

Strategic Transport Leadership Board

December 2024

East West Rail Update

Agenda Item 7

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Agrees the proposed outline approach to the EEH response to the current East West Rail consultation.**
- b) Notes that East West Main Line Partnership Board will also be submitting a separate more detailed response to the East West Rail consultation.**
- c) Notes the update on East West Rail door to door project and EEH involvement**
- d) Agrees the on-going approach of EEH to ensure that East West Rail provides a lasting legacy for the region.**
- e) Notes the East West Rail information booklet, 'East West Rail: a legacy for the region' compiled by EEH, which helps make the positive case for the scheme from the perspective of a local resident/potential user (annex A).**

1. Purpose of paper

- 1.1. To set out the proposed approach to EEH's consultation response to East West Rail and provide an update on the Door to Door and wider legacy project.

2. Key points to note

- 2.1. East West Railway Company's non-statutory consultation runs until 24 January 2025.
- 2.2. EEH's response is proposed to focus on issues such as door-to-door connectivity and integrating and ensuring its benefits are maximised to create a lasting legacy for the region.
- 2.3. To coincide with the launch of the consultation, EEH has compiled an information booklet setting out the positive case for the scheme from the perspective of a potential user (annex A).

3. Context

- 3.1. The East West Rail scheme remains our most significant priority to addressing the east-west connectivity barrier in our region and assisting the region to realise its economic potential.
- 3.2. Previous EWR scheme related papers to this Board were taken to meetings in March 2023 and June 2024. This included agreeing an outline of key matters to be considered in relation to the EWR legacy.

- 3.3. The non-statutory consultation¹ for East West Rail was announced on 14 November 2024 and is running until 24 January 2025. EEH is leading on pulling together both the core response from the sub national transport body but also as the secretariat, the East West Main Line Partnership Board Response. It is important that key matters are highlighted at this time so that the scheme can be further developed positively in advance of the statutory stage of consultation expected to commence later in 2025.
- 3.4. A key part of the scheme success will be how it improves connections to surrounding communities and provides a lasting legacy for the region. EEH is continuing to engage with the EWR company and local authority partners to develop plans for door to door connectivity, recognising that details of proposals are still in development. We also continue to make the case for further work that will identify how EWR will provide a legacy for the region.
- 3.5. Following a request from a number of leaders, EEH collated an information booklet which sets out the positive case for the scheme from the perspective of a potential user. This was shared with Board members in the week the consultation launched. The information booklet, 'East West Rail: a legacy for the region' is available in annex A.

4. EWR consultation- proposed approach to response

- 4.1. The current EWR consultation is non-statutory, but provides an opportunity to flag key points and issues on proposals in advance of the formal, statutory consultation. This is expected to commence later in 2025, starting the Development Consent Order planning process which will include a public examination.
- 4.2. It is proposed that the EEH response to the current consultation is aimed at a strategic, high level, focusing on the following priority areas.
- Ensuring the scheme is delivered in line with EEH Transport Strategy principles and policies, including on connectivity and decarbonisation
 - Ensuring the scheme is developed to maximise door to door connectivity and supporting the ongoing legacy for East West Rail
 - Ensuring the scheme is developed to maximise the opportunities to deliver improved rail linkages across the region as per priorities in the Main Line Priorities Report, endorsed by Board in September 2024.
 - Ensuring the scheme is developed to maximise the opportunities to link with the delivery of improved bus services, as per the proposed Heartbeat network presented to Board in July 2024, and active travel links, in particular the proposed Varsity Way, and that digital infrastructure is built alongside it (as is the case with the Bicester-Bletchley section).
- 4.3. In addition to the above overall priorities, the legacy themes being developed by EEH in engagement with partners will also be critical to help shape both this response and EEH input to the statutory consultation. More detail on these are given in the section below.
- 4.4. It is recognised that whilst the EEH response will mainly be focused on regional and strategic matters, local authorities will very much wish to highlight more detailed local impacts and issues within their own responses.

¹ <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation2024>



- 4.5. In order to ensure that the responses drafted by EEH are fully informed by member authorities, and that EEH has an awareness of locally specific issues being raised, three virtual engagement sessions are proposed for local authority lead officers to attend over the next month. Attendance invites for these are planned to be based on the EEH Transport Officer Group and Main Line Partnership officer groups circulation. EEH will present draft strategic messages for feedback, and officers will be encouraged to share local issues being raised through the consultation. These sessions will also review alignment with the East West Main Line Partnership response.

5. EWR door to door workstream

- 5.1. East West Rail will provide a catalyst for improved east west connectivity, with a huge opportunity to develop excellent first mile last mile linkages from stations along the line. Door to door solutions will need to be designed and delivered in a way which maximise the opportunity of East West Rail, improving connectivity and providing benefits to communities.
- 5.2. To help guide the development of the Door to Door offer, such as active travel or bus connections, a number of key principles and themes are suggested. The door to door offer should be:
- Ambitious – to maximise the potential of the middle mile solution
 - Innovation led – so that provision for first mile last mile is future-proofed and enabled through forward thinking design and planning
 - Customer led – to meet the needs of communities
 - Integrated – to provide seamless end-to-end journeys
 - Safe, easy, secure and accessible – so as many people as possible can access the first mile last mile options. This includes the timetable patterns of public transport
 - Reflect local and customer needs and opportunities – recognising local needs should be met as well being part of a recognisable network
 - Good practice – Draws on good practice of known successful examples of first mile last mile solutions
 - Strategic network – Should be part of a wider network (such as the Heartbeat network) as well as providing local solutions.
- 5.3. In addition to the development of physical connections, door to door connectivity also needs consideration and integration of information at stations which is clear concise and easily available. Anyone visiting an EWR station should know that information and services will be consistent across the route and that if they start a journey by sustainable modes they will know how they can complete their journey at the destination station.
- 5.4. This also relates to branding and marketing of new EWR services.
- 5.5. East West Railway Company has been developing a door to door strategy and workshops with local authority officers have been held in recent months to, in particular, identify proposed schemes needed to improve door to door connectivity at stations along the line.
- 5.6. It is proposed that a further set of workshops take place to in early 2025 to agree preferred packages of improvements at each station and engage with the bus sector. EEH will be facilitating these workshops.
- 5.7. Given the stage of door to door strategy development, the detail of door to door connections within the current stage of consultation is limited. It is expected that more detail on plans will be included within the statutory stage of consultation commencing later in 2025.



5.8. Throughout the development process of the door to door strategy, EEH has consistently made clear that funding should be made available to deliver door to door improvements at stations to ensure that EWR fulfils its potential to effectively serve communities along the line. It is also recognised that any core scheme funding will work alongside wider funding opportunities to deliver improvements- for example associated with any new development close to the EWR route.

5.9. The Board will be further updated on the door to door strategy as it develops.

6. EWR Legacy update

6.1. Previously, the EEH Board has set out its expectation that East West Rail is designed in a way that brings a lasting legacy to communities across this region.

6.2. EEH Board members are clear that while EWR will inevitably deliver significant economic growth benefits for the region and the UK as a whole, there should be an equal (if not greater) focus on maximising East West Rail's benefit to local communities and businesses. The best way of ensuring this is through a locally-led approach to creating a legacy for East West Rail.

6.3. By working with partners such as the Science Supercluster Board and Universities group, as well as the Pan Regional Partnership, and East West Railway Company, EEH (and the East West Main Line Partnership) has been leading work to ensure the government's commitment to East West Rail is focused on leaving a legacy for communities across the region.

6.4. The legacy of East West Rail is being developed and shaped around four key enablers, the first two of which will be led by EEH. These are:

- Connectivity – primarily focused on creating world class door to door connectivity to EWR.
- Quality of life – including heritage, culture as well as the built and natural environment
- Skills and learning (*being led by the Oxford to Cambridge Universities Group*)
- Business, investment and knowledge (*being led by the Pan Regional Partnership and Science Supercluster*)

6.5. The legacy project is ready to commence, subject to confirmation of funding from Government for its support. While this has been on hold, EEH has been sharing some of the key messages and expectations of a lasting legacy, including preparing an information booklet which sets out the positive case for the scheme from the perspective of a resident or potential user. The information booklet, 'East West Rail: a legacy for the region' is available in annex A.

James Gagg
Project Lead

Naomi Green
Managing Director

December 2024

