

## Strategic Transport Leadership Board

4 December 2025

### Item 4: Integration

#### *Recommendation:*

#### **It is recommended that the Board:**

- a) Agrees the East West Rail Legacy Integration Phase One Report** as a framework to guide regional integration work
- b) Agrees EEH's proposed approach to Phase Two**, including developing the 'Transport Opportunity Plan' (TOP) concept.
- c) Notes progress** with supporting transport integration in and around the new **Universal Studios resort site in Bedford**.
- d) Notes how EEH's wider work contributes to Integration across the region**, and the potential for future TOPs to cover locations not directly in the geography of East West Rail
- e) Notes the proposed Legacy Integration Programme Governance** arrangements
- f) Notes the wider announcements on East West Rail** which were made in October and November (annex 4, below)

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

- 1.1. To seek agreement on EEH phase one integration report, which sets out nine ambitions for integration, and to outline the proposed approach to phase two, which will come before the Board for final agreement in January 2026.

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

- 2.1. Delivery of East West Rail and other significant developments present an outstanding opportunity to embed the principles of the Government's forthcoming Integrated National Transport Strategy within the region.
- 2.2. EEH seeks to support this through its East West Rail 'legacy' integration programme, alongside wider work across the region, for example of bus and advocacy for infrastructure such as MK MRT, Aylesbury link and HERT.
- 2.3. Our Phase One report includes nine 'opportunity statements' which set out ambitions for integration as the basis for the next stage of work – Board is asked to agree this report.

- 2.4. It is proposed that Phase Two applies those opportunity statements to specific geographic locations, to create 'Transport Opportunity Plans'. Board is asked to consider how these locations would be selected within a phased programme approach.
- 2.5. A number of important announcements regarding East West Rail have been made since the last Board meeting (see annex 4).

### **3. Context**

- 3.1. Integrating transport networks is central to delivering a system that works for people, places and the economy.
- 3.2. Enabling high quality and seamless 'door-to-door' journeys across multiple modes ultimately ensures the transport system is more than the sum of its individual parts: maximising the benefits of existing and new infrastructure; making public transport and active travel more attractive; reducing congestion; and improving access to jobs, education and healthcare.
- 3.3. The Government's Integrated National Transport Strategy (INTS) will set out a unified vision to end fragmentation and champions seamless journeys. We are expecting further announcements about the INTS in the coming months.
- 3.4. Developments within our region collectively provide a unique opportunity to realise the ambitions of the INTS and create a legacy of integration best practice. These include:
  - Delivery of East West Rail (see update on East West Rail below)
  - Government commitment to Oxford-Cambridge growth corridor
  - New towns and high levels of planned economic and housing growth
  - Major new trip attractors such as Universal and Puy Du Fou
  - Expansion of airports within and in very close proximity to the region
  - Rural economic hubs such as Silverstone for which improved connectivity is key to their growth
- 3.5. This opportunity is well understood by this Board, Government and the wider transport sector. As the Campaign for Better Transport's Michael Solomon Williams told our recent Bus and Integration Symposium: *"EEH can become the model region where integration is not an aspiration, but standard practice."*

### **4. EEH's East West Rail 'Legacy' Integration Programme**

- 4.1. There are 1.7m people living within 10 miles of East West Rail stations, and 900,000 jobs: a 10-minute enhancement to connectivity to East West Rail stations brings 210,000 more residents closer to Milton Keynes; 80,000 closer to Bicester Village; 74,000 closer to London Luton Airport; 64,000 closer to Oxford; and 52,000 closer to Cambridge.
- 4.2. EEH's East West Rail Integration programme sits within the broader context of our work across the region (see section 6). It is designed to maximise the benefits of Government's multibillion pound investment in East West Rail. However, the 'Transport Opportunity Plan' approach - described below - is applicable across a much wider geography than East West Rail.
- 4.3. The Integration Phase One report, presented in Annex 1, seeks to set the scale of our ambition and the conditions of success.
- 4.4. It has been produced through consultation and collaboration with local authority partners, bus operators and East West Railway Company.
- 4.5. The Phase One report identifies nine 'opportunity statements' which provide the framework for consideration of integrated connectivity.
  - Strategic Connectivity
  - Rural Connectivity
  - Positive behaviour change



- Active Travel
  - Connecting growing settlements
  - Supporting economic growth opportunities
  - Enhancing bus connectivity
  - Stations fit for bus integration
  - Stations fit for integration
- 4.6. EEH presented the draft Phase One report to the Board in October 2024. Following member feedback, EEH held further engagement meetings with local partners and feedback has been incorporated into the final draft report being presented to Board. For a sample of feedback and how it has been actioned, please refer to Annex 2.
- 4.7. Subject to approval by this Board, EEH will progress to Phase Two. This will look at the most effective way of delivering the opportunity statements identified and agreed in Phase One. It is proposed that this would involve the development of Transport Opportunity Plans focused on specific geographical areas.

## **5. Phase Two – Delivering the Opportunity Statements**

- 5.1. EEH has been working to determine the most effective way to deliver the Opportunity Statements identified in phase one and have developed a potential framework through the development of transport opportunity plans (TOPs). These TOPs would be geographically based and would align with and build on the work that East West Railway Company are already progressing through their door-to-door programme.
- 5.2. Each TOP would include an evidence-based action plan and shortlist of priorities for interventions that are key to delivering the opportunity statements (including the ones that fall under East West Railway Company remit/ funding). Interventions not being considered by East West Railway Company (see Annex 3) would be developed into tangible propositions, including costings and an evidence and data-driven strategic narrative on how it would deliver the opportunity statements. The TOP would also consider the best route to secure delivery and funding for identified interventions, including developer contributions and private financing.
- 5.3. EEH is developing criteria to identify TOP locations, that are based on data, need and areas that present the greatest possibility to achieve the relevant opportunity statements, this includes:
- Served by current/ planned East West Rail station/s
  - Within proximity of current/ planned East West Rail station/s and would substantially benefit from improved connectivity to them
  - A major national trip attractor – new or existing
  - A major area of housing and/or economic growth – including new towns
  - An area where stations are being consolidated
  - Where there is fresh impetus created by a major improvement being made to a transport network which can be maximised through enhanced integration.
- 5.4. The 'timeliness' of each TOP is also a key consideration, particularly in the context of the phased approach, alongside the need to avoid duplication of effort. Member and officer feedback on the TOP programme will be a crucial element.
- 5.5. While integration of East West Rail is a major priority for local and national partners, there is a need to realise the economic opportunity of the entire Oxford to Cambridge growth corridor. There will be other places that, while not on the route of East West Rail, play an equally important role in supporting economic growth and as such, we would expect these to be included within a phased approach of TOP delivery.



- 5.6. Based on the criteria above, and subject to Board comments, possible locations that could benefit from a TOP (in alphabetical order) would include:

**Along the line of East West Rail:**

- Bedford and the proposed Universal Studios development and its wider catchment area – a major national and international trip attractor, while Bedford itself will be a major transport hub on the MML and EWR main lines.
- Bicester: An area of significant growth with a new town at Heyford Park/ Puy du Fou theme park/ potential SFRI and significant economic and population growth.
- Marston Vale Line: Centre of housing and economic development, with assets including Millbrook, and consolidation of stations which will require connectivity interventions.
- Milton Keynes: New town. Major growing economic and population hub. Connectivity via MRT is central to these plans.
- Silverstone (with Westcott): Major International destination and economic hub with significant plans for expansion, such as the Silverstone 2035 proposals. Currently experience poor sustainable connectivity. Silverstone is equidistant from a number of rail stations – including three on EWR (Bicester, Winslow, Milton Keynes) with Northampton and Banbury also within range. Westcott is five miles from Aylesbury Vale Parkway, and nine from Bicester Village Station.
- Tempsford: New town – selected by Government as part of first wave of new towns.

**In addition, TOPs outside of the immediate route of EWR could include:**

- Aylesbury: an area of significant housing growth, where connectivity – both road, rail and public transport – is a major barrier to unlocking economic potential.
  - Luton – supporting airport expansion and important connections to the town centre.
  - Stevenage: major connectivity location, with significant economic growth.
  - Wider airport connectivity – reflecting the expansion plans of Heathrow, Stansted and Luton airports.
- 5.7. TOPs would allow a phased approach to delivering the integration programme, tailoring each TOP to local circumstances and using a combination of EEH's inhouse expertise, local authority partners and external support – as necessary.
- 5.8. It is intended that EEH staff will assess the extent to which we can deliver the TOPs in house. Where funding for significant levels of external support is required (in effect, becoming a commissioned project), the Board will be asked to agree a prioritised approach during its meeting in January 2026.

**Universal Transport Opportunity Plan**

- 5.9. EEH's response to the Special Development Order for the proposed Universal Studios resort in Bedford Borough, highlighted concerns about the lack of local and regional connectivity, especially the lack of provision for public bus services.
- 5.10. To address this EEH has been working with Bedford Borough Council and the Department for Transport (DfT) to scope an urgent project to establish the public transport and active travel network needed to support Universal. The project would enable the development of the first integrated TOP to maximise local and regional connectivity opportunities to Universal Studios.
- 5.11. The project would be led by Bedford Borough Council, delivered in partnership with Central Bedfordshire, Luton, and Milton Keynes councils, and supported by DfT and EEH. Governance is through a DfT steering group, likely to be chaired by EEH.



- 5.12. The project has been scoped and costed with funding still to be confirmed from DfT. However, it provides the opportunity to test the TOP approach by developing an integrated transport opportunity plan to provide local and regional accessibility to the proposed Universal Studios.

## **6. Integration and EEH's Wider Work**

- 6.1. While it is intended that Phase Two of the Legacy Integration project would focus on delivery of geographically based Transport Opportunity Plans, improving consistency of transport at a region-wide level is the basis of EEH's overall approach to planning transport integration.
- 6.2. There will be some common interventions identified within developing the TOPs, such as regional ticketing and shared information provision, which would apply across a much broader area than a single TOP location. It may be that the TOPs identify suitable 'trailblazer' locations as proof of concept for the wider region.
- 6.3. Integration touches almost all aspects of EEH's work. This includes our extensive work on improving bus journeys, for example:
- Heartbeat Network
  - 'Buses in Bedfordshire'
  - Luton-Dunstable Busway extension
  - DRT assessment across the region
  - Ongoing Mobility Hub work
  - Supporting journey alert roll-out in Bedford and potentially wider region
- 6.4. This work will continue to serve the whole region. EEH will ensure that it is fed into the Transport Opportunity Plans; and conversely, the Phase One Opportunity Statements act as a framework guiding wider work (given that their ambitions are applicable beyond East West Rail).
- 6.5. In addition, EEH will continue to advocate, support and seek to progress major infrastructure projects which have a significant impact on local and regional connectivity and in many cases would significantly support integration of the transport network into East West Rail and/or radial main lines. These include (but are not limited to):
- The Aylesbury link to Milton Keynes (and Northampton-Old Oak Common-Heathrow corridor)
  - Bletchley Chord
  - Ely Junction
  - Oxford-Swindon-Bristol services
  - Rail east of Cambridge
  - MRT in Milton Keynes and Hertfordshire
  - Oxfordshire Rail Priorities including Cowley Branch Line
  - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough priorities including Cambridge Metro
  - Integration with the region's main lines

## **7. Proposed Legacy Integration Governance**

- 7.1. It is proposed that the integration programme would be overseen by the EEH Board, as EEH is the lead organisation taking the work forward. The East West Main Line Partnership Board would also receive regular updates and engagement.



- 7.2. An Integration Taskforce is being established to steer the overall programme. The Taskforce will comprise key regional and national stakeholders, experts, influencers and innovators. This would report back via the EEH Board.
- 7.3. Working arrangements will be set up according to individual places. Local authority officers and delivery partners, including EWR Company and transport operators will be involved. The working groups will focus on interventions to enable integrated TOPs to be successfully implemented.

## **8. Next Steps**

- 8.1. If the Board agrees the East West Rail Legacy Integration Phase One Report as a framework to guide regional integration work then EEH will continue to develop the proposed approach to Phase Two, including further developing the 'Transport Opportunity Plan' (TOP) concept. Noting that the trailblazer TOP is likely to be focused on the new Universal Studios resort in Bedford Borough as this is a priority for DfT.
- 8.2. The Board should also note the wider announcements on East West Rail which were made in October and November which is included as annex 4.

**Naomi Green**  
**Managing Director**  
**December 2025**



## **ANNEX 1: Integration Phase One report: see separate document**

## **ANNEX 2: Feedback on Phase One Report**

Below is a sample of the feedback from Members and officers on the Stage One report that has been taken into consideration and the report updated to reflect them:

- Expansion of the 10-mile radius as a catchment area to include notable large settlements and economic opportunities, such as London Luton Airport, Silverstone and parts of the Midland Main Line close to the Universal site

Inclusion of the Aylesbury Link as a key connection between Aylesbury and Winslow

- Incorporation of Northampton as a destination within the Milton Keynes and Bletchley Interchange
- Consideration of Stevenage as an interchange with both Thameslink and ECML following the Government 19 November announcement regarding station updates at Tempsford
- Revised wording regarding parking strategies and the role of park and ride to support urban destinations
- Consideration on the service types available to settlements and areas classed as 'Rural' and 'Rural Fringe', notably regarding the choice between rural bus and rural DRT services

Categorisation of the Station Topologies, accounting for the existing status and any future developments around stations

- The need for Rural Connectivity and the role of integrated timetabling in enabling rural connectivity

Opportunity Statement 9– Station Facilities Fit for Integration: Creating and allocating space that supports and enables interchange

Clarity regarding the EWR buckets and the associated funding mechanisms

- The importance of Active Travel within the framework was raised and this has been acknowledged and has been prioritised as Opportunity Statement 4.
- The use of the 10-mile boundary over a destination-based approach was questioned. This has been acknowledged and although it is maintained for the EWR Legacy Integration project, in addition to adding in locations such as Aylesbury, Luton Airport and Silverstone, a more destination-based approach would be taken forward as a focus for Phase 2 through the identification of Transport Opportunity Plans.

## **ANNEX 3: East West Railway Company work on integration**

East West Railway Company is undertaking a Door to Door work programme, that has been developed in collaboration with local authorities to prioritise door to door interventions. This is focused on the following areas:

- Facilities and access to its railway stations, ensuring these are integrated with the wider travel context (for which it has funding)
- Mitigate the impact of its scheme, providing solutions where there are severance issues or a loss of connectivity (for which it has funding)

8.3. They will support wider active travel initiatives, working with stakeholders to enable modal shift but will not fund these directly (e.g developer/ Active Travel England). However, East West Railway Company is likely to only consider interventions within a 2km radius of EWR.



#### **ANNEX 4: East West Rail – ‘you said we did’ and other announcements**

In November the East West Railway Company released its You Said We Did report. It includes a number of significant announcements, summarised below:

- Bicester London Road Level Crossing: Consideration of a single lane underpass for vehicles and a corridor for pedestrians/cyclists
- Bletchley Station: Updated designs for an eastern entrance
- Stewartby Station and Universal Studios: Updated station to support Universal and wider community needs near Broadmead Road
- Bedford St.Johns: Updated relocation with improved links, EV parking and designs
- Tempsford Alignment: Site 1c selected to enable earlier station delivery and better operational efficiency
- ECML Logistics Hub: Option B selected for a refenced design to reduce impact and improve access
- Cambourne Station: Station to be moved 700m west for better access, avoiding green space and aligning with local plans
- Bourn Airfield: Mixed tunnel selected to reduce disruption to existing users, along with lower development and environmental impacts
- Cambridge Station: Consideration of a new eastern entrance to improve connectivity and align with revised Cambridge City Plan
- Cambridge East: Exploration phase for a station at Cambridge East with active travel links and regional connectivity
- Updated designs support confirmation of the Cowley Branch line to be reopened

Marston Vale Line to be revised to have four new stations and up to five trains per hour across a consolidated route of Woburn Sands, Ridgmont, Lidlinton and Stewartby

In addition to the East West Railway announcements within the You Said, We Did report, in October it was confirmed that the Cowley Branch line will be brought back into use for passenger services in addition to its existing freight usage:

This will enable journeys from Cowley to Oxford to be undertaken in nine minutes. The branch line could reopen in 2029, with detailed design work is set to commence in early 2026, and the route, operator and services to be appointed in due course.

The Government has also confirmed the installation of fibre alongside the East West Rail route, inclusive of the Marston Vale Line. EWR Company are currently exploring options for how 5G data connectivity could be provided including through third party funding.

EEH previously secured funding so that fibre was installed on the Bicester-Bletchley section of East West Rail. We subsequently supported the England’s Connected Heartland local authority consortium to trial 5G along this section. We have been engaging with England’s Connected Heartland on how this can be a ‘use case’ for attracting investment in 5G elsewhere along the line.

