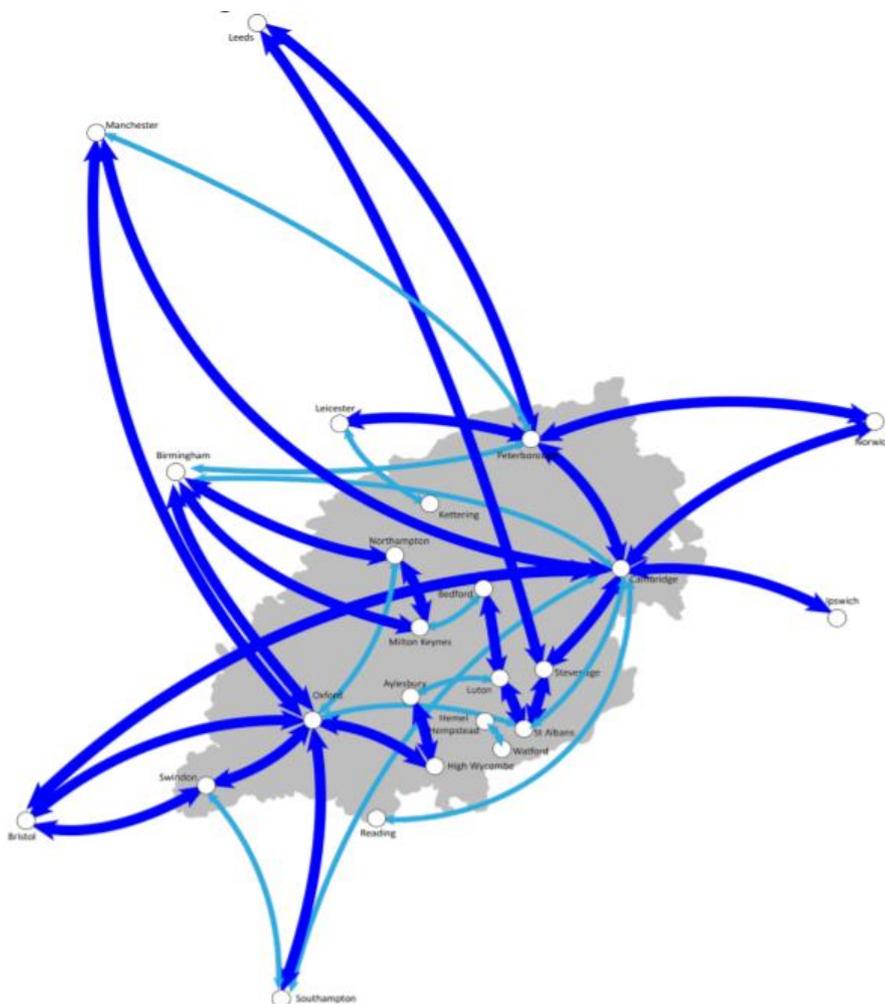


Figure 2 High and Medium Value EEH Flows. Dark blue denotes high value flow and light blue medium value flow

6.10. A summary of regional flows taken forward for consideration as a result of the study is provided in Table 1.

*Table 1: EEH Regional Flows*

<b>Internal EEH Flows</b>	
<b>High Value Flows</b>	<b>Medium Value Flows</b>
Cambridge – Peterborough	Milton Keynes – Bedford
Milton Keynes – Northampton	Watford Junction – Hemel Hempstead
Oxford – High Wycombe	Aylesbury – Luton
St Albans – Luton	Cambridge – St Albans
Oxford – Swindon	Oxford – St Albans
Cambridge – Stevenage	Northampton – Oxford
Aylesbury – High Wycombe	
Bedford – Luton	
St Albans – Stevenage	

6.11. A summary of inter-city flows taken forward for consideration is provided in Table 2 and Table 3.

*Table 2 EEH to Core Cities Flows*

<b>EEH x Core Cities Flows</b>	
<b>High Value Flows</b>	<b>Medium Value Flows</b>
Milton Keynes - Manchester	Peterborough - Leeds
Swindon - Bristol	Watford - Birmingham
Northampton - Birmingham	Watford - Manchester
Milton Keynes - Birmingham	Cambridge - Birmingham
Peterborough - Newcastle	Stevenage - Newcastle
Oxford - Manchester	Peterborough - Manchester
Stevenage - Manchester	Peterborough - Birmingham
Cambridge - Manchester	Cambridge - Leeds
Oxford - Bristol	Cambridge - Newcastle
Cambridge - Bristol	
Stevenage - Leeds	
Oxford - Birmingham	

*Table 3 EEH to External Hubs Flows*

<b>Internal EEH x External Hubs Flows</b>	
<b>High Value Flows</b>	<b>Medium Value Flows</b>
Oxford - Reading	Kettering - Leicester
Cambridge - Norwich	Cambridge - Southampton
Oxford - Southampton	Cambridge - Reading
Swindon - Reading	Peterborough - Ipswich
Peterborough - Norwich	Swindon - Southampton
Cambridge - Ipswich	
Peterborough - Leicester	

6.12. Any submission from EEH towards a long-term plan for rail will make clear the importance of infrastructure planning considering new economic geographies and travel patterns that are increasingly more complex and less radially focused on London. Whilst the legacy of Victorian infrastructure might determine the initial development of GBR, new movement patterns and demand for east-west connectivity in the north, and south and centre of our region requires much greater consideration.

## **7. Stakeholder management**

- 7.1. The Board will be updated on progress with work on the wider case for East West Rail at its next meeting in February 2022. It is envisaged that representatives from the Great British Railways transition team will also give a presentation on work on their 30 year strategic plan at the same meeting.
- 7.2. Officers will be kept informed with ongoing progress with the study work into East West Rail.
- 7.3. The East West Main Line Partnership will receive a briefing on the work at its January meeting.

## **8. Programme implications**

- 8.1. EEH is proposing to joint-fund the work on the evidence-based narrative.
- 8.2. The costs of the work are to be finalised. To manage the project, a small amount of budget will need to be reallocated from elsewhere in the programme. It is proposed that a proportion of funds earmarked for mobility hubs be transferred to this project. Reallocating some funds will allow a smaller programme of work on mobility hubs to take place in 2021/22. Further phases of the mobility hub work will be budgeted for in the 2022/23 programme.

**Adam King**

**9 December 2021**