

## **East West Main Line Partnership Strategic Board**

**8 June 2022**

### **Agenda Item 3: East West Rail strategic narrative**

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

**a) Notes the updates on work being carried out to update and reemphasise the strategic case for East West Rail**

#### **1. Context**

- 1.1. In March 2022, the East West Mainline Partnership agreed funding to update and reemphasise the strategic narrative for East West Rail between Oxford and Cambridge, including the link to Aylesbury.
- 1.2. The work had the support of the Department for Transport, East West Railway Company and the EEH Strategic Transport Leadership Board. It also aligned with the East West Main Line Partnership's six strategic areas of focus, as agreed by the Board in September 2021 including (but not limited to): 'delivery of Oxford-Cambridge at the earliest opportunity'; 'north-south connectivity'; and 'coast to coast connectivity'.
- 1.3. The project was divided into three distinct packages, an update on progress on each package is set out below.

#### **2. Package one: Consolidating the Strategic Case for East West Rail**

- 2.1. This first piece of work is being jointly funded by EEH and the East West Railway Company. Steer has been commissioned to undertake the work.
- 2.2. A literature review has been drafted, summarising evidence regarding the strategic case for East West Rail. The review has covered the local, regional, and national strategic cases for East West Rail.
- 2.3. An assessment of how East West Rail aligns with known local economic and housing plans was undertaken which included one-to-one engagement meetings with transport and planning officers from all local transport authorities and district colleagues (when required) from across the EEH region.
- 2.4. Individual station catchment areas have been drawn up (based on what different modes can access the stations), to better understand the local impact of East West Rail.
- 2.5. The work is in final draft and will be presented to the Partnership Board in September 2022.

#### **3. Package two: Strategic modelling**

- 3.1. The second package of work was commissioned by EEH and jointly funded by the East West Main Line Partnership.
- 3.2. It includes quantitative strategic modelling of the benefits of East West Rail (Oxford-Cambridge and the Aylesbury link) including economic impacts and modal share.
- 3.3. Steer have also been commissioned for this work. The project utilises a model already developed by Steer for EEH for the connectivity studies.
- 3.4. The work is near to completion and will be presented to the Partnership Board in September 2022.

#### **4. Project three: Business advocacy for East West Rail**

- 4.1. The third package of work will provide a convincing, powerful, and visual narrative around the business imperative for East West Rail.
- 4.2. It is being funded by the East West Main Line Partnership. Leading communications agency Seven Hills has been commissioned to undertake the work.
- 4.3. The work will include:
  - Sourcing quotations from businesses regarding the importance of East West Rail's delivery
  - A punchy narrative that details how East West Rail will open opportunities for Global Britain, grow the economy, level-up and improve the transport network.
  - A high level, visual summary of the discussions with businesses and the narrative.
- 4.4. Engagement has been undertaken with senior representation from LEPs, the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Leaders Group, EEH and the East West Main Line Partnership. This workshop has helped identify key messages to take forward into discussion with businesses.
- 4.5. Emerging messaging developed by Seven Hills focuses on East West Rail's role in delivering growth and innovation; creating skills and talent; and supporting global Britain.
- 4.6. The support of our partners has been invaluable in identifying potential businesses to approach. Interviews are currently taking place. By the end of the project there should be testimonies from around 12-15 leading businesses in the region.
- 4.7. The work is near to completion and will be presented to the Partnership Board in September 2022.

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**May 2022**