

East West Rail Consortium
11th September 2018

Agenda Item 10: Work Programme: Oxfordshire Rail Connectivity Study

Recommendation: It is recommended that the meeting:

- a) Note the progress made in finalising the Study Remit (attached in Annex A)**
- b) Identify any specific EWR related issues to be considered as part of this commission (having regard to the remit and principles outlined below).**

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 This meeting agreed (14th June 2018, item 10.2) to provide £25,000 funding support for this study, as part of the matched funding arrangement with the Department for Transport. Other partners, including EEH, rail operators and Oxfordshire County/City Councils are also contributing.
- 1.2 All funding partners are Shareholders in the study, with representation on the Study Steering Group. Oxfordshire County Council is representing the EWR Consortium on this Group (as well as EEH and the Oxfordshire Growth Board).
- 1.3 The East West Rail Company is also represented on the Group as an observer, essential as the effective operation of EWR through Oxfordshire is a prime consideration and the study provides an opportunity to help identify measures to overcome train service and timetabling issues, as well as providing the case for investment to support the development of enhanced services in the future.

2. Summary of Study Proposals, Organisation and Timescales

- 2.1. The Study remit provides the details, but in essence a two-part study structure is being taken forward:
 - (i) A strategic study of the market and growth benefits of interventions, setting out a proposed investment strategy over a 5 – 30-year period
 - (ii) Option development for interventions.
- 2.2. Whilst these two stages are proposed to be sequential, some work is proposed to be undertaken in parallel, specifically on accelerating option development on the Cowley branch line, the potential for which was highlighted in last year's Autumn statement when the funding for this study was originally announced. This should be beneficial for East West Rail, in terms of both identifying additional connectivity opportunities (for either phase 1 or phase 2 operations) and reinforcing the need for additional rail capacity through Oxford, to enable EWR services to be extended.

- 2.3. Whilst the Steering Group will provide strategic oversight of the study, most of the work would be undertaken via Working Groups, considering a range of strategic questions and issues grouped around three themes – Growth, Freight and Technology.
- 2.4. Principles of the strategic study include:
- Outputs / service enhancements to be scalable / affordable, i.e. include funding considerations
 - Focus on the whole system (not just infrastructure) in line with economic growth focus
 - Opportunities for rail to influence where growth could be located and the economic benefits of different options
 - Ensuring linkages with related plans, including Local Industrial Strategy, Spatial Plan and EEH work programme
- 2.5. The strategic study is expected to take between 22 and 32 weeks, so would conclude sometime in Spring 2019.
- 2.6. The second stage, option development, is expected to undertake 3-4 options to Output Definition Stage, with potentially some initial strategic outline business case work undertaken. This will be dependent on the level of funding, so would become clearer as the study progresses.

3. Specific EWR Issues to be analysed

- 3.1. As referenced above, investment in the rail corridor through Oxford has already been identified as a means of securing resilient EWR services and enabling future growth – both that being planned for the operation of the central and Eastern sections (noting the 2027 target date for the former) and future connections to the west – Swindon, Bristol and potentially beyond, which will be the subject of a paper to a future Board meeting.
- 3.2. Views are sought from members regarding any issues they believe should be taken into consideration, or any points to raise arising from the study remit.

4. Next steps

- 4.1. Given the financial contribution made by the consortium, an update on progress and any significant issues raised is proposed at the next Board meeting in December, with the March 2019 AGM the likely opportunity for the Board to review the outcomes of the first stage of the study and provide input to Stage 2.
- 4.2. A study launch event for Shareholders is planned to take place in October, at which Consortium representation can be considered.

September 2018



East West Railway Company Limited

