



Strategic Transport Leadership Board

Minutes

29 September 2023

11:00 – 13:00

Online

Present:

Cllr Liz Leffman (Vice Chair)	Leader, Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Jim Robbins	Leader, Swindon Borough Council
Cllr Jim Weir	Deputy Mayor, Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Lucy Nethsingha	Leader, Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr Jennifer Wilson-Marklew	Cabinet Member, Milton Keynes Council
Cllr Graham Lawman	Executive Member, North Northants Council
Cllr Phil Larratt	Cabinet Member, West Northants Council
Cllr Robert Roche	Executive Member, Luton Council
Cllr Anna Smith	Deputy Mayor, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
Cllr Mary Walsh	Executive Member, Central Bedfordshire Council
Cllr Steven Broadbent	Cabinet Member, Buckinghamshire Council

Apologies:

Mayor Nik Johnson	Mayor, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough
Cllr Martin Tett	Leader, Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Phil Bibby	Executive Member, Highways & Transport
Cllr Susan Brown	Chair, Future Oxfordshire Partnership
Cllr Adam Zerny	Leader, Central Bedfordshire Council

EEH Team Members Present:

Naomi Green	Managing Director
Suzanne Winkels	Technical Programme Manager
Fiona Foulkes	Business Manager
Abi Nichols	Project Lead
Trevor Brennan	Project Lead
James Golding-Graham	Head of Decarbonisation and Innovation
Nathalie Mazhunga	Project Officer
Adam King	External Affairs and Policy Manager
Hanane Elmaarouf	Business Operations Assistant
Erin Pitcher	Business Operations Assistant
Helen Fallon	Freight Lead
James Gagg	Project Lead

<p>1</p>	<p>Board Chair – Election</p> <p>Naomi Green (NG), as Managing Director, invited members of the Board for nominations for the Chair for the Strategic Transport Leadership Board. No nominations were received in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>Cllr Lucy Nethsingha nominated Cllr Liz Leffman – this was seconded by Cllr Phil Larratt and Cllr Jennifer Wilson-Marklew.</p> <p>The decision was taken to a vote and voting members of the Board collectively agreed to appoint Cllr Liz Leffman as the new Chair of EEH.</p> <p>Naomi Green (NG) proposed to remove the role of Vice Chair and instead have three Board Champions. The role will be very much about representing EEH at important events, speaking on the subject matter and offering challenge and oversight of EEH’s approach. It is light touch in time commitment but hopefully high in impact for the individuals. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Decarbonisation and Innovation ○ An integrated transport system – exploring mobility hubs, buses and active travel ○ Strategic connectivity – including strategic roads, rail and freight. <p>Action – EEH business unit to develop the proposal further for Board Champions. Board members are asked to consider the role and submit expressions of interest.</p> <p>Cllr Steven Broadbent (SB) expressed interest in the strategic connectivity role.</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>Introductions</p> <p>Cllr Liz Leffman (LL) opened the meeting and asked attendees if they were content with accuracy of previous meeting minutes. No amendments were requested.</p> <p>Naomi Green (NG) gave an update on the actions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ox-Cam Roads Study as forward agenda item for December Board meeting - <i>The agenda item is on hold pending Ministerial decision-making timelines.</i> 2. Cllr Phil Larratt (PL) said that West Northamptonshire would like to work with EEH to develop their first LTP - <i>We await LTP guidance from DfT, but in the meantime EEH are exploring the level of support that can be provided to local authorities (pending a funding settlement from DfT).</i> <p>No questions were raised.</p>

3**Public Questions**

Cllr Liz Leffman (LL) read out the following questions sent by **Anthony Carpen**.

- What discussions has the EEH had within its own organisation and with partner organisations regarding the construction of tram and light rail networks in towns and cities across its geographical area, including but not limited to:
 - [The Light Rail Transit Association](#)
 - [UK Tram](#)
 - [Rail Future East](#)
 - [Cambridge Connect](#)
- Please could the EEH and the Ox-Cam Regional Partnership confirm that they are willing to organise exploratory meetings with the above-mentioned organisations regarding the possibility of light rail to ensure the wealth being generated by Oxford and Cambridge can be better spread to surrounding towns and villages, while at the same time noting the lessons learnt from the [Edinburgh Tram Inquiry](#) over the problems they faced.

Action - EEH to respond to Anthony Carpen's questions with a written response.

Naomi Green (NG) clarified that EEH is supportive of mass rapid transport schemes within the Transport Strategy more broadly, but that individual schemes are a matter for individual local authorities.

Alan Francis (AF), Milton Keynes Green Party provided a statement on Item 7 HS2 released capacity. The statement is below:

I want to urge you to support one of the key recommendations in that report that concerns making Milton Keynes Central into an interchange hub for North, South and East West Services. It proposes that virtually all the trains on the West Coast Main Line would stop at Milton Keynes Central, and it also proposes that more of the East West Rail line trains would stop at Milton Keynes Central. In particular, they would be trained half hourly from Oxford, Aylesbury and from Cambridge, and indeed, the Oxford trains might go on to Northampton and the Cambridge trains might go on to Cambridge and in order to do this, it needs a couple of extra tracks between on the West Coast Main line between Bletchley and Milton Keynes Central that's a distance of about 3 miles.

The first mile is already covered by some existing tracks, so what we're really talking about is 2 miles of increasing from 4 tracks to 6 tracks and unlike the situation that I'm sure most of the Members are aware of in Bedford, where adding an extra couple of tracks involved demolishing houses, that's not the case here in Milton Keynes and alongside the track are commercial premises or open land and it involves widening a cutting and adding a couple of bridges, but it's fairly straightforward and doesn't involve any demolition. They also talk about a North East chord so that trains could go directly from Cambridge to Milton Keynes without having to go into Bletchley and reverse sort of more ambivalent about that one but it makes this recommendation saying that this could be done when the capacity on the West Coast Main Line is released by HS2 but I would like to suggest to you that it should be done anyway, because Milton Keynes Central can then become an interchange hub.

The report does describe it as a no regrets measure in other words, it's kind of needed in all of the scenarios that they're considering, but I would suggest to you that a you support that recommendation, which is their highest priority recommendation, but B that you consider actually bringing it forward because it's a useful measure even before the capacity on the



West Coast Main line is released by HS2 and we obviously all aware that the timing and extent of HS2 is currently under discussion, but this is a project worthwhile doing with or without HS2 and it brings benefit across the whole of the EEH region because it improves connectivity between Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, Bedfordshire, and Cambridgeshire. Thank you very much.

Action – EEH business unit will consider Alan Francis’s statement.

4

Oxford-Cambridge Pan-Regional Partnership

Cllr Liz Leffman (LL) opened the item and welcomed **Dipesh J Shah (DS), Chair of the Oxford-Cambridge Pan-Regional Partnership (Ox-Cam PRP)**.

DS thanked **LL** for the welcome and agreed that the collaboration between EEH and OxCam PRP are essential. He added that the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had written to the PRP in January 2023 setting out key priorities for new partnership which were:

- to bring together public and private sector partners,
- to realize the region's economic potential in an environmentally sustainable manner, and
- to create a strong regional brand that competes on investments on a global scale.

At the first PRP board meeting a couple of weeks ago, missions were endorsed and immediate priorities were agreed. The objective is to move into delivery at pace through a focused programme. The missions that were endorsed are:

- Secure a future in which our communities prosper from the very best in environmentally sustainable ways of living and working.
- Collaborate to excel economic opportunities created through the regions of the innovation strengths.
- Achieve significant environmental enhancements.
- Unlock investment for inclusive, high quality, sustainable development.

The work programme includes pulling together:

- an investment prospectus
- environmental issues within the region e.g. water management
- an evidence base/data observatory to support investment
- advocacy for collaboration and the region

DS clarified his desire that duplication is avoided between EEH and the Pan Regional Partnership.

DS also added that he would be delighted to see everyone at the Ox-Cam PRP annual conference on the 24 November, at which EEH have agreed to host a workshop session on innovation in local transport.

Cllr Lucy Nethsingha (LN) welcomed **DS** and said that there are some areas of overlap with some of the other partnerships. **LN** raised concerns about repetitive work being made by Cambridge 2040 (particularly around water resources) and asked if conversations have been had with Peter Freeman on how this can be avoided.

DS confirmed that he has met with Peter Freeman and emphasised that he does not want to "get in the way of" local initiatives. Communication between partnerships will help avoid work being duplicated and sharing best practises.

Cllr Steve Broadbent (SB) sought clarification on the geography covered by the Ox-Cam PRP, saying that neither Buckinghamshire Council or the LEP have been approached for discussion on collaboration opportunities.

DS said we do need to work right across the region, including with Buckinghamshire Council. He also added that he will be reaching out to commence engagement and dialogue.

Hillary Chipping (HC) endorsed the answer on water management and agreed with the collaboration between the work streams and extending best practise across region. Partnership will want to work with Buckinghamshire. Richard Hutchins (Managing Director for Ox-Cam PRP) has reached out Rachael Shimmin (Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire Council) about involvement in the inward investment prospectus.

LL reiterated that regular communication between the two organisations is crucial as they both have similar intentions. PRP is part of the bigger EEH region and ensuring cooperation on a regular basis as members would like to be involved.

Action – Ox-Cam PRP on the agenda in future meeting.

5**Strategic Transport Leadership Board – Mid-Year Finance and Priorities**

Naomi Green (NG) presented the paper and explained the financial position for the current financial year.

In May 2023, the Board agreed to the annual local contributions towards EEH, including a 2% uplift in contributions. While below the rate of inflation and staff cost increases, NG understands that it's a significant amount of funding allocated towards a partnership and EEH are working to measure and quantify the return on that investment and its impact. In July this year, DfT confirmed settlement for 2023-24 as £1.35 million. This was lower than the indicative settlement amount and represents a 5% reduction in the level of funding expected.

NG added that 95% of the budget last year was committed in-year, with the other 5% on hold due to awaiting further decisions either from DfT or other partners. Staffing costs have slightly increased due to an additional fixed term contract being added to provide support to local authorities on C&C, LTP guidance and other general technical based projects. The overall programme is on track, with a focus on delivering the tail expenditure (see annex 1 for programme/project progress). Alongside these, projects EEH have continued to work on joint projects which are set out in 6.2, and these add significant value to local authorities.

NG asked Board to agree the proposed work programme for the 2023-2024 based on the revised settlement, which is in line with the 2022-2025 business plan. Despite the shift in funding available, and the disappointment that no additional funding for centre of excellence or CAF has been provided, the EEH programme for 2023/24 remains ambitious and designed to have impact. In agreeing to it, the Board can expect that EEH will:

- Plan for how public transport and strategically important roads are better connected, managed and integrated.
- Develop the matrix of evidence capturing service improvements, small scale interventions and priority capital projects which achieve economic growth and net zero.
- Move forward, and secure funding for, the introduction of mobility hubs.
- Plan to support the smooth passage of freight and logistics within and through the region.
- Work with train operators and Network Rail to see our rail line priorities are realised.
- Support the rollout of public electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
- Create a resource upon which all partners can draw to support the development of scheme proposals (scheme development hub).
- Provide additional resource over the next two years to enable local authorities to produce updated local transport plans (centre of excellence).
- Amplify a clear regional voice which recognises the realities of Government funding and ensures money is invested in the most important schemes and services for the benefit of the region and UK.
- Collaborate with partners – bringing sectors, modes and structures together for the benefit of EEH's places.

Cllr Liz Leffman she said that there have been a number of announcements on supporting motorists, does EEH have any sense on the impact this will have across the region.

NG explained that she has not seen any shift in the way DfT is responding.

Dan Taylor (DT), Department for Transport added that there has not been a significant policy shift, whilst acknowledging there has been a number of announcements regarding choices in planning. There is no requirement for schemes to pause or change at present. He encouraged local authorities to continue to work closely with relevant DfT policy teams as this is an evolving picture.

Cllr Steven Broadbent (SB) asked when the connectivity studies and the investment pipeline work will come together and what point will we know if we need to consider doing anymore in future years.

NG said that the investment pipeline is intended to be flexible to priorities, and is being done as a matrix so that it can keep growing over time (i.e. it would not be waiting for completion of the Luton – North Northampton Connectivity Study 6). This is due to come to the Board in March 2024 and EEH officers would be seeking to engage with Board members over the next month. Most of the region has been covered by the connectivity studies programme, excluding the borders of CPCA given that there was a lot of work ongoing in that area when the connectivity studies programme was originally scoped.

Trevor Brennan (TB) clarified that work has started on connectivity study 6, EEH will be seeking agreement to the conclusions of the study from the Board in December 2024.

Cllr Anna Smith (AS) referred to the recent announcement delaying Local Transport Plan guidance consultation and said that it would be helpful for local authorities if the local transport plans guidance could be made publicly available, for example so that it could be used by members to audit plans.

DT noted the comment and said that it's not ready for circulation yet and are regularly seeking updates on it.

Cllr Lucy Nethsingha (LN) said that it is worth checking in with officers on the gaps in connectivity studies geography, as well as transport East as part of the wider corridor including Ely

Action – EEH business unit to work with Transport East and local authorities on gaps in the Connectivity Studies.

Adam King (AK) updated the board on the advocacy plan over the autumn and said we knew from the outcome of the independent review of EEH that this was important to Board members. There is real role for EEH to represent the region on making a case for investment priorities. EEH were successful in securing a recommitment for East West Rail last year, this year the focus has been on Ely Area Capacity Enhancement . EEH's priorities are unlocking the potential of the region. In June the **Keeping Trade on Track** brochure was launched, the advice from DfT officials was to keep on pushing. We have a suggested a letter for the board to send to ministers about how Ely is a rail solution for the roads problem. Other infrastructure asks are clarity on the MRN programme, Oxford to Cambridge road study and pushing the case for the Varsity Way active travel scheme. Alongside this, the advocacy plan includes pushing for policy reform to: strengthen the role of sub-national transport bodies in setting road and rail priorities; reforming the system of competitive funding rounds; the need for consistent 5yr funding; and reform of buses. EEH are preparing for the autumn statement submission, and are also about to commission a set of economic narratives for the region .

AS supports the work on Ely junction and great to see we are pushing on it in this forum.

The Board:

- **noted the mid-year financial position for EEH, including staffing and programme updates.**
- **Agreed to the programme of work for 2023/24.**
- **Agreed to provide a steer during the autumn on priorities for EEH's 2024/2025 work programme – this would be discussed further at the December Board meeting.**
- **Agreed the autumn advocacy programme for EEH.**
- **Agreed to write to the Secretary of State for Transport to impress the case for investment in the Ely Junction Capacity Enhancements Scheme.**

6 Bus Symposium feedback and next steps

Trevor Brennan (TB) introduced the paper and thanked board members for attending the bus symposium. The paper provided the draft 'Statement of Intent' which gave a direction for EEH's future work on buses. Attendees were pleased with outcomes, and EEH received excellent feedback. Key take aways are that members valued the session as a focused opportunity on buses, whilst recognising the need for future work on rural.

The statement of intent covers three broad areas of focus for EEH to develop into a costed programme:

- total transport – consider how/whether provision in buses, school transport and patient transport could be brought together and identify opportunities for cross-border working
- models and funding opportunities, such as the powers of enhanced partnerships. More information was requested on how these models might work in the region
- services and technology to provide integrated ticketing.

Cllr Steven Broadbent (SB) proposed that a sentence around 'recognising the varied challenges and that there is a need for a collective voice however solutions aren't uniform for everyone' to be added to the funding section in 4.1 of the statement of intent document.

Phil Southall (PS) congratulated EEH on the event and cautioned not to underestimate the scale of challenges arising from the total transport project. He also encouraged everyone to engage with DfT on Project Coral. **PS** then said that having just mobilized the new franchise in Manchester, the cost is large and there's no guarantee it will be funded by the government as they are not committing to fund franchising. ZEBRA 2 has just been announced, £129 million has been made available therefore bids expression of interest must be by 20 October and final bids submitted by the 15 December – the net zero transition is not clear cut, and it may be worth including something on ZEBRA funding. Long term funding for the bus industry is still being considered by government.

Cllr Graham Lawman (GL) welcomed some additional support around enhanced partnership enforcement, as due to North Northants having one major bus operator, there can be challenges with commercial interest. Rural transport issues are not mentioned in the paper and should include community transport, hub and spoke model, and particularly demand responsive transport in rural areas. **GL** also shared **PS's** concerns around BSOG and the concessionary fare future.

Cllr Phil Larratt (PL) agreed with **SB's** comments around differing starting points between authorities. Due to the legacy issues of the former Northamptonshire County Council, both West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire have suffered with lack of investment in transport. The statement of intent picks up all the issues however we need to consider rural areas where services don't currently exist. **PL** also recognised the great work within the connectivity studies that highlight areas where bus services need strengthening, e.g. Silverstone connections.

Cllr Lucy Nethsingha (LN) said she supports the summary that's been put forward and pleased that total transport is there despite it being difficult and think its important that it stays there. Rural home to school transport costs have risen exponentially over the last 5 years and considering how to improve this should not be missed. Young people living in rural areas have limited opportunities for them to access education and work.

Cllr Anna Smith (AS) endorsed the rural connectivity points that have been made, we are in all agreement for the need to consider improving public transport in rural and urban communities. Cambridge and Peterborough combined authority have gone out for audit on



	<p>the outline business case for bus reform. AS also said that an awareness and impacts on any future devolution deals would be helpful to be included in the paper/further thinking.</p> <p>LL agreed with everyone's comments and suggested a future paper on actions that have come out of the bus symposium.</p> <p>The Board have suggested their comments to be added to the Draft 'Statement of Intent', arising from the EEH Bus symposium 2023.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>West Coast South Strategic Advice, including HS2 released capacity</p> <p>James Gagg (JG) introduced the paper and provided an update on the Network Rail West Coast South Strategic Advice work, published July 2023, regarding opportunities from HS2 released capacity.</p> <p>Gavin Dowland (GD), Lead Strategic Planner, Network Rail explained that the West Coast South Strategic Advice looks at options on how to best use the released capacity from HS2 and how to deliver other aspirations beyond once HS2 is up and running.</p> <p>Matthew Jones (MJ), Senior Strategic Planner, Network Rail gave a brief overview of the document in full. This report is available on the Network Rail website. MJ gave an update on the Approach & Method, Objectives & Scenarios, Planning & Principles, and the Findings.</p> <p>Cllr Phil Larratt (PL) said that West Northamptonshire has much to gain from the released capacity on the West Coast Main Line. The study mentions possible additional stations – the potential benefits of these needs to be balanced with the impact on journey times, particularly for commuters between Northampton and Birmingham or London. PL said he would like to be engaged in anything to do with new stations. He also noted that the direct Stoke-on-Trent and Crewe services are not proposed for return, expressing concerns that the advice is Milton Keynes centric rather than Northampton or Long Buckby. PL also said he would like Weedon Loops to be given higher priority as it would enable more freight to use the Northampton avoiding line, and does not want to see freight at the detriment of paths for passenger services. PL was pleased to see consideration of 6-tracking between Bletchley and Milton Keynes as a priority in order to maximise benefits of East West Rail and added that he would like to see the realisation of the eastward cord.</p> <p>MJ acknowledged PL's comments and said that Network Rail are very conscious about the connectivity between Northampton and the North West, services that used to run are captured in the scenario testing. There will be a choice to be made regarding increasing the number of services/reduction in journey time or introducing/reintroducing direct connections to the North West.</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>Roads of the Future</p> <p>The Board noted the paper presented by James Golding-Graham has written. Due to time restriction, no questions were raised.</p>

<p>9</p>	<p>Business Unit Update and consultation responses</p> <p>The Board noted the paper Suzanne Winkels has written.</p> <p>Cllr Graham Lawman (GL) expressed concerns on the lack of engagement from special assistance staff at the train station and ticket pricing gap between ticket machines and online.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Proposed Future Meeting Dates</p> <p>1 December 2023</p> <p>The meeting will be in person to be held in Farnham and Robertson House (Hertfordshire County Council), Six Hills Way, Stevenage, SG1 2ST) <i>the pre-meet will be reduced to 30 mins allowing the extra 30 mins to be added to the board meeting.</i></p> <p>2024 proposed dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 March 2024 - 24 May 2024 - 12 July 2024 (in person) - 27 September 2024 - 6 December 2024 (in person) <p>Board members were also invited and encouraged to attend our EEH Annual Conference on 1 November 2023 at the Guildhall, Cambridge</p>