

Strategic Transport Leadership Board

7 March 2025

Agenda Item 6 Freight Action Plan

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Strategic Transport Leadership Board:

- a) Endorses the EEH Freight Action Plan included as Annex A; and**
- b) agrees to the development of the Freight Action Plan Matrix to take forward actions for freight in the region.**

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. To seek approval for EEH's Freight Action Plan and development of next steps to deliver this through the development of a Freight Action Plan Matrix.

2. Key points to note

- 2.1. EEH has produced a freight action plan which builds upon our major freight study of 2019.
- 2.2. The action plan contains new data and evidence about freight and logistics in the region.
- 2.3. Priorities for action include addressing 'freight blindness'; future infrastructure; logistics planning; net zero; and innovation.
- 2.4. An action plan 'matrix' is being developed to support freight priorities in the region, this will be presented to a future Board.
- 2.5. EEH continues to engage with the sector at a regional level.

3. Context

- 3.1. Freight accounts for a significant volume of strategic traffic travelling across the EEH region, especially from ports in the south and east to distribution centres in the Midlands.
- 3.2. No other region has more parts of the SRN that provide key connections to London, Southern and Eastern ports that result in significant volumes of strategic freight and commercial traffic travelling through the region to distribution centres in the Midlands.
- 3.3. The region is home to 23 active rail freight terminals or interchanges, including the largest Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) in the UK at Daventry. The road and rail corridors across the region mean that EEH is an important transit region for goods moving between other regions as well as serving businesses and communities within the area.
- 3.4. The region has a 'polycentric geography', with a mix of relatively small cities, market towns and a large rural population (around 35% of the region's population live in small market towns and rural hinterlands, significantly above the national average). This results in a diverse range of transport needs, opportunities and challenges.

- 3.5. There are large parts of the region not served by rail. Roads are often the only realistic means of making local freight journeys. Consequently, much of the region's freight requirements are dependent on road freight and therefore, there is a need to develop an action plan to address the region's different freight demands, including finding rail solutions to road freight.
- 3.6. To support and plan for freight across the region EEH has developed a Freight Action Plan that builds on the 2019 Freight Study and is a way to ensure priorities and activity is co-ordinated locally and regionally.

4. Freight Action Plan

- 4.1. The EEH Freight Study was published in June 2019 and identified that there is a significant amount of freight traffic going to and through the Heartland region as shown in Figure 1 below.
- 4.2. This report updates the evidence from the EEH Freight Study, incorporating the findings from our connectivity studies and further research undertaken subsequent to the Freight Study and the Transport Strategy, to culminate in a Freight Action Plan.

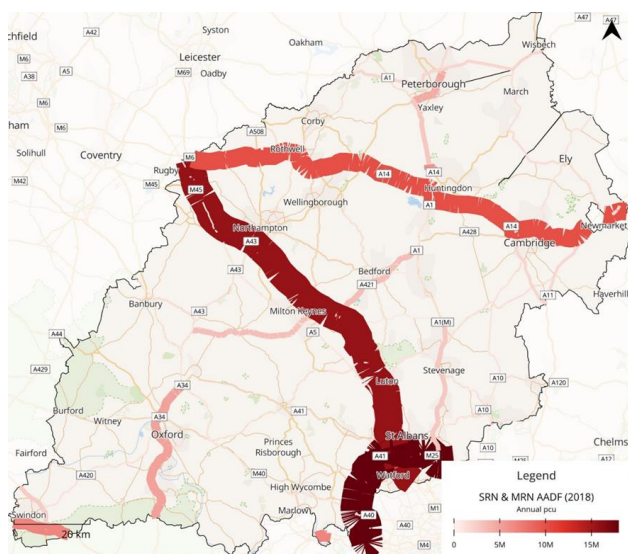


Figure 1 Average Annual Daily HGV Flows across the EEH Region SRN and MRN (Source: MDS and City Science, 2018)

- 4.3. The freight and logistics industry has changed significantly in the last few years, due to a combination of factors including:
 - Shift to online shopping accelerated by the pandemic.
 - Wide scale global supply chain disruptions which have impacted many areas of logistics, such as equipment sourcing, production delays and fuel prices.
 - Driver shortages and lack of HGV parking and welfare facilities.
- 4.4. The draft Freight Action Plan identifies actions that will support local authorities to best plan for the safe and efficient movement of freight and logistics; support the logistics industry to continue to meet business and consumer demand.
- 4.5. It will enable EEH to understand their role in raising the status of freight across the region, embedding a multi-modal approach to support a cleaner and more efficient freight system.
- 4.6. The priorities for the action plan are as follows:
 - ensure the right infrastructure in the right places to support the industry to decarbonise their transport operations;

- industry demonstration of innovative technologies, many of which have been developed or trialled in the region - from safety systems, autonomous deliveries and other innovative last mile solutions; and
 - support the freight and logistics industry, linking in with the region's global expertise to unlock new opportunities for residents and businesses, and benefit the UK as a whole.
- 4.7. This Plan also shares best practice from across the region and the wider UK to support partners across industry and the public sector to identify suitable solutions that help the sector and guide freight and logistics related transport to the right modes and routes in the region.
- 4.8. The region has traditionally been a hot bed from innovation, especially for last mile solutions and highlights examples such as: starship robots; drone research; and local consolidation centres using cycle deliveries.
- 4.9. Within this context the Action Plan identifies strategic actions which contribute to addressing the challenges identified through the following five key areas as set out in the table below:
- Freight blindness – or freight awareness
 - Future Infrastructure – road and rail
 - Planning for logistics
 - Net Zero / Environment
 - Innovation

Freight Blindness	Future Infrastructure (Road and Rail)	Planning for Logistics	Net Zero/environment	Innovation
Engagement planning Freight Officer Forum EEH Freight Forum Freight information Public sector awareness training Public sector freight toolkit	Funding and investment planning HGV Rapid Charge point Roadside facilities New rail freight terminals	Freight Officer Group Use of Construction Logistics Plans and Delivery and Service Plans Logistics land	Freight decarb plan Real zero emission vehicles Site assessment Alternative fuel locations Decarbonisation Guide Review of non road freight movement in the region and options for modal shift Support for rail freight growth Support for freight on EWR	Innovation review

5. Next Steps

- 5.1. The freight and logistics sector operates nationally and therefore is likely to engage less at a local level. Therefore, EEH, alongside the wider sub-national transport body (STB) network that covers the whole of England, has a role to play in facilitating conversations with the freight and logistics sector as well as helping provide the evidence to support Local Authority partners understand how and where they operate, and what their requirements are in the region to enable LTAs to plan for the right infrastructure to support the sector.

- 5.2. To support the delivery of the priorities identified in the Freight Action Plan EEH is developing an action plan matrix to identify key areas of focus for EEH and partners to take forward in their work programmes.
- 5.3. An example of work that EEH are currently progressing, in partnership with other STBs in the Wider South East Freight Partnership, is a study addressing freight blindness by raising the awareness of freight and logistics requirements for local authority officers.
- 5.4. A copy of the Freight Action Plan is available at Annex A.

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