

East West Rail Consortium Strategic Board 27th July 2020

Agenda Item 8a: Sub-national Transport Body Update – England’s Economic Heartland

Recommendation: It is recommended that the meeting note the report

1. The draft Transport Strategy

- 1.1. The draft Transport Strategy was published on 14th July, with consultation running through to midnight on Monday 6th October. This is a significant moment for the region and for England’s Economic Heartland and its work on behalf of the region’s businesses and residents.
- 1.2. The launch took place in the form of a webinar hosted by Mayor Dave, with Greg Smith MP (Buckingham – and a member of the Transport Select Committee), Laura Church (Chair of the Transport Officers Group and Environmental work stream lead), Emily Seabrook (Winner of the 2050 Vision competition and who works for Skanska in Oxfordshire) and Martin Tugwell on the panel.
- 1.3. The webinar had the strapline ‘Connecting People: Transforming Journeys’ which reflects the ambition underpinning the draft Transport Strategy which sets out how EEH will:
 - Use the de-carbonisation of the transport system as the opportunity to harness innovation and deliver solutions that generate opportunities that support economic growth
 - Champion investment in digital infrastructure as a means of improving connectivity, particularly for rural communities, in order to reduce the need to travel
 - Use delivery of East West Rail as the catalyst for the transformation of the region’s strategic public transport networks, connecting economic assets and communities to realise the economic potential of the region
 - Champion increased investment in active travel and shared transport solutions that improves local connectivity, and helps ensure that everyone has the opportunity to realise their potential/
 - Ensure that the region’s communities and businesses are supported by freight and logistic services that enable access to goods and services whilst lowering the environmental impact of their delivery.
- 1.4. The webinar was attended by 285 individuals, and initial reaction to the draft Transport Strategy has been very positive.
- 1.5. The documents published at the launch included:
 - The draft Transport Strategy
 - The draft Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (undertaken in parallel with the Strategy)
 - The Heartland in Context (a summary of the Regional Evidence Base)

- The Pathway to Statutory Status (seeking views from partners and stakeholders)
 - The Pathways to Decarbonisation report (part of the technical evidence base)
 - The Passenger Rail Study – Phase 1 report (part of the technical evidence base)
- 1.6. On the day of the launch there were 3 live radio interviews (BBC Cambridge, BBC Northampton, Three Counties Radio) and 1 live tv interview (BBC Look East).
- 1.7. Communications on the day included the release of an e-newsletter, social media posts and a news release targeted at national, regional and local media as well as industry media. Letters announcing the start of the consultation have been sent to a wide range of stakeholders across the Heartland region
- 1.8. All of the documents are available via the EEH website with linkages to the draft Transport Strategy and the consultation process. The approach has been to create the feel of a 'virtual drop-in event', breaking down information by topic and featuring videos from member of the EEH Business Unit explaining the background to the various aspects of the strategy and technical studies.

2. Support for the Rail Network

- 2.1. A key focus for the draft Transport Strategy is the role of the rail network as part of the overall transport system. In particular the East West Main Line is identified as a transformational project, one that will act as a catalyst for further change to the strategic public transport infrastructure.
- 2.2. Within the draft Transport Strategy key policies include:
- Support for the decarbonisation of the rail network with priority given to:
 - Completion of Midland Main Line electrification
 - Delivery of East West Rail as an electrified route
 - Infil electrification schemes that enable electric haulage of rail freight services, in particular those to/from Felixstowe
 - The adoption of a hierarchy of travel modes, with priority given to active travel modes and public transport
 - Support for the delivery of the East West Rail project (including its Eastern Section)
 - A commitment to work with the East West Railway Company, Network Rail and adjoining STBs to realise opportunities to realise the longer term potential of the East West Main Line
 - A commitment to work with partners, the East West Railway Company and Network Rail to ensure that where the East West Main Line intersects existing main lines the opportunity is taken to establish regionally significant transport hubs, with priority given to developing proposals at:
 - Oxford Stations
 - Bucester Stations
 - Aylebsury Station
 - Bletchley/Milton Keynes Stations
 - Bedford Midland Station
 - East West Rail/East Coast Main Line
 - Cambridge/Cambridge South Stations

- A commitment to work with partners to prioritise investment in improving local connectivity at East West Main Line stations
- Recognition of the need to work with the rail sector to ensure that the region benefits from the opportunities created on the 'classic' network arising from the construction of HS2
- The identification of the Northampton – Milton Keynes – Aylesbury – High Wycombe – Old Oak Common as a corridor along which to develop a new regional service
- The identification of Felixstowe to Nuneaton and the East West Main Line as routes that should be developed to encourage increased use by rail freight
- Support for the development of Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges where they support the ambitions of the overall Strategy

Rail Passenger Study – Phase 1

- 2.3. Published alongside the draft Transport Strategy was a series of technical studies that form part of the Regional Evidence Base, one of which was the output from the first phase of the Rail Passenger Study.
- 2.4. This work, undertaken by Network Rail working in partnership with EEH, forms a baseline of the current rail system supporting the region, including linkages with adjoining regions.
- 2.5. The study is in part a recognition that delivery of East West Rail will create new travel opportunities: members of the Consortium will recall that it has previously set out the potential scale of opportunities that would be possible with a one-stop interchange.
- 2.6. The second phase of the Rail Passenger Study will begin shortly, and will use the baseline information to identify those travel opportunities for which rail offers a viable and competitive option. The output from the second phase will in turn feed into the region's Investment Pipeline moving forward.

3. Other Considerations

Local Connectivity - Marston Vale Line and Aylesbury

- 3.1. As part of its work to develop the draft Transport Strategy EEH commissioned work that focused on the importance of the First Mile/Last Mile journey – local connectivity.
- 3.2. The output from this work was published alongside the draft Transport Strategy.
- 3.3. As part of this year's Business Plan EEH has identified the opportunity to work with partners to use the output from its work on local connectivity to complement the investment being made in the East West Rail project. Two areas have been identified as initial pilots – the Marston Vale Line and Aylesbury.
- 3.4. The EEH Business Unit is now working with partners in both areas with a view to realising this opportunity.

Milton Keynes – East Midlands

- 3.5. Working in partnership with colleagues in Midlands Connect and Network Rail an initial piece of work has been undertaken to explore the potential of improving north-south connectivity through the construction of a rail link between Northampton and Market Harborough.
- 3.6. Whilst still in its early stages the work so far has been encouraging: sufficiently so as to encourage the parties to propose that the work moves to the next stage.

Midland Main Line

- 3.7. The regional significance of the Midland Main Line was highlighted at the most recent meeting of EEH's Strategic Transport Forum and this will form the focus of a substantive discussion at its next meeting on 11th September.
- 3.8. In the meantime, EEH is working with colleagues in Midlands Connect to join up thinking on corridor across the STBs.

Martin Tugwell

July 2020