

# Strategic Transport Leadership Board

1 March 2024

## Agenda Item 6: Investment priorities

### *Recommendation:*

**It is recommended that the Board:**

- a) Notes the progress being made on the connectivity studies and investment prioritisation framework.**
- b) Notes the work being undertaken to clearly and concisely communicate the region's transport priorities through the 'Connecting Economies' investment brochures, including the illustrative list of interventions for the first six brochures (sections 7-12) and EEH's plans to engage with members and officers to agree the final list.**

### **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1. To update members on the connectivity studies, investment prioritisation framework and investment brochures, including an illustrative list of priorities for each brochure.

### **2. Key points to note**

- 2.1. The Thames Valley-Northampton and 'Southern East-West Movements' connectivity studies are nearing completion, and work is progressing on Luton-Bedford-Corby.
- 2.2. The investment prioritisation framework, a database of interventions filterable by different criteria, is also nearing completion and a methodology note is the appendix.
- 2.3. EEH is producing investment brochures which highlight the flagship transport schemes across seven corridors/ areas in the region.
- 2.4. The brochures will feature a short list of priority interventions which score strongly in EEH's investment framework prioritisation tool.
- 2.5. An illustrative, draft list of interventions which could be included in the brochures is below, and EEH will work with members and officers to finalise this list over the coming months.

### **3. Context**

- 3.1. EEH has developed a significant body of evidence to support its role in advising the Secretary of State on the region's priorities for investment which support economic growth while reducing emissions.
- 3.2. This includes the multimodal connectivity studies and the investment prioritisation framework, a database of interventions categorised by 12 levels of service criteria.
- 3.3. It is crucial that identified priorities are now clearly and concisely communicated to government, its agencies and other stakeholders including the private sector. This is what the investment brochures are looking to achieve.

#### **4. Connectivity studies**

- 4.1. The 'Thames Valley-Northampton' and 'Southern East West Movements' connectivity studies have been in development since January 2023, working extensively with stakeholders (see annex 1) to progress each of the studies to shape a package of the interventions for each study area. These will be presented to the May Board.
- 4.2. The studies are part of a programme of multi-modal connectivity studies, with previous studies relating to 'Oxford-Milton Keynes', 'Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford' and 'Swindon-Didcot-Oxford' already complete.
- 4.3. A sixth connectivity study covering Luton-Bedford-Corby continues to be developed. A long list of interventions for the study area is under development via engagement with the steering group, stakeholders, and Members. It is anticipated that this study will be completed by end of 2024 and presented to December's Board.

#### **5. Investment prioritisation framework**

- 5.1. The outputs of the studies will be included in our investment prioritisation framework (pipeline) - a core function of an STB set by the Department for Transport.
- 5.2. Guidance from the Department for Transport suggests that:
  - The investment pipelines developed by STBs should be usable documents which will help Government and LTAs prioritise investment in regions
  - STBs needs to regularly engage with DfT policy colleagues, as well as colleagues from DfT agencies responsible for delivering investment, such as National Highways, Network Rail and Great British Railways.
  - Government priorities can change rapidly, due to external events and changing fiscal circumstances. Therefore, each STBs should be ready to provide prioritised, evidenced advice, across all modes of transport, should investment demands change in the future.
- 5.3. Building on this guidance, EEH has developed an investment prioritisation framework, building on the principles of the transport strategy. The 'levels of service'/ objectives under which the framework was built have previously been agreed by Board and are included in annex 2.
- 5.4. Officers and Members have been engaged through workshops and individual briefing sessions as well as officer feedback on the list of interventions included in the framework.
- 5.5. The framework is not a static document and will be iterated moving forwards, noting the ongoing nature and development of schemes and pipelines.
- 5.6. An output of the project is a clearly written methodology, which outlines the development of the framework approach, which is available to LAs wishing to utilise the methodology in the development of their own local pipelines. The methodology is included as appendix 1 to this report.
- 5.7. As outlined in previous Board papers, EEH's approach to the iteration of the investment prioritisation framework is to be agile and flexible. For example, Government bid documents may have different objectives – the framework allows us to focus on the objectives identified to understand, working alongside partners, the interventions which best meet the objectives. It is a way for us to have an evidence-based approach and narrative for the investment priorities for the region.
- 5.8. The investment prioritisation framework will be utilised by EEH (and partners) to identify interventions for inclusion in the investment brochures, meet requirements from Government for identifying interventions as future bidding pots become available and identify where EEH has a role in supporting the development of interventions for future work planning. Any decision about future regional priorities will be presented to the Board, along with accompanying evidence from the investment prioritisation framework for the Board's agreement.
- 5.9. The investment prioritisation framework will be iterated annually.

## **6. Investment brochures: overview**

- 6.1. The value of clearly and concisely communicating regional priorities can be seen in the success of achieving government funding commitments to East West Rail and Ely Junction.
- 6.2. EEH is therefore producing seven geographically-based 'investment brochures' which are underpinned by expert analysis of the region's economy and contain the flagship priorities which EEH can focus its advocacy work over the coming 12 months.
- 6.3. The brochures' geographies are largely based on the connectivity study corridors:
  - Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford
  - Milton Keynes
  - Swindon-Didcot-Oxford
  - Southern east-west movements
  - Thames Valley-Bucks-Milton Keynes-Northampton
  - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
  - Luton-Bedford-Corby
- 6.4. The majority of the brochures, provisionally titled 'Connecting Economies', should be available by late spring (subject to Board approval in May) providing a focal point for EEH and partners' prioritisation and advocacy work throughout the rest of the year.
- 6.5. The Luton-Bedford-Corby brochure will be launched later in the year, following completion of the corresponding connectivity study.
- 6.6. The brochures will be around 20 pages long, with a format based on the success of the Building Better Connections (East West Rail) and Keeping Trade on Track (Ely) brochures.
- 6.7. The first half of the brochures will contain a summary of economic analysis commissioned from Cambridge Econometrics. This provides the economic narrative for the brochures' geographies (for example, understanding the key sectors and clusters within them) and how better connectivity within the corridors will unlock economic growth. EEH and Cambridge Econometrics have engaged with economic development officers and LEPs regarding these narratives.
- 6.8. The second half of the brochure will detail between five and 10 flagship transport priorities for that geography, as identified by our evidence base and subject to the Board's comment and approval.
- 6.9. As referenced above, the geographies of the brochures are largely based on the geographies of the connectivity study corridors. The connectivity study corridors were chosen after a thorough sifting exercise involving transport officers, and these were approved by EEH's Strategic Transport Forum (the precursor to this board) in 2021.
- 6.10. At the time, in consultation with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, it was agreed that no connectivity study would be carried out involving Cambridgeshire. However, recent engagement with CPCA and other Cambridgeshire partners has suggested an appetite for an investment brochure based on Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- 6.11. To reduce the duplication of similar geographies being covered by several brochures, and to reflect the importance of Milton Keynes as one of the largest and fastest growing economic and population centres in the region, there will be an investment brochure based on Milton Keynes, rather than one based on the geography of the Oxford-MK connectivity study.
- 6.12. In some other cases the geographies have been slightly altered from those used in the connectivity studies to ensure all areas of the EEH region are covered (for example, Banbury and Daventry are included within the Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford brochure) and to reflect Cambridge Econometric's identification of the individual economic areas which make up each corridor.

## **7. Investment brochures: interventions**

- 7.1. Each brochure will feature between five and 10 priority interventions (some interventions may be grouped by type or location).
- 7.2. An illustrative list of potential interventions for inclusion in each brochure is below. It is recommended that a 'less in more' approach is taken with the priorities: with a smaller number of interventions providing greater focus to advocacy over the coming year.
- 7.3. EEH is keen to work with members and officers to agree a final list for inclusion in the brochures. Over the coming month we will engage with transport officers, growth boards, LEPs and economic development officers on the brochures, and will be pleased to have one-to-one discussions with Board members (please contact external affairs and policy manager Adam King at [aking@englandseconomicheartland.com](mailto:aking@englandseconomicheartland.com) if you wish to set up a meeting or provide any comment).
- 7.4. The illustrative list interventions has been selected based on the evidence gathered in the connectivity studies and other studies by EEH or partners. The broad criteria for their selection is based on:
  - Their performance in EEH's investment framework prioritisation tool. This is either where a scheme has scored particularly well for its impact on economic growth and/or where it has scored well across several criteria such as in improving strategic and local connectivity, improving journey time reliability, encouraging modal shift and reducing operational emissions.
  - Interventions that are at an appropriate stage of development with a prospect of progression in the next 12-18 months (for example, with regards to road schemes, they are major road network submissions, feature in the road investment strategies or are emerging as priority areas from the Oxford-Cambridge Roads Study).
  - Interventions not already at DCO/ construction stage.
  - A mixture of road, rail, bus and active travel schemes.
  - Strong political buy-in and support from our partner authorities.
- 7.5. The narrative in the brochure detailing the wording of each intervention will be produced in collaboration with our partner authorities to ensure consistency of message.
- 7.6. The illustrative list of priorities to be featured in each brochure is below (aside from Luton-Bedford-Corby, which will be agreed at a subsequent Board meeting following completion of the corresponding connectivity study):

## **8. Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford**



- 8.1. Focus: Improving connectivity to and between the economic centres of Peterborough, Northampton and Oxford, along the northern 'arc' of the EEH region.
- 8.2. Illustrative list of interventions:
  - Bus service improvements along the corridor, including between Oxford and Northampton, connectivity to Silverstone, and along the A45/ A605

- MRN schemes: A1139 Peterborough; A43 Northampton-Kettering; A509 Isham Bypass
- Peterborough Station quarter
- Reinstatement of Welland Valley Rail
- Improving connectivity around Bicester including M40 junctions/ A41 and a solution for London Road
- Northampton strategic road improvements including A45/ A43/ Northern Orbital Road
- Towcester connectivity including A5 relief road and A43 to Brackley
- Improvements to the Cotswolds Line
- Maximising opportunities from East West Rail, including seamless interchange from the radial main lines which connect into it EWR stations
- Varsity Way between Oxford and Bicester and improvements to wider active travel network

## 9. Milton Keynes



- 9.1. Focus: Getting people in/out of and around Milton Keynes, a growing major economic centre located in the middle of the region.
- 9.2. For this brochure, Cambridge Econometrics is considering the Milton Keynes area's economy (dark grey), and its relationship with neighbouring economic areas (light grey).
- 9.3. Illustrative list of interventions:
  - Milton Keynes MRT
  - Maximising opportunities from East West Rail including Bletchley eastern entrance; Bletchley chord; Aylesbury link and Marston Vale services.
  - Access to M1 junctions 13-14
  - A5 Kelly's Kitchen improvements
  - Improving sustainable travel between Milton Keynes, Cranfield and Millbrook
  - Varsity Way between Bicester, Milton Keynes and Bedford and improvements to wider active travel network

## 10. Swindon-Didcot-Oxford



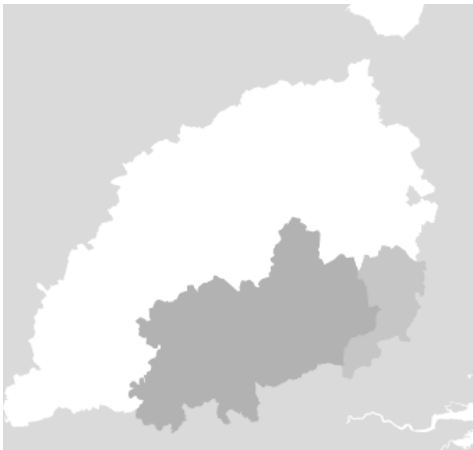
10.1. Better connectivity between Swindon and Oxford, and to the 'Science Vale' to the south of Oxford, alongside improving connectivity along a wider Bristol-Swindon-Oxford corridor.

10.2. For this brochure, Cambridge Econometrics is considering the synergies between the economies of Bristol, Swindon and Oxford and the economic opportunities better connectivity along this corridor would unlock.

10.3. Illustrative list of interventions:

- Improving multimodal connectivity along the A420
- East West Rail services to Bristol and new stations along the Great Western Main Line
- Improving Oxford core bus network
- Reopening of Cowley branch line
- Improving connectivity on the A419
- Delivery of mobility hubs along the corridor
- Improving bus journeys along the A34 between Abingdon and Oxford

## 11. Southern east-west movements



11.1. Brochure focus: Improving east-west connectivity along the southern half of the EEH region, including connectivity to Luton and Stansted airports.

11.2. For this brochure, Cambridge Econometrics is also considering the economic relationship of the corridor with Harlow and Stansted areas (light grey), given the very close proximity of both to east Hertfordshire.

11.3. Illustrative list of interventions:

- Hertfordshire-Essex Rapid Transit (HERT)

- Aylesbury connectivity: facilitating regional east-west movements on the A41 by investing in the Aylesbury ring road.
- Luton and Luton Airport connectivity improvements including Vauxhall Way, Luton Station improvements and extension of busway to Leighton Buzzard
- A10 improvements at Broxbourne
- Active travel improvements including between Tring, Wendover and Aylesbury

## **12. Thames Valley-Bucks-Milton Keynes-Northampton**



12.1. Brochure focus: Improving connectivity from the Midlands through to Thames Valley.

12.2. For this brochure, Cambridge Econometrics is considering the economic relationship Reading, Slough and Heathrow (light grey) has with the wider corridor.

12.3. Illustrative list of interventions:

- West Coast Main Line improvements including enhancements around Northampton and making the most of HS2 released capacity
- Northampton-Milton Keynes-Aylesbury-Wycombe-Old Oak Common rail corridor
- Aylesbury connectivity improvements including ring roads and improved rail connectivity (including link to Milton Keynes).
- Chiltern Line improvements including train lengthening and rolling stock
- Improvements to A421 corridor
- Improvements to A418 corridor
- Improvements along the A404 corridor including the A404/M40 Junction 4 Handy Cross roundabout
- Varsity Way and improvements to wider active travel network

## **13. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough**



13.1. Brochure focus: Improving regional connectivity into the cities of Peterborough and Cambridge, and improving connectivity within rural Cambridgeshire.

13.2. For this brochure, Cambridge Econometrics is considering Cambridgeshire's economic relationship with neighbouring (mainly rural) areas (light grey).

13.3. Illustrative list of interventions:

- Ely junction improvements
- Maximising opportunities from East West Rail including Bedford-Cambridge section and eastern section to Norwich and Ipswich
- A1 connectivity (Huntingdon to Biggleswade)
- March-Wisbech-Peterborough public transport improvements, including restoration of Wisbech to March rail services and Peterborough-March ultralight rail.
- M11 Junction 13
- Improvements to rail connectivity to Stansted
- A10 Ely to A14 improvements
- Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership initiatives: Cambourne to Cambridge; Cambridge Eastern Access; Cambridge South East Transport; Waterbeach to Cambridge
- Varsity Way between Bedford and Cambridge and wider improvements to active travel network
- Peterborough bus depot

**Abi Nichols and Adam King**  
**February 2024**

**(see annexes below)**



## Annex 1: Stakeholder engagement

The below table summarises the external stakeholder engagement sessions for the connectivity studies '**Thames Valley – Northampton' Study 4** and '**Southern East West Movements' Study 5**

\*Transport Officer Group, Strategic Transport Leadership Board updates throughout and written comments from officers were invited on all outputs of the study.

\*\* The steering groups was formed of Local Authority officers (Local Transport Authorities and Local Planning Authorities).

\*\*\*The stakeholder groups involved organisations such as (non-exhaustive list): DfT, National Highways, Network Rail, public transport operators, Sustrans, statutory environmental bodies, Chamber of Commerce

\*\*\*\* Where there is engagement listed for a steering or stakeholder group there were 2 sets of meetings – one for each study

Date	Meetings
24 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2023	Steering group 1- Study 4
25 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2023	Steering group 1 -Study 5
27 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2023	Steering group 2- Study 4
1 <sup>st</sup> March 2023	Stakeholder group 1 – Study 5
8 <sup>th</sup> March 2023	Steering group 2 -Study 5
14 <sup>th</sup> March 2023	Stakeholder group 1 – Study 4
20 <sup>th</sup> April 2023	Member Briefing – Bedford
24 <sup>th</sup> April 2023	Member Briefing – West Northamptonshire Council
31 <sup>st</sup> May 2023	Member Briefing – Buckinghamshire Council
9 <sup>th</sup> May to 11 <sup>th</sup> June 2023	A general call for evidence, inviting wider groups and the public for comments on transport issues within the study areas to help inform the study
21 <sup>st</sup> June 2023	Member Briefing – Luton Borough Council
10 <sup>th</sup> July 2023	Steering group 3- Study 5
12 <sup>th</sup> July 2023	Stakeholder group 2 – Study 4
17 <sup>th</sup> July 2023	Steering group 3 -Study 4
19 <sup>th</sup> July 2023	Stakeholder group 2 – Study 5
2 <sup>nd</sup> Aug 2023	Member Briefing – Milton Keynes Council
18 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2023	Member Briefing – Central Bedfordshire Council
13 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2023	Steering group 4- Study 4
15 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2023	Steering group 3- Study 5

## Annex 2: Investment Prioritisation Framework Levels of Service

Transport Policy Key Principle	Principle 1: Achieving net zero carbon emissions from transport no later than 2050, with an ambition to reach this by 2040			Principle 2: Improving quality of life and wellbeing through a safe and inclusive transport system accessible to all which emphasises sustainable and active travel		
Criteria Title	Embodied Emissions	Operational Emissions	Modal Shift	Environment	Safety and Accessibility	Health and Wellbeing
Criteria Description	Avoid a net increase in GHG emissions resulting from construction	Likely to reduce net operational GHG emissions of the transport network	Increase the number and percentage of journeys using active travel and public transport	Conserve and enhance the region's natural and historic environments	Provide greater levels of <b>safety</b> , inclusivity, affordability, and accessibility	Improve air quality and the quality of life of local communities

Transport Policy Key Principle	Principle 3: Supporting the regional economy by connecting people and businesses to markets and opportunities			Principle 4: Ensuring the Heartland works for the UK by enabling the efficient movement of people and goods through the region and to/from international gateways, in a way which lessens its environmental impact		
Criteria Title	Journey Time	Economic Growth	Local Connectivity	Regional Connectivity	Strategic Routes	Interchange
Criteria Description	Reduce journey <b>times</b> and or improve <b>journey time reliability</b> (across all modes)	Support sustainable economic growth and inward investment in all areas	Improve the connectivity in and/or between places of strategic importance and key economic centres	Encourage the safe and sustainable movement of people and goods throughout the region(s) and/or to international gateways	Ensure strategic journeys can use and keep to strategic routes	Facilitate more frictionless transfer between modes for people and goods