

Strategic Transport Leadership Board

Minutes

24th May 2024

11:00 – 13:00

Virtual

Present:

Cllr Liz Leffman (Chair)
Cllr Jennifer Wilson-Marklew
Cllr Graham Lawman
Cllr Javed Hussain
Cllr Lucy Nethsingha
Cllr Adam Zerny
Cllr Phil Larratt
Cllr Anna Smith
Cllr Phil Bibby
Cllr Chris Watts
Cllr Jim Weir

Leader, Oxfordshire County Council
Cabinet Member, Milton Keynes Council
Executive Member, North Northants Council
Executive Member, Luton Council
Leader, Cambridgeshire County Council
Leader, Central Bedfordshire Council
Cabinet Member, West Northants Council
Deputy Mayor, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CA
Executive Member, Hertfordshire County Council
Cabinet Member, Swindon Borough Council
Deputy Mayor, Bedford Borough Council

Apologies:

Cllr Martin Tett
Cllr Jim Robbins
Cllr Steven Broadbent
Cllr Susan Brown
Mayor Nik Johnson
Cllr Gavin Elsey

Leader, Buckinghamshire Council
Leader, Swindon Borough Council
Cabinet Member, Buckinghamshire Council
Leader, Oxford City Council
Mayor, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough
Leader, Peterborough Council

EEH Team Members Present:

Naomi Green
Suzanne Winkels
James Golding-Graham
Adam King
Abi Nichols
Trevor Brennan
James Gagg
Hanane Elmaarouf
Erin Pitcher

Managing Director
Technical Programme Manager
Decarbonisation and Innovation Manager
External Affairs and Policy Manager
Project Lead
Project Lead
Project Lead
Business Operations Assistant
Business Operations Assistant

1	Introductions Cllr Liz Leffman (LL) opened the meeting and asked attendees if they were content with accuracy of previous meeting minutes. No amendments were requested. Naomi Green (NG) gave an update on the actions. 1. Ox-Cam Roads Study– <i>The high-level conclusions of the OxCam Road Study are set out in Agenda Item 4.</i> 2. LTP guidance – <i>We await LTP guidance from DfT, but in the meantime are exploring the level of support that can be provided to local authorities (pending a funding settlement from DfT).</i> 3. Hybrid meetings - <i>EEH will liaise with board members to discuss hybrid meetings.</i> 4. Board champions - <i>EEH business unit has raised the discussion with Cllr Larratt.</i> 5. Public questions - <i>The submission has been shared with EWR Co.</i> 6. Busses - <i>A letter has been sent in from Naomi Green, reflecting the discussion held by the Board. A copy of the response will be circulated to Board Members.</i>
2	Public Questions Alan Francis, MK Green Party queried whether the stated population of Milton Keynes in the draft connectivity studies was correct. Action – EEH officers to look at the figures and respond to Alan Francis. NB: The connectivity studies have been updated with a footnote explaining how population figures are derived.

End of Year review and annual report

Naomi Green (NG) opened the item and updated the board on EEH's year end corporate position for the financial year 2023/24. The planned programme were successfully delivered or commissioned within the allocated budget, despite the late receipt of the settlement in October. EEH has still not received a letter to confirm its settlement. Other updates included:

- Busses - Work continues, EEH will hold another bus symposium in the autumn.
- Rail – EEH has made significant achievements in rail operations.
- Innovation funding bids - EEH has supported a large number of bids.
- Freight - EEH has established key strategic partnerships, notably the SE Rail and SE freight partnerships.
- Settlement – EEH has not yet received information on the settlement.

Cllr Liz Leffman (LL) praised EEH for its work and the various efforts and development of collaboration with other STBs.

The Board agreed the year-end financial and corporate position.

The Board noted the financial commitments carried forward into 2024/25 and the delays in receiving a confirmed settlement from DfT.

The Board supported the proposal, pending confirmation of funding from DfT, to recruit a small number of additional staff into the team on a fixed term/secondment basis.

The Board approved the draft 2023/24 annual report.

Productivity and Connectivity – Considerations for the Heartland

Naomi Green (NG) provided an update on recent evidence regarding productivity in the region. **NG** highlighted the creation of investment brochures, starting with the 'Ely capacity and enhancements' brochure, which was published and promoted through a parliamentary event last summer, leading to a secured commitment in the autumn. This approach was also applied to the 'East West Rail: Building Better Connections' brochure, published 18 months prior, which played a crucial role in advancing the project. EEH is going to produce seven additional investment brochures. EEH has set out four actions to address the decline in productivity, these are:

- Securing the investment needed to reverse the declining trend in productivity in the region
- A rail system fit for the future
- Innovation
- Identifying Trends and Tailored solutions

Cllr Liz Leffman (LL) highlighted the importance of regional productivity in attracting innovative businesses and the need for preparedness in presenting critical issues to the government.

Cllr Adam Zerny (AZ) suggested the consideration of a potential cross-border scheme to establish a bus link between Hitchin and Luton, and said that it would be of great benefit to the residents of those towns.

NG said that EEH will look into Cllr Zerny's suggestion, she also said that EEH will review the evidence and potentially incorporate it into EEH's priority activities.

Sue Frost (SF) said that Luton's Park and Ride system would link in really well with any enhanced bus route from Hitchin.

Cllr Javed Hussain (JH) agreed and said that the park and ride as well as the interchange proposals, would benefit commuters to Luton and not just Luton Airport.

AZ added that note that Hitchin is not part of Central Bedfordshire, and therefore, coordination with Hertfordshire is essential.

Action – EEH to work with Central Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Luton on Reviewing the existing evidence for the potential cross-border scheme.

The Board agreed to the four priority areas of focus.

Luton Airport Expansion

Suzanne Winkels (SW) introduced the paper and said that London Luton Airport, which is owned by Luton Council, is the fifth busiest airport in the UK and a very significant employer in the region. There are plans for the airport to expand its passenger numbers using the existing runway, with the addition of a new terminal. The expansion plans are being determined by the Secretary of State through the Development Consent Order process. EEH's representation regarding the expansion is focused on surface access to an enlarged airport.

Nick Platts, Managing Director, Luton Rising (NP) gave an update on the Luton Airport Expansion proposals.

SW said that the paper included the surface access strategy and there is a sustainable transport fund available which is aimed at mitigating the impact of development. Representations were to improve better connectivity for Aylesbury, Hertfordshire, Hitchin and Bedford. SW shared concerns about the absence of coach services linking many areas with Luton Airport, with driving being the only current option.

Cllr Phil Bibby (PB) expressed concerns about the impact of development on traffic and congestion in Hertfordshire, particularly regarding the highways network through Hitchin and the route to Luton. **PB** asked if Luton Rising's development plans include adequate measures to improve the highways and alleviate congestion.

NP emphasised the importance of a data-driven approach to developing solutions for transportation modelling and mitigation. He said he was surprised when planning inspectors removed some of the mitigations from the Development Consent Order (DCO). **NP** said that once the DCO is released, Luton Rising would work with authorities on a sustainable transport plan and suggested prioritizing investment and improvements through a sustainable transport forum.

Cllr Lucy Nethsingha (LN) acknowledged the crucial role of Luton Airport in local development and its strategic location. She expressed environmental concerns regarding the expansion of air travel and suggested a broader vision for the airport as a multi-modal transport hub and sees potential for Luton Airport to become a central hub, connecting various transport modes.

Cllr Phil Larratt (PL) expressed concerns about not having a solution to enhance connectivity between West Northamptonshire and Luton Airport, he said this issue needs to be addressed. The current primary route to Luton airport via the M1 corridor is often congested, leading to missed flights, and the public transport service is infrequent. **PL** suggested the accessibility from West Northamptonshire to Luton Airport be included in an upcoming connectivity study.

Cllr Jim Weir (JW) asked if there is an update on how the proposed Universal Studios development may affect connectivity around the region.

NP said that in a recent meeting with the team at Universal, discussions focused on the expected international visitor percentage, airport capacity and the importance of transport connections. NP also agreed with LN and said that the airport is a transport hub. He suggested that there is significant potential for growth in bus services, particularly in east-west routes.

NG said the regional model, led by James Golding-Graham, aims to guide where investments in transport should be enhanced to meet this growing need. The connectivity

	studies do not include Universal because it's based on current knowledge. Collaboration with Bedford and the East West Railway Company is ongoing. Sustainable travel options like buses, walking, and cycling are yet to be fully addressed, but are considered crucial to the regional bus strategy and the Heartbeat network. Technical capabilities are being developed to support these initiatives, with a commitment to further improvement or expansion.
6	Connectivity Studies & Investment Prioritisation Framework Brochure Cllr Liz Leffman (LL) said that she is conscious of the relevance of the connectivity studies to Buckinghamshire and due to the absence of a Buckinghamshire representative, she suggested postponing any decisions to a future meeting, considering it unfair to decide without the presence of all colleagues. James Gagg (JG) introduced the paper and outlined the final packages and summary reports for the 'Thames Valley – Northampton' (Study 4) and 'Southern East West Movements' (Study 5) connectivity studies. Abi Nichols (AN) provided an update on the regional investment prioritisation framework. Phil Larratt (PL) welcomed the Thames Valley – Northampton study and asked why the Northampton loop speed intervention has no indicative timeframe. He mentioned the development of a business case and a feasibility study for a new station south of Northampton. JG said that the Northampton area presents complex challenges for rail operations, as acknowledged in the Network Rail guidance and that potential interventions need to be considered when evaluating the business case for a station, this was emphasised in the West Coast strategic advice from the previous. When Network Rail recently presented to the board, this was reflected in the descriptions for the interventions and also reflected in the detailed work Cllr Larratt mentioned. The Board considered the update but agreed to pause until all Board members were present.

Innovation

James Golding-Graham (JGG) provided the Board with an overview of the innovation work being undertaken by EEH. Direct funding for innovation from DfT is limited. EEH has submitted six funding bids for additional funding over the last 12 months. Funding has been secured for five of these projects. EEH has a flexible approach to the role it undertakes in each of these projects. EEH continues to make good use of its relationships within academia and business networks to support and enable funding bids to be developed. EEH has provided numerous letters of support to academic consortiums. Projects EEH is working on are :

- Artificial intelligence (AI) transport model
- Disrupted Journeys
- Decarbonisation project
- HERT

Naomi Green (NG) said EEH is the only STB in this area she highlighted the region's strength in leveraging bids to attract funding, and that such efforts demonstrate the region's capability to thrive with some governmental support.

Jim Weir (JW) BSIP refresh on the 12th June, how can we link that to other funding going forward.

NG said that Trevor Brennan has been actively working on preparing support for BSIP submissions. EEH has also prepared evidence and mapped out potential routes for the region, which will be shared with officers shortly. The aim is to incorporate this information into the BSIP submissions and to present a comprehensive update to Board in July. Discussions with the Department for Transport (DfT) are ongoing, which will contribute to the spending review proposal. This will be presented as a comprehensive report to the Department for Transport (DfT), following board approval.

TB said that bus officers will be receiving an email from him, this will provide a brief statement on regional connectivity for inclusion in the BSIPS and a detailed section will outline the potential structure of a regional network.

8	Business Unit Update Naomi Green (NG) summarised the business unit update. Adam King (AK) said that discussions have been made with the Local Transport Today magazine and EEH is the headline sponsor for the Local Transport Summit which is set to take place on the 4th and 5th of December in Bedford at the Mercure Hotel. This event is expected to draw national attention, including ministerial and MP attendance. EEH Strategic Leadership Board meeting was originally scheduled for the 6th, however is being rescheduled to the 5th to coincide with the summit, allowing attendees to participate in both events. EEH is looking to accelerate the Luton – Bedford – Corby investment brochure by late summer/early autumn. EEH is expecting to have all seven investment brochures ready for the conference. Sue Frost (SF) asked if the draft South East West movement brochure will be sent before being published. AK said that all the brochures that will affect Luton have been sent to Antony Swift.
9	Future Meeting Dates The Board agreed the following 2024 dates: - 12 July 2024 (<i>in person - To be held at Cranfield University Management School, with a short visit scheduled thereafter.</i>) - 27 September 2024 - 5 December 2024 (in person)