



Strategic Transport Leadership Board

30 September 2022

11.00 - 13.00

Via Teams

Attendees

CLlr Richard Wenham (Chair)
CLlr Liz Leffman (Vice Chair)
Mayor Dave Hodgson
CLlr Emily Darlington
CLlr Graham Lawman
CLlr Phil Larratt
CLlr Robert Roche
CLlr Lucy Nethsingha
CLlr David Renard
CLlr Steve Broadbent

Leader, Central Bedfordshire Council
Leader, Oxfordshire County Council
Mayor, Bedford Borough Council
Cabinet Member, Milton Keynes Council
Executive Member, North Northamptonshire Council
Cabinet Member, West Northamptonshire Council
Executive Member, Luton Council
Leader, Cambridgeshire County Council
Leader, Swindon Borough Council
Cabinet Member, Buckinghamshire Council

Apologies

CLlr Martin Tett
CLlr Phil Bibby
CLlr Wayne Fitzgerald

Leader, Buckinghamshire Council
Executive Member, Hertfordshire County Council
Leader, Peterborough City Council

Guests

Paul Hawker
Matt Chesterfield
Alan Francis

BEIS
BEIS
MK Green Party

EEH Attendees

Naomi Green
Suzanne Winkels
James Golding-Graham
Fiona Foulkes
Abi Nichols
Trevor Brennan
Nathalie Mazhunga
Adam King
Bronwyn Marshall

Managing Director
Principal Technical Lead
Decarbonisation and Innovation Lead
Business Manager
Project Lead
Project Lead
Project Officer
Communications and Policy Manager
Executive Coordinator

1	<p>Introductions</p> <p>Richard Wenham (RW) opened the meeting and asked attendees if they were content with accuracy of previous meeting minutes.</p> <p>Dave Hodgson (DH) sought correction to his title – this should read <i>Mayor</i> Dave Hodgson not <i>Cllr</i> Dave Hodgson.</p> <p>Naomi Green (NG) informed the meeting that all actions from the previous meeting were complete or on the meeting agenda.</p>
2	<p>Public Questions</p> <p>Alan Francis (AF), Milton Keynes Green Party raised concerns that the East West Rail Strategic Narrative (commissioned by EEH) unsells the benefits of EWR, such as connectivity opportunities beyond Oxford and Cambridge. AF reflected that the X5 bus no longer runs through to Cambridge every half hour but is instead an hourly service Oxford – Bedford. Further, AF raised concerns that the number of houses served by Milton Keynes Central station has been underestimated and is therefore underrepresented in the report.</p> <p>NG recognised the document is focused on the Oxford-Cambridge and Aylesbury sections of East West Rail. It does however recognise the links with the broader Network Rail East West Main Line Strategic Statement. She was happy to further strengthen the narrative with regards to connectivity beyond Oxford and Cambridge.</p> <p>David Renard (DR) supported this wider connectivity, highlighting opportunities for connections beyond Oxford.</p> <p>Steve Broadbent (SB) highlighted that the narrative has been considered by the EWML Partnership meeting, which recognised that the narrative is linked with the EWR scheme as it is currently scoped.</p> <p>ACTION: EEH to draft strengthen lines to acknowledge wider connections ACTION: Population figures for Milton Keynes to be reviewed based on feedback</p>
3	<p>Mid-Year Business Management Update</p> <p>Fiona Foulkes (FF) presented the mid-year corporate position for 2022-23, including staffing and budget updates. At this mid-year point, EEH is forecast to finish the financial year within the current overall funding envelope.</p> <p>In August, the DfT confirmed that EEH’s settlement for 2022/23 would be £1,350,000 – this has been received in full. Year to date, £343,800 of the total expected £441,420 contributions has been received or committed by local authority partners.</p> <p>Permanent headcount for the business unit team was reported as being increased to eight. This is a result of DfT agreement that a proportion of their funds could be used on staff costs where they are supporting programme delivery. Savings have been achieved from EEH business unit’s initial assumptions through minor restructuring and staggered recruitment during the year.</p> <p>In terms of the programme – the 2021/22 ‘tail’ projects are all either in progress or committed. Prior to funds being available, limited commissioning activity had been possible for the 2022/23 programme – however, further scoping had been undertaken by the EEH team and commissioning was</p>

able to commence now DfT funding had been received.

For the connectivity studies, there was a slightly increase in budget required, following commissioning. In addition, an extra modelling requirement on earlier tranches has been identified. Savings have been made elsewhere across the programme to support this change control.

Graham Lawman (GL) queried whether there had been any push-back on contributions.

FF clarified that there had not been any challenge to local contributions, delays in payment were most commonly a result of changes in personnel.

The Board noted the update and approved the revised budget estimates for the DfT funded work programme 2022/23 as the agreed budget for the remainder of the financial year.

The Board agreed that the December 2022 in-person meeting would be held in Milton Keynes.

NG reflected that Emma Ward, DfT is expected to attend the December meeting and that this was an opportunity for the region to showcase the innovations in Milton Keynes. Board members were asked to leave time in their diaries after the December meeting to enable this.

ACTION: FF to investigate options for future meeting venues and a recommendation to be made to the Board of an appropriate location.

4 **New government priorities: EEH response**

NG introduced the paper, laying out reflections on the priorities of the new government. It was noted that the Chancellor was prioritising economic growth and accelerated delivery of infrastructure, which presents an opportunity for the Heartland given it is a net contributor. The success of the Heartland region has been despite the historic lack of investment in infrastructure, and there are areas that are reaching the transport capacity of the infrastructure, so potential growth could be limited as a result.

Andy Rhind (AR) was invited to comment. It was recognised that it feels like a change of administration with clear focus on growth, infrastructure, delivery, and acceleration. The schemes list is not exhaustive – refinements can be made through further engagement with DfT.

ACTION: EEH to work with partners to identify priority schemes that have been missed from the accelerated delivery list and their deliverability, which can then be discussed further with DfT

Steven Broadbent (SB) highlighted the issues caused by inflationary pressures, which is impacting on delivery as well as pipeline management. It is currently unclear what is meant by government by “growth” and the criteria being used for accelerated schemes.

Additionally, SB highlighted the opportunities present by the LEVI scheme and asked when the larger scheme would be open for applications. Biodiversity challenges are being seen with HS2 and East West Rail – net gain/offsetting needs to happen locally in the region, not elsewhere. There is also little on the accelerated delivery list that makes sure that freight is on the ‘right route’.

Phil Southall (PS) raised issues of national driver shortage in the bus industry, which is now looking at whether drivers could form a special case under the skilled worker visa. It was highlighted that the case for transitioning from diesel to electric buses is now harder now due to cost per mile of electric becoming

twice the cost of diesel.

Emily Darlington (ED) asked whether there are any insights on timings to be able to influence the spending review, to give DfT enough time to consider our priorities in a meaningful way.

NG responded to the Board comments, recognising that inflation is a very significant issue. In a previous meeting with Emma Ward, the importance of evidence was emphasised, with real examples of problems on the ground being key to change. With regard to productivity as a measure of growth, it was recognised that LEPs have done work in this area and could provide useful further insights. The concerns around biodiversity net gain and location of offsetting could be usefully raised at the Ox-Cam Arc Environment group.

ACTION: EEH to raise biodiversity offsetting concerns at the next Ox-Cam Arc Environment group meeting.

AR clarified that it is expected that any new spending review is more likely to be in spring, not autumn, though it was highlighted that there is much movement in the fiscal environment at present.

Lucy Nethsingha (LN) raised concerns around the regulatory environment for buses, stating that Stagecoach is withdrawing routes with only 30-days notice in Cambridgeshire.

PS clarified that under the current regulations, bus operators must give local transport authorities 28-days notice of change followed by 42-days notice to the Traffic Commissioner.

Phil Larratt (PL) said some older second-hand buses used by an operator in his local authority are heavy polluters. PL agreed that there is a need for a strategy to ensure that freight is on the right roads.

5 Centre of Excellence

Suzanne Winkels (SW) presented on DfT's ambitions for sub-national transport bodies to be centres of excellence, bringing together local transport authorities to share best practice; develop common approaches; develop tools for local authorities to use; provide guidance on specific areas; or leading on work on behalf of LTAs.

DfT has identified four core areas of work which would focus on maximising local transport authorities' capability over the next two years:

- Producing updated local transport plans, which plan for the transport systems of the future and are in line with the regional transport strategy.
- Providing support on quantifying carbon reductions, a key requirement of new local transport plans, following the guidance which is due to be published later this year.
- Developing effective business cases, as and when these are required to secure investment.
- Ensuring each local transport authority develops and maintains a pipeline of future schemes.

It was emphasised that EEH is in a good position, with a business plan that broadly aligns with these work areas, though future work will need to be developed to ensure fuller alignment. Any changes to the business plan would be subject to Board approval.

The in-year capacity and capability project is progressing, with a focus on major schemes development. A survey self-identifying needs and peer reviews have been conducted with local authority partners, as well as discussions with other sub-national transport bodies. The next stage is to establish a forum to discuss results to identify specific business needs and agree support packages with local authorities - to meet in

	<p>November.</p> <p>ED shared that it has been extremely helpful to work with EEH team to develop business cases. This is a valuable investment and capacity building that EEH is providing.</p> <p>AR emphasised that DfT is very supportive of this initiative, highlighting the key role for sub-national transport bodies in working within their regions and amongst each other to share expertise that has built up over the years.</p>
6	<p>BEIS update on network connections policy - focusing on electricity network support for transport decarb infrastructure</p> <p>James Golding-Graham (JGG) provided context to the request for BEIS, following a previous guest slot from OZEV on opportunities available for local authorities to accelerate the delivery of EV infrastructure. This identified that one of the challenges was issues around the opportunity to actually connect up the new infrastructure as it was deployed.</p> <p>Paul Hawker (PH) and Matt Chatfield (MC) presented to the meeting on BEIS’ electricity distribution networks connection policy. Currently, customer pays upfront for the connection (“sole-use asset”) and for costs to reinforce where next voltage level is required. For example, an EV charger or heat pump may require a higher voltage. The wider network costs are paid by all users of distribution network based on their DNO region. The DNOs are obliged to offer cheapest connection to meet customer requirements, though customers can choose to connect using an independent provider rather than the DNO. Once connected, customers then pay ongoing use of system charges. As of April 2023, all reinforcement costs will be socialised across all customers.</p> <p>HC sought clarity on whether the new regulations would allow forward-funding of capacity in fast growing areas.</p> <p>PH acknowledge that there has previously been an incentive to not construct ahead of the need. Ofgem have recognised this and from April 2023, a broader evidence base will be able to be considered e.g. EV roll-out plans.</p> <p>Graham Lawman (GL) advised that his local area was looking to be part of a scheme with Liberty Charge to provide on-street charging points in a mix of town centre and residential locations. However, Western Power rejected the application based on there not being enough power to supply them.</p> <p>PH clarified that by law, DNO can’t say “we can’t connect you”; instead, they must offer costs and timescales. Examples and information to use in conversations with DNOs is welcomed.</p>
7	<p>East West Rail</p> <p>NG explained that an early draft of EWR Strategic Narrative went to board in July. This received helpful feedback to present in more focused way, based on emerging priorities of the region around economic growth. It was recognised that there has been much uncertainty in past six months over the future of EWR but that it has been notable that the new government have been engaging more positively around delivery of EWR to Cambridge and the Aylesbury link.</p> <p>Alongside the EEH-funded strategic narrative, the East West Main Line Partnership has funded a Business Advocacy document – these work together with the strategic narrative providing the evidence base</p>

behind the advocacy. The Business Advocacy document has been shared with MPs and positive feedback has been received.

It was suggested that an additional paragraph should be added into the strategic narrative:

Realising the East West Main Line is a priority in England's Economic Heartland's transport strategy. The economic benefits of improved links to the west of Oxford (Swindon, Bristol) and east of Cambridge (Norwich, Ipswich) came out strongly in EEH's Passenger Rail Strategy.

This report supports the ambitions from the East West Main Line Partnership, which has a core area of interest in ensuring a direct 'coast to coast' main line from Norwich and Ipswich through to Swindon, Bristol and South Wales. An East West main line will link key economic clusters (for example, Swindon is a 'fast growth city' with specialises in life science and advanced engineering; while East Anglia has specialisms in agritech and energy and Norwich is also a 'fast growth city'). At the same time, it would help 'level-up' and spread opportunities to parts of the country beyond Oxford-Cambridge.

Realising the main line will require improvements to capacity and frequency east of Cambridge (for example, at Ely) and at Oxford and Didcot to allow services from Swindon on the Great Western Main Line (connectivity between Swindon and Oxford is being examined as part of EEH's Swindon-Didcot-Oxford connectivity study).

ED stated that clarity is needed on the impacts of East West Rail for smaller stations. Milton Keynes Council is fully supportive of EWR but recognises there are some trade-offs.

The Board agreed to publish the narrative, with the additional paragraph.

8 Business Unit Update

SW provided an overview of consultation responses since the last Board and overview of key projects progressing. It was highlighted that the Ox-Cam Road studies would be presented at the December Board meeting.

ACTION: Ox-Cam Roads Study as forward agenda item for December Board meeting.