

Strategic Transport Leadership Board

7 March 2025

Agenda Item 7

2025/26 Business Plan and Work Programme

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Notes the letter from the Secretary of State for Transport, confirming EEH's settlement for 2025/26: an increase on previous years to reflect the growing level of support and engagement required from EEH.**
- b) Notes the work programme for 2025/26, subject to final agreement with DfT over additional activity.**
- c) Agrees to continue its support to EEH through annual partner contributions, held at 2023/24 levels to reflect current financial pressures.**

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The paper provides Board members with the programme of activity for EEH for 2025/26 and seeks agreement to continued local contributions towards EEH, retained at a flat rate with 2023/24 levels.

2. Key points to note

- 2.1. Unlike previous years by this point, EEH has received its settlement from the Department for Transport for the year ahead. This earlier settlement is to be welcomed: allowing EEH to plan its year ahead in a timely manner.
- 2.2. The Strategic Transport Leadership Board agreed the proposed work programme for 2025/26 in September 2024¹; receiving confirmation of funding allows us to now mobilise that programme of work.
- 2.3. It is proposed that partner contributions to EEH remain at 2023/24 levels, reflecting the pressure on local government finances.

3. Context

- 3.1. In September 2024, the Strategic Transport Leadership Board agreed a one-year programme of work for the year 2025/26. This was subsequently submitted to DfT Ministers.
- 3.2. In line with the new Government's approach to the Spending Review, EEH has approached its business planning in a twofold manner: a single year Business Plan coupled with a long term Spending Review proposal.

¹

[Item 4 Government Update and Business Planning Strategic Transport Leadership Board 27.pdf](#)

- 3.3. This paper considers EEH's work for the financial year 2025/26. While our Spending Review submission (see Agenda Item 8) covered the need for a long-term settlement for EEH, officers will continue to work with DfT over the coming months as required to ensure the evidence and plans for the remainder of this Spending Review are being considered.
- 3.4. In anticipation of this, EEH will develop a three-year Business Plan for further consideration by the Strategic Transport Leadership Board in May 2025.

4. Progress during current financial year - 2024/25

- 4.1. The EEH business unit is forecast to finish the financial year within our current overall funding envelope, and we expect to have committed a majority of the 2024/25 work programme funding by the end of the financial year.
- 4.2. There remains around £180,000 (13%) of programme spend from 2024/25 that will need to be commissioned early in 2025/24. This level of carryover is 5% lower than the previous year, reflecting: an earlier settlement from DfT (in May 2024) than previous years; greater emphasis on bringing staff in house rather than commissioning support (reducing the time needed for commissioning); and a more certain work programme. DfT officials have reviewed the trajectory of spend and are comfortable with the way EEH is managing our funding, as well as our spend profile.
- 4.3. In delivering to the core programme and beyond, EEH business unit has had a successful year, developing stronger partnerships at the national, regional and local level – all of which will lead to improved outcomes for transport connectivity across the EEH region. A draft annual report setting out our achievements for the year will be presented to the Board for approval in May 2025.
- 4.4. An interim financial update was provided to the Strategic Transport Leadership Board in September 2024. An end of year financial statement will also be presented to the Board for approval in May 2025.

5. Future Work Programme - 2025/26

- 5.1. On 24 February 2025, the Secretary of State for Transport wrote to EEH to confirm our Departmental funding settlement for 2025/26. A copy of the letter is set out in Annex 1. Board Members will note the Secretary of State's recognition of the work EEH, under the leadership of the Strategic Transport Leadership Board has done to support the Government's missions and the way in which EEH has worked collaboratively with the Department for Transport and our delivery bodies as a supportive partner.
- 5.2. In September 2024, the Board approved the overall work programme for the 2025/26 financial year. It was on the basis of this Work Programme that EEH submitted our Business Plan and Work Programme for 2024/25 (see Annexes 2 and 3).
- 5.3. The Work Programme was designed, as requested by DfT, on an assumed flat figure of £1,426,000. However, as Members will see from the SoS's letter, we have in fact received a slightly higher settlement this year of £1,522,667. An increase of £96,667. We understand the additional funds are in recognition of our role in supporting the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor but the exact details of this are to be confirmed. As such, Officers are proposing we do not yet commit those funds to a specific activity. As the DfT's views becomes clear, we will provide a further update to this Board.



6. Local contributions

- 6.1. Each financial year our constituent member authorities make 'local' financial contributions towards EEH. This is a vital part of the EEH funding programme as it provides important support to cover communications, effective engagement activities with the government, MPs and other key decision makers, some operational costs and a proportion of staff costs.
- 6.2. Recognising the continued pressure on local government finances, EEH does not take the request for local contributions lightly. To minimise the impact on partners, it is proposed that local contributions are therefore held at 2024/25 levels.
- 6.3. By investing in EEH, local partners retain the organisation as a locally-led body with flexibility to deliver local priorities. At the same time, EEH's local contributions are able to lever a significant uplift in government programme funding to plan strategic transport investment in the region.
- 6.4. The staff within the EEH team are a regional resource that all partners are able to work with and benefit from. During 2025/26, EEH staff will maintain a tight focus on how we can further support local partners to bring added value – aiming consistently to bring added value well in above the level of local contributions that have been leveraged.
- 6.5. The flat rate contribution does not reflect the likely cost increases that EEH will face in the year ahead, due primarily to inflation. While this may present EEH with potential challenges, EEH staff will remain committed to resolving these pressures through efficiencies, just as our local partners are having to do.
- 6.6. If agreed, letters relating to local contributions will be sent at the start of the 25/26 financial year, with a deadline for receipt of contributions by end of October 2025.

7. Long Term Plan for England's Economic Heartland

- 7.1. The English Devolution White Paper², published in December 2024, set out the Government's commitment to continue working through STBs as a key part on the devolution landscape stating:
"moving forward, the government intends to support Mayors in collaborating at pan-regional level and creating convening bodies whose purpose, priorities and membership are decided at a regional level, and working with existing regional organisations such as Sub-National Transport bodies".
- 7.2. This commitment, coupled with an increased funding settlement, shows a welcome commitment to STBs that we expect to continue going forward.
- 7.3. Alongside the prominent role that transport is playing in supporting the emerging Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, these factors make clear how important the role of this Board will be in supporting both devolution but also in shaping a single integrated transport system for the region's businesses and communities.
- 7.4. It is in this context that EEH officers will commence development of a second five-year plan, for consideration and steers by the Board in May 2025. We expect the final draft of a five-year plan to then be approved in the Board's meeting in July 2025.
- 7.5. In considering the long-term future for EEH, Board members will be mindful of the current considerations around government funding for Pan Regional Partnerships. We expect clarity on the preferred way forward imminently.

² [English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/white-papers/english-devolution-white-paper)



- 7.6. In the meantime, it has been a clear steer from the Oxford to Cambridge Pan Regional Partnership that, in the event of closure at the end of this financial year, all the assets from the PRP should be held together and hosted by one regional organisation. Included in the assets are: the Environment Principles (presented to the Strategic Transport Leadership Board in December 2024); the Data Observatory; some branding and communications work and a wide range of expertise and networks across the region's economic sectors. With the assets would be a small amount of funding, which would most likely be needed to maintain the collaboration and coordination of the region's economic and environmental partners.
- 7.7. EEH, along with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, has been identified as one of the two bodies most likely able to host these residual assets during a transition period to a more certain future for coordination of economic and environmental strategy within the region. There are clearly synergies between EEH's activity and some of the residual assets, not least the data observatory and environmental work which could be embedded easily and effectively with our own regional evidence base, for the benefit of all partners in the region.
- 7.8. At the same time, there remain some assets of the PRP that wouldn't naturally fit with EEH's core activity – particularly the branding and promotion activity which more sensibly should be led by a collaboration of the region's existing networks (such as the Science Supercluster), our combined and local authorities as well as our Growth Boards and Business Boards.
- 7.9. The Pan Regional Partnership Board will further consider its next steps as the Government's position on PRP's become clearer.

Naomi Green
Managing Director
March 2025



Programme Summary

Annex 3

England's Economic Heartland

2025 – 2026 Work Programme – submitted to Government in January 2025

Work Area	Specific Workstream	Deliverables
Prioritising and Planning		DfT Programme Spend - £290,000 <i>including staff costs to deliver work in house</i>
1	Integrated Transport (Strategy and Implementation)	Maximising the impact of East West Rail and leveraging it as a trigger for transformational change in the delivery of a once in a generation new approach change to planning integrated transport across the region; EEH will develop an action focused regional Integrated Transport Plan. The Plan will set out how all of EEH's (mode-specific) work strands will be brought together and integrated into a single approach for the region – complementing at all levels existing and future ambitions of our local and combined authority partners. The work will ensure the transport system is planned as a single network with housing and economic growth opportunities embedded. Innovation will be at the forefront of the approach, bringing together existing activity along with further aspiration for innovative funding approaches, and innovation in the way we collaborate and deliver – across sectors, modes and technologies. Impact and delivery pathways will be monitored to share experience and speed up delivery.
2	Roads	As well as activity to support and secure investment in the region's road investment priorities, specific funds will be put aside to support further work on the Smart Junctions Project. The project is identifying ways, at a pan regional level, that we can maximise capacity on the existing road network through better strategic network management. The work has completed phase 1 with phase 2 to be rolled out as part of our 2025/26 programme.
3	Freight – A small contribution to the Regional Freight Forum and the South East Freight Partnership.	Work on the regional freight forum and SE freight partnership is ongoing, led by TfSE.
4	Responding to Government Priorities	EEH remains committed to on going support for Government priorities, providing a continuous link between local partners, government and its delivery agencies. Costs to EEH will be in staff time only.

5	Improved monitoring and evaluation and approaches to lessons learnt	There is a need to improve the way transport is planned and prioritised, learning lessons from previous activity and monitoring and evaluation. A real terms decrease in budgets is preventing EEH from commencing work, including developing a pan regional approach to climate change resilience and mitigation on our transport system. Costs to EEH will be in staff time only.
6	Integration across the Wider South East Rail Network	This programme, identified by TfL, TfSE, Transport East and Great British Railways as a significant opportunity to explore how the rail network can better support housing, economic growth as well as wider social and environmental outcomes in the outer London/beyond London borders where car use is significantly higher than in neighbouring boroughs of London.
Improving and Integrating		DfT Programme Spend £510,000 <i>including staff costs to deliver programme activity</i>
1	Rail (secondment costs plus small amount of expert advice)	<p>Secondment to deliver EEH's rail priorities work. This work is enabling us to act quickly when an opportunity arises, and to ensure our rail service aspirations receive the right level of engagement across the new integrated rail body, the sector and Government. EEH's rail work is enabling places across the region to maximise alignment with rail services, thinking about the railway as a driver for economic and housing growth, decarbonisation and realising better connectivity for all communities. The EEH approach focuses on how we can leverage the most impact out of existing services and planned investments as well as identifying smaller scale interventions that, should they become viable, will have the most impact.</p> <p>Leading thinking and providing secretariat for the wider South East Rail Partnership, Ely Taskforce and East West Main Line Partnership.</p> <p>Working with partners to ensure Oxford-Milton Keynes section of East West Rail opens successfully (2025) and supporting the East West Rail DCO process.</p> <p>Supporting Network Rail to take forward the next stage of work on Ely Area Capacity Enhancements.</p>
2	Bus	<p>Further building on current activity (which will complete spring 2025) work will be designed to ensure the Government's plan for buses can be implemented in the best way for the region, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing regional route proposals; - Connecting places of strategic importance, as agreed by EEH Board

		<p>- Developing (and implementing where viable in the short term) propositions for network reform.</p> <p>Propositions are being developed to be innovative in approach and provide the evidence base that can support ambitious future bus funding and effective approaches to planning the region's public transport network.</p>
3	Mobility Hubs Pilot	Working with local authorities to roll out identification of locations tool and process. There will be no further programme funding allocated to the project, implementation will be led in house by the EEH team.
4	Innovation Funding and Pump Priming	An ongoing and important part of EEH's offer - small amounts of funding that can be used towards bid development for both innovation funding and to develop models for innovative funding of transport schemes. In both cases, the potential for securing much larger funding opportunities can be realised. EEH had some major innovation funding in 2024/25 but this cannot be rolled forward into 2025/26 so we will need to continue to look for new opportunities.
5	Active Travel Investment Strategy	Developing and launching the case for investment in the Varsity Way.
6	Capacity Support for EWR	A significant opportunity to support the way all local partners can work with and maximise the successful delivery of East West Rail. This work is unaffordable within our current settlement but has the potential to deliver significant benefits to the successful delivery of East West Rail. A 20% uplift in settlement would allow EEH to appoint a member of staff to lead coordination of the region's approach to enabling a successful delivery of East West Rail for many communities along the route and beyond.
7	EEH support for Bus Networks delivery (EPs, Franchising)	Not currently funded but EEH remains keen to explore opportunities to pilot bus network delivery models.
Analysis and Excellence		<p>DfT Programme Spend £576,000</p> <p><i>including staff costs to deliver programme activity</i></p>
1	Technical capability and tool development	<p>Including local transport plan support and further updates and roll out of tools including the CAP and EV infrastructure tool (including staff time and regular support to local authorities). Roll out of tools and workshops throughout 2025 with an ongoing feedback loop with LTAs to show effectiveness.</p> <p><u>Tools to include:</u></p> <p>Highways Assignment Model (inc. license and application)</p> <p>Pan STB EV tool</p> <p>Carbon Analysis Playbook tool (CAP) and transport carbon baseline</p> <p>Mobility hubs tool</p> <p>Bus tool (bid booster)</p>

2	Common Analytical Framework (CAF)	Additional costs (EEH staff time) to ensure EEH is capable of leveraging DfT investment into TfN CAF programme. This will include: Data/model development for EEH, alignment of tools and staff to manage the development of the CAF in a way that brings consistency across all seven STBs.
3	Data Bank and Platform	Funds to continue to support, develop and enhance the regional evidence base, including local authority, growth board, Cambridge-Oxford PRP and other partner engagement to ensure single data set(s) for the region. Evolution of Cadence, annual license updates of development and housing data (D-log/I-LOG) and other analytical tools.
4	Progressing investment pipeline (scheme development)	<p>Collation of evidence (qualitative and quantitative) to help shape investment priorities and the wider regional investment narrative. Costs include working with partners within EEH and across the wider South East. Ongoing work with the investment framework outputs – further development of strategic case (leveraging mobility, socio economic data and land-use models).</p> <p>The data and evidence provides important support to National Highways and Network Rail decision making. (Staff time only)</p>
5	Partner Support	Ongoing partner intelligence and support, including policy intelligence, ongoing engagement and sharing expertise. Responding to specific LA needs and unique economic opportunities
6	Capacity and Capability Centre of Excellence	<p>Scrunity and review of funding propositions, continuation of the design of the capacity and capability programme including master class series.</p> <p>Supporting LTAs in delivery of Major Scheme Business Cases and local priorities (such as future Bus investment proposals).</p>
7	Skills Development (including University Engagement)	<p>Establishing the EEH careers networks and supporting competency approach</p> <p>Continued Roll out of masterclass programme.</p> <p>Strengthening alignment with the region's universities.</p>
8	Forum Management and supporting cross sector engagement (staff time and building partnerships)	<p>Ongoing work to ensure the smooth running of the organisation, stakeholder management and growing partnerships.</p> <p>Our regional forums include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directors' Group - Transport Officer Group - Decarbonisation Working Group

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Innovation Working Group - Regional Bus Forum - Active Travel Forum - Capacity and Capability Forum - Connectivity Study Programme Boards - STB EV Group - Freight Working Group - Ely Taskforce - EEH Delivery Partners
Accountable Body Costs	£50,000
Other EEH Costs (funded by local contributions)	£420,000 Including staff time to manage business operations, travel, office and meeting costs, engagement and communications activity and professional memberships.
EEH Reserves	£430,000 (funded by EEH)
Total DfT Programme Spend	£1,426,000 (including all programme staff costs)
Additional DfT Funds for further support activity	£97,000