

## Annex 2

### England's Economic Heartland EEH activity on regional priorities

**Table 1: EEH priorities (as per Spending Review submission)**

Priority	Rationale	EEH work to progress
Ely/ Haughley Junctions	Critical for supporting movement of freight from Felixstowe, reducing road congestion and opening up capacity for better passenger services.	<p>Produced (and subsequently updated) regional advocacy document, <i>Keeping Trade on Track</i>. Ely is also included within Connecting Economies brochure for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.</p> <p>EEH chairs the Ely Taskforce, which bring partners together to collaborate on advocacy, including with CPCA, LAs, EoE APPG, Chambers of Commerce, industry and ports.</p> <p>We continue to raise importance of Ely at all opportunities, including through conference and engagement activity, meetings with officials and MPs, and consultation responses.</p>
Maximising East West Rail	Ensuring as many people as possible can access EWR stations, and that it benefits communities and businesses across and beyond its route.	<p>'Integration project': first phase underway to establish baseline and set vision. Second phase will create a programme of tangible projects to deliver integration and potential funding mechanisms.</p> <p>'Quality of life' project: focusing on EWR's role in boosting tourism; access to green spaces; and benefiting town's not directly on the line itself. These projects are getting underway.</p> <p>We have a resource dedicated to ensuring there is appropriate engagement between EWR Company and local authorities.</p> <p>Lessons learned: from planning, construction and engagement phases of new rail services from Oxford to Milton Keynes through the lens of local authorities (jointly funded with EWMLP). To inform approach to future phases of EWR and wider infrastructure. Due to complete in autumn 2025.</p>
Aylesbury- Milton Keynes link and wider Northampton -Old Oak Common corridor	The Aylesbury-Milton Keynes link is an integral part of East West Rail.	<p>The corridor/ link is identified within various EEH connectivity studies and rail studies</p> <p>In 2024 EEH produced the Global Britain Rail advocacy document which focused on the importance of the Aylesbury link as a strategic connection between Northampton &amp; Milton Keynes to Old Oak Common and Heathrow. EEH also</p>

	Realising a new rail corridor between Northampton, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and Old Oak Common, offering rapid interchange to Heathrow Airport.	<p>procured economic data on the corridor (it also featured prominently in our Connecting Economies brochures).</p> <p>EEH is continuing to raise the significance of investment in the Aylesbury Link and the wider rail corridor at all opportunities, including conferences, events, with other STBs and in meetings with shadow GBR, DfT, Network Rail, EWR Co officials, and MPs, and consultation responses.</p> <p>Current work on released capacity opportunities will further strengthen evidence.</p>
Bletchley North East Chord and capacity at MK Central	To facilitate a through route for East West Rail to Milton Keynes Central from the east, and alleviate rail capacity constraints between Bletchley and Milton Keynes. Supporting capacity enhancements at Milton Keynes Central Station is integral to this.	<p>Identified within connectivity study and rail priorities work to maximise the benefits of EWR in the region. Featured in Connecting Economies brochures.</p> <p>Working with Network Rail to understand how this can be taken forward as a priority.</p>
Oxford 'metro' including Cowley Branch line	Using the existing heavy rail network to provide a co-ordinated service to deliver a metro type system for greater Oxfordshire.	<p>Continuing to work with all stakeholders to progress rail priorities in Oxfordshire. OCC are currently developing a rail strategy that will support the Oxford Metro.</p> <p>Included within Connecting Economies brochures (EEH also produced an advocacy brochure on North Cotswold Line for OCC).</p> <p>EEH will continue to raise importance of the opportunity, including through meetings with government officials, shadow GBR, Network Rail, EWR Co officials, and MPs, and consultation responses.</p>
Oxford-Swindon-Bristol services	A low-cost 'quick win' opportunity to restore direct rail connectivity between Oxford and Swindon, and Oxford and Bristol. Helping to realise East West Main Line.	<p>Identified in EEH connectivity study, rail studies and highlighted in Connecting Economies. Progressed by Network Rail. EWMLP contributed funding towards Network Rail economic appraisal and EEH produced an advocacy document which was submitted into DfT and Spending Review.</p> <p>Continuing to raise importance at all opportunities, including through meetings with DfT, Network Rail, TOCs, EWR Co officials, and MPs, and consultation responses.</p>

EWMLP Eastern Section	Services east of Cambridge to Ipswich and Norwich are a core part of the strategic ambition for a coast-to-coast East West Main Line.	EWMLP part-funded Transport East strategic case for Eastern Section, which is due to publish in autumn.  Continuing to raise importance at all opportunities, including with Transport East and through EWMLP, meetings with shadow GBR, DfT, Network Rail, EWR Co officials, and MPs, and consultation responses.
Digital connectivity along EWR	EWR must include provision for appropriate digital infrastructure to ensure passengers receive a consistent, high quality and productive onboard experience, and to enable additional rural businesses and communities to access high quality digital services.	EEH previously secured funding for fibre to be installed from Bicester-Bletchley. Subsequently supported England's Connected Heartland's successful bid to make this section 5G. Working with ECH to make case for digital connectivity from Bletchley to Cambridge (and Oxford-Bicester).
Varsity Way	A landmark active travel corridor between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge, following a significant portion of the East West Rail route. Acting as an active travel spine, providing access to green spaces and becoming an iconic tourist destination in its own right.	A high-level options report was undertaken to identify the opportunities and upgrades required for the current Varsity Way alignment. Following stakeholder feedback there was support for more detailed work in the Marston Vale area considering active travel alignment options. We have been working with Central Bedfordshire Council on a feasibility study associated with the Marston Vale area.  Our ambition is to continue to work with Local Authorities across the route to understand opportunities associated with Varsity Way and undertake advocacy work highlighting the benefits of a strategic east-west active travel route.
Milton Keynes MRT	MK MRT will maximise opportunities for EWR will be the linkages between MRT and EWR.	Principle identified in connectivity study. EEH is currently supporting Milton Keynes City Council in their MKISS work and are positively promoting Milton Keynes MRT, for example through Connecting Economies brochure for Milton Keynes.  We have consistently raised with DfT highlighting the needs for a consistent approach to funding MRT schemes regardless of devolution status.
Hertfordshire -Essex Rapid Transit (HERT).	Will deliver a step change in east west connectivity through Hertfordshire and into Essex: a modern, flexible and realistic solution.	The connectivity gap for which HERT is a solution was highlighted by Network Rail in EEH's Passenger Rail Study (2021). It was a key intervention identified in EEH's connectivity study and featured in Connecting Economies.  We have consistently raised with DfT highlighting the needs for a consistent approach to funding MRT schemes regardless of devolution status.

	Primarily focused on the A414 corridor, the HERT will connect with north south rail lines to create new sustainable journey options across the whole of Hertfordshire and beyond.	EEH helped secure funding, with Hertfordshire County Council to investigate the financial and service implications of running autonomous vehicles on the HERT network. The outcomes of this work provide an evidence base which has been shared with EEH LTAs and the wider transport sector on the opportunity and challenges of deploying autonomous buses on a public transport network.
Better buses	<p>Bus journeys often represent the only realistic means of public transport for people living in many different parts of our region. Ensuring service levels are firstly protected, and then grown is critical to our economy, alongside the social and environmental wellbeing of our communities.</p> <p>Improvements to bus services are a comparatively simple, quick and affordable means of delivering improvements to connectivity which unlock economic opportunities.</p>	<p>EEH's work on bus cuts across a number of different areas, as agreed by the Board and at our annual Bus Symposiums. We are regarded as a leading STB voice on bus.</p> <p>More information on our work on bus can be found in agenda item 3 of our 11 July 2025 Board paper.</p> <p>It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a regional bus network concept 'The Heartbeat', currently developing costs and revenue models to support its delivery.</li> <li>• Providing strategic level advice on buses and multi-modal integration.</li> <li>• Holding an annual Bus Symposium to bring together Members and officers with industry and transport experts.</li> <li>• Supporting BSIPs within the region with technical and policy advice.</li> <li>• Providing advocacy on bus funding, including by calculating the economic value per LA and region.</li> <li>• Creating a bus bid booster tool, to help LTAs calculate the value of bus infrastructure improvements.</li> <li>• Commissioning work to understand the effectiveness of a Total Transport approach for our LTAs. Now undertaking a more focused economic review of costs of transport services with three individual LTAs.</li> <li>• Developing a bus plan for Bedfordshire, to consider current and future demand for bus services to meet for example the needs of East West Rail stations, Universal Studios, London Luton Airport and expected local plan growth.</li> <li>• Working with Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough Councils, EEH is leading a commission to explore the potential demand to extend Luton-Dunstable busway services or routes to areas such as Leighton Buzzard, Milton Keynes and Stevenage.</li> </ul>

Targeted investment in roads.	<p>Targeted investment in our strategically-important roads will unlock and support economic and housing growth opportunities across our region. Roads funding should be considered not just for the Strategic Road Network but also the Major Road Network, a critical part of the UK road network.</p> <p>Priorities identified, including through connectivity studies, Oxford-Cambridge roads study, the MRN programme and schemes identified in the current Road Investment Strategy and RIS pipeline schemes are listed in the information below.*</p>	<p>We work with National Highways and the DfT to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• communicate the region's priorities and feed into technical studies to make the case for investment in the region</li> <li>• promote and progress the next steps in the priorities identified in the OxCam Roads Study, including A1, Aylesbury Roads connectivity and M1 Ju 13.</li> <li>• inform and comment on RIS programme RIS pipeline schemes such as M40/A404 junction and looking for longer term solutions for A34.</li> </ul> <p>We work collaboratively with DfT promoting and highlighting the importance of MRN schemes in the EEH region. While we are still waiting for the outcome of these schemes we continue to offer support to our LTAs for intelligent client support for these major scheme business cases.</p> <p>We are facilitating collaborative discussions with Central Government stakeholders considering the A1 South of Buckden to Biggleswade.</p> <p>We work with DfT, National Highways and local authorities to support other major schemes promoters to facilitate joint work to help find solutions, such as the new destination resort Puy Du Fou in Oxfordshire.</p>

\*

A1 Sandy to Biggleswade (there is also a need for wider improvements between Huntingdon and Biggleswade, and in Hertfordshire – a solution to the previous smart motorway proposal that was cancelled by the previous Government)

M1 Junction 13 (Central Bedfordshire)

A1139 (Peterborough)

A6/ A421 (Bedford)

Aylesbury roads

A605 (south of Peterborough)

A43 Corby and Broughton

A14 J33-J36 (Cambridgeshire)

A421 (A43 to M1 J13)

A141/A142 (Cambridgeshire)

A43/ A5 roundabout (Milton Keynes)

A5 Old Stratford and Kelly's Kitchen roundabouts (Milton Keynes)

A5 Hockliffe (Central Bedfordshire)

Bicester roads

A507 (Central Bedfordshire)

A404 corridor (Buckinghamshire)

A34 (Oxfordshire)

A47/A1101 Elm Road Junction (Cambridgeshire);

M11 Junction 13 (Cambridgeshire).

A10 Broxbourne and Ely to Cambridge

Vauxhall Way (Luton Airport)

A509 Isham Bypass

**Table 2: Additional, ongoing EEH thematic priorities**

Theme	Rationale	EEH work
Rail	<p>Rail plays a strategically vital role as a backbone for sustainable, inclusive, and decarbonised economic growth.</p> <p>It is important that the region can 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.</p> <p>There is a need to leverage the most impact out of existing services (including timetabling) and planned investments as well as identifying smaller scale interventions that, should they become viable, to have the most impact.</p>	<p>In addition to the extensive work we are progressing to maximise the benefits of EWR, EEH continues to undertake work to maximise all rail lines across the region to benefit the region.</p> <p>The Rail Mail Line Priorities study was approved by the Board in 2024, and outlines EEH's key rail priorities. We use this as the evidence to influence improved rail outcomes for the region, including engagement with train companies, Network Rail and EWR Co.</p> <p>We are currently working on a study on released capacity and developing a New Stations Tool Kit to help LTAs to progress new stations in their region.</p> <p>We work closely with Network rail and represent the region at all of the different Network Rail regional meetings promoting key priorities for EEH, reviewing impact of new timetables, service changes</p> <p>We helped establish the Wider South East Rail Partnership to ensure rail in the wider south east has a strong voice.</p> <p>We retain the use of expert advice to use on specific projects and interventions.</p> <p>EEH continues to be the secretariat of the East West Main Line Partnership.</p>
Freight	<p>A significant amount of freight travels from ports in the South, London and East through EEH to distribution centres in the Midlands. The region is also home to one of the largest SRFIs at Daventry with new ones coming online at Northampton Gateway and Radlett.</p>	<p>EEH work as part of the Wider South-East freight Forum to address complex challenges in the freight and logistics industry which are often outside of the geography of the region.</p> <p>EEH through the WSEFF are delivering work on raising freight awareness especially with LTA officers and how to address challenges with the availability of effective freight data.</p> <p>EEH has developed a freight action plan that was approved subject to amendments in 2024 and will be looking to develop specific actions to take forward to address freight challenges across the EEH region.</p>



Active travel	Active travel—walking, cycling, and wheeling—underpins the region’s ambition to deliver a net zero transport system. By enabling more people to make short journeys without a car, active travel reduces congestion, improves air quality, and supports healthier lifestyles. It also helps make towns and cities more attractive places to live and work, which is vital for attracting talent and investment.	<p>Our active travel strategy sets the ambition for the region to create an exemplar active travel network and culture. Work has been undertaken to baseline and understand the regional active travel picture as well as identifying high potential cross boundary active travel links.</p> <p>Working with local authorities, our ambition is to progress and advocate for the Varsity Way (see above) and support LAs in the development of cross border links, where appropriate.</p>
New towns	England’s Economic Heartland (EEH) is uniquely positioned to support the identification of infrastructure needs for new towns by providing a strategic, data-driven, and cross-boundary perspective. As a regional transport body, EEH can help local authorities and developers understand how new settlements can be integrated into the wider transport network—ensuring that new communities are well-connected from the outset.	<p>This will be subject of a paper to September Board following the anticipated announcements by Government.</p> <p>EEH has never been involved in stipulating where housing should go, but has a key role in making clear to MHCLG that new homes must be supported by appropriate infrastructure including good transport connectivity.</p> <p>A response from EEH could include: data and analytical support; engagement with relevant partners and government departments; preparation of written evidence to support responses; a coordination role; engaging with the NSIP/DCO/SDO process where it is appropriate to do (capturing the cross-border impact of some projects); and advocacy for investment.</p>
Mobility hubs	Mobility hubs provide an opportunity to facilitate seamless and efficient multi-modal transport and help increase public transport use.	<p>EEH has developed and produced a range of supporting materials for its LTAs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business case guidance on funding mobility hub delivery</li> <li>• Regional Mobility Hub Location Tool.</li> <li>• Mobility hubs investable proposition brochure and workshop with private sector funders.</li> <li>• ‘White Paper’ on strategies for enhancing private sector investment in mobility hubs.</li> </ul>





Electric vehicles	<p>Electrification of the UK vehicle fleet offers government and authorities the quickest ways of decarbonising a significant percentage of the transport sector. EEH authorities have received some funding to support the roll out of EV Charge infrastructure and lead the way on innovative deployments. EEH's current focus is on ensuring there sufficient energy to power EVs.</p>	<p>EEH have undertaken work highlighting the opportunities and gaps in EV uptake and infrastructure deployment across the region. We have also developed with partners a free to access EV planning tool. We will shortly deliver a bottom up assessment of the power required by the region for EVs now and in the future – feeding into the energy system planning</p>
Smart junctions	<p>Better managing our existing road network asset through emerging technologies can reduce journey times, environmental impacts and increase capacity and safety. As more connected vehicles come online we can share information and priorities certain journeys at certain times of the day.</p>	<p>EEH has completed a report based on the Connectivity Study geographies that outlines the opportunity to improve network efficiency through the application of technology - understanding key corridors and where existing signalised junction infrastructure could be improved and connected – EEH will continue to work with government to realise this opportunity.</p>
Airports	<p>There are three major airports located within or very close to the EEH region: London Luton, Heathrow and Stansted. All have plans to expand. While this offers economic opportunities, it is crucial that expansion is accompanied by improvements in sustainable surface access.</p>	<p>EEH represents the region on the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group and their Surface Access Group and provides input into their areas of work.</p> <p>We have commented and represented the region at London Luton Airport expansion including their examination in public and EEH are on the London Luton Airport Access Forum.</p>
Convening role for Oxford-Cambridge region	<p>Funding was transferred from the former Oxford-Cambridge PRP to EEH to deliver a regional convening role on behalf of local and combined authorities. This provides a key way in which leaders can work in partnership to provide the strategic voice for the region.</p>	<p>EEH is currently organising the Regional Leaders Summit for October. This will bring together elected leaders with ministers, government officials, experts, and businesses.</p>





Transport Strategy	The EEH transport strategy sets out a long term strategy for the region.	<p>Following stakeholder engagement and publication of the transport strategy in 2021, there is a need for a light touch update of the strategy to ensure the direction of travel remains relevant and reflects the technical work undertaken since the original strategy.</p> <p>Accompanying the visioning sessions is the development of a transport strategy evidence base refresh, providing a data led approach to check and challenging the strategy (data can be used for wider work and LA partners).</p> <p>We also support our Local Authority Partners in the development of their Local Transport Plans and transport strategies.</p>
Tools/ data	Tools and data are fundamental to effective transport planning, enabling evidence-based decision-making, ensuring that investments deliver the greatest benefit for people, places, and the environment. High-quality data—on travel patterns, demographics, land use, and emissions—helps planners understand current challenges and forecast future needs. Building tools and securing data at a regional scale accomplishes economies of scale and ensures a consistent baseline. The tools and data EEH hold form the basis of the work that we do to accelerate the delivery of schemes and priorities in the region as agreed by Board.	<p>EEH has recently presented the tools catalogue to the Board. More information is available in the 20 June Item 4 Board paper.</p> <p>We are constantly refreshing the data we hold and improving access to the data and interagency generated.</p> <p>EEH is looking to further develop and enhance our collaborative partnerships with academia to add further value and enhance our offering</p> <p>Tools in development include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the next iteration of the EEH Land Use model</li> <li>• enhancing the accessibility of the intelligence derived from mobile network data</li> <li>• refreshing the data we hold on housing and employment sites as well as planned infrastructure</li> </ul>
Centre of Excellence	EEH can play a key role in enhancing local authority capability and capacity in transport strategy and planning. This is particularly important in the current, fiscally challenging environment facing local authorities.	<p>More information is available in the 20 June Item 4 Board paper.</p> <p>Our Centre of Excellence includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seven cross-regional communities and early careers network to share best practice</li> <li>• Information Provision – tools catalogue, knowledge hub (recently launched)</li> <li>• Thought Leader – guest lecturing, masterclass programme</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better Outcomes – critical friend/intelligent client into business cases, lessons learned.</li> <li>• Skills &amp; Development – skill matrix, supporting retention.</li> </ul> <p>Work to come includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better Outcomes – revised initiative on business cases aligned to findings of Green Book review (tbc – when DfT releases capital portfolio)</li> <li>• LTP Support (tbc – when DfT announces)</li> <li>• Survey/engagement on capability and tools to shape future Centre of Excellence initiatives</li> </ul>
--	--	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------