

**East West Rail Consortium**  
**14<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

## **Agenda Item 10.1: Oxfordshire Rail Connectivity Study Remit**

**Recommendation: It is recommended that the meeting:**

- a) Welcomes and supports the proposed study, noting the prominence of East West Rail in shaping the need and scope for the work;**
- b) Endorse the draft Remit for the study.**

### **1. Background and Context**

- 1.1 In the Government's 2017 Autumn Statement, £300,000 was identified for a rail connectivity study for Oxfordshire, reflecting the National Infrastructure Commission's November report to the Treasury. The budget speech also referenced the importance of investment in the Oxford to Cambridge corridor.
- 1.2 The principle of the study was endorsed by the Oxfordshire Growth Board in February. The Growth Board recognised the wider strategic rail context within which key rail infrastructure and service enhancement projects sit – for example the rail corridor through and including Oxford Station and East West Rail Phase 2. This was proposed as the emphasis of the study.
- 1.3 The Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy approved by the Growth Board in 2017 had already identified an infrastructure funding gap of approximately £8.4bn – the most significant element, accounting for over half of that gap, is investment in heavy rail throughout Oxfordshire.
- 1.4 Building on Network Rail's previous rail strategies, the priorities for investment in Oxfordshire's Local Transport Plan (and its agreed Rail Strategy), the Strategic Economic Plan and the priorities of the main rail operators serving the county, the proposed Connectivity Study does not so much need to focus on identification of schemes - more important is the inter-dependencies, key barriers to implementation and the optimal prioritising and timetabling for investment. This is what needs to be drawn out and better articulated.

### **2. Key Messages**

- 2.1. Following discussions between the Department for Transport, Network Rail, Oxfordshire County Council (and other Growth Board partners) and representatives from the East West Rail Company, work has taken place to revise the initial draft Study Remit, to ensure that it is fit for purpose in terms of meeting the needs of all partners.

- 2.2. Specifically, it has been agreed that the Study needs to go above and beyond 'traditional' rail investment planning, and more overtly considers as a priority how rail investment would support growth in Oxfordshire, along the wider Oxford to Cambridge corridor and beyond.
- 2.3. This will mean, amongst other approaches, there would be increased emphasis on quantifying economic and related benefits, with scenario planning that includes consideration of Gross Value Added (GVA) uplift and incorporating new evidence data from the Local Industrial Strategy.
- 2.4. An update report on the Rail Connectivity Study is due to be considered by the Oxfordshire Growth Board on 11<sup>th</sup> June. A copy of the report and its annex – a revised draft Study Remit – can be accessed via the Growth Board website at [www.oxfordshiregrowthboard.org](http://www.oxfordshiregrowthboard.org)
- 2.5. The report restates the importance of the study in terms of establishing the priorities for rail investment in Oxfordshire, including setting out the Strategic Outline Business Cases for specified interventions, and demonstrate how prioritised rail investment can support the economy and wider development. The report and revised Remit also make specific reference to ensuring that the opportunities and benefits of proposed national rail investment (in particular the planned phases of East West Rail) can be secured.
- 2.6. The draft Remit sets out the study context; objectives and outcomes; scope, approach and Governance. It will also include a costed programme for the work once this has been finalised and agreed and a Shareholder / Stakeholder arrangement which reflects the proposal for study match funding. Specific points to draw out from the Remit include:
- The strategic rail connectivity context of the study, in terms of supporting growth across the wider NIC Oxford to Cambridge corridor and beyond;
  - The emphasis being placed on wider benefits, in particular GVA uplift of rail investment, to enable partners to better understand the relative benefits of different rail service patterns and infrastructure requirements, so that investment can be prioritised;
  - A tighter project timescale than originally envisaged, with the majority of the outputs anticipated by the end of the 2018/19 Business Year, which will help in terms of supporting the case for East West Rail;
  - The central role that upgrade of capacity and station facilities at (and through) Oxford station will play, in terms of enabling other rail proposals, including East West Rail, where there is specific reference to the opening of the Western Section in 2022/23 and the 2027 target date for opening of the Central Section.



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### **3. Funding and Financing**

- 3.1 A DfT requirement is for an equal match funding contribution of £300,000, which would mean a total of £600,000 of study funding would be available. This will enable more to be done in terms of study outcomes, e.g. Strategic Outline Business Case work.
- 3.2 A funding proposal is covered in a separate paper to this meeting.

### **4 Other Issues to Note**

- 4.1 The Governance for the study is currently being finalised. In principle, it is proposed to be jointly approved and owned by all funding Shareholders, who would comprise an Oxfordshire Corridor Study Steering Group which would oversee the study programme. This group should be established by the summer, once Shareholder funding arrangements have been confirmed.
- 4.2 The Project Remit will be finalised following consideration by the relevant decision-making bodies within the DfT and Network Rail. Any significant changes to the Remit will be reported for the necessary consideration.

### **5 Next Steps**

- 5.1 A final Study Remit is expected to be confirmed by the end of July, once it has been through the required approvals processes and the match funding arrangements have been confirmed.
- 5.2 Subject to consideration of the separate funding paper, representatives from East West Rail would be closely involved in the progress of the Study, which would be reported back to these Strategic Board meetings.

**June 2018**



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