



EEH priorities tables

(June 2026 – items in yellow denote changes since previous Board meeting in March 2026)

Table 1: EEH activity on regional priorities

Priority	Rationale and evidence	EEH work overview and next steps
CROSS-REGIONAL PRIORITIES		
<p>East West Rail: Integration</p> <p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p>Transport Strategy (2021) highlights importance of using East West Rail as a catalyst for enhanced local transport and integration.</p> <p>Maximising East West Rail (2024) sets out this ambition in more detail.</p> <p>The engagement activity associated with EWR CS1 and CS2 has demonstrated the need and potential for an integrated transport network with EWR as its core.</p> <p>Local Authority LTPs, EPs, BSIPs, LCWIPs and other related transport strategies and plans, alongside engagement sessions with local</p>	<p>The Integration Legacy Programme is identifying how EWR can be a catalyst for establishing a legacy of a regional integrated transport network for the whole region, not just the last mile connectivity around station locations.</p> <p>EEH is leading and managing this workstream, coordinating all activity with local authorities, EWR Co and transport operators. EEH is also liaising with DfT on how best to use this programme to deliver the INTS.</p> <p>EEH has a resource dedicated to ensuring there is appropriate engagement between EWR Company and local authorities.</p>

	<p>authority transport officers, demonstrate the need for integrated transport.</p> <p>The Department for Transport's Integrated National Transport Strategy acts as an essential evidence base for this piece of work, which aims to deliver the strategy across the region.</p>	<p>Following engagement with Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and the collation of their feedback, the revised phase One report was approved at December's EEH Board meeting.</p> <p>Phase two of the programme is centred around delivery of Transport Opportunity Plans (TOPs). These are detailed in the board paper on Integration for January 2026.</p> <p>EEH has been working to determine the appropriate sequencing of the TOP programme to ensure locations are addressed accordingly.</p> <p>Universal Studios is the first TOP to be undertaken, led by Bedford Borough Council and supported by EEH and DfT. Funding to support the project was confirmed in early January 2026 to support the delivery of the TOP, via technical support and an FTE in Bedford Borough Council. This will create an Integrated Transport Plan with operational interventions to maximise the impact of Universal and the interchange with EWR. More detail on its progress is included in the Board Paper on Integration.</p> <p>The second TOP is focused on Silverstone and is currently in development and is designed to support Silverstone 2035 ambitions by providing better connectivity by sustainable transport modes that in turn will create better access to the Silverstone offer to the wider population.</p> <p>These TOPs will identify practical interventions across bus, rail, active travel, ticketing and mobility services to support growth and improve connectivity.</p> <p>Heads of Service of LTAs across the EEH Region received a briefing on the updates regarding the TOP programme, along with the proposed list, project scope and ambitions.</p> <p>As the Integration and Transport Opportunity Plan Programme progresses, it represents an expansion of the integration workstream to focus beyond the core EWR line, to enhance the integrated transport options across the region as a whole.</p>
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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. Transport Strategy (2021) makes EWR digital spine a priority. Also in connectivity studies.	EEH previously secured funding for fibre to be installed from Bicester-Bletchley. Subsequently supported England’s Connected Heartland’s (ECH) successful bid to make this section 5G. Working with ECH to make case for digital connectivity from Bletchley to Cambridge (and Oxford-Bicester). Integrating digital into the ‘maximising EWR’ work where possible/ appropriate. In November 2025 the Government confirmed that: “East West Rail Company (EWR Co) will install high-capacity fibre along the line of route including the Marston Vale Line, which has spare capacity designated for third-party telecommunications such as to provide 5G mobile signal for passenger use. EWR Co are currently exploring options for how 5G data connectivity could be provided including through third party funding.” EEH is currently discussing with ECH on the feasibility of a study to demonstrate benefits of the trackside 5G project, along with understanding the impact it could have on existing and future EWR sections. We are currently reviewing their project brief and anticipate that a summary paper will be presented before the board in 2026.
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	In November 2022 EEH published a report with Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (Sustrans) highlighting the opportunity of improving the Varsity Way. The report concluded that Varsity Way has the potential to become a

	<p>to green spaces and becoming an iconic tourist destination in its own right.</p> <p>EEH's 2021 Transport Strategy includes maximising the potential of an Oxford-Cambridge 'Varsity Way' segregated cycling and walking route as a 'green spine' across the Heartland: one that can act as a focal point for developing a region wide network of cycle routes." Also included in connectivity studies, active travel studies, and two further reports (see right).</p>	<p>leisure and tourism attraction for the area. Evidence includes an audit of the entire route condition.</p> <p>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 (2025) associated with the Marston Vale area.</p> <p>We continue to work with stakeholders including EWR Company, OxCam Growth Corridor Team, Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, ATE on exploring opportunities to realise ambitions for the Varsity Way.</p>
<p>Better buses: Overview</p> <p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p>Importance of bus journeys highlighted in regional transport strategy (2021) and regional bus strategy (2022).</p> <p>Bus journeys often represent the only realistic means of public transport for people living in many different parts of our region.</p> <p>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>Research by EEH in association with KPMG (2025) highlights importance of bus in region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £2.6 billion in annual spending by bus passengers in local economies, supporting high streets, shops, and leisure venues. • Every £1 of public money spent on improving bus services in the region 	<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>It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosted the third annual EEH Bus Symposium on the 14th of November, which brought together Members and officers with industry and transport experts to consider multi-model transport and regional bus integration the priorities from this support specific thematic areas that are being progressed through EEH's bus focused work. • Supporting the delivery of Journey Alerts QR code bus travel information platform with Bedford Borough Council. • Creating a regional bus network concept 'The Heartbeat', EEH is currently looking how this can support Transport Opportunity Plan ambitions. • Providing strategic level advice on buses and multi-modal integration. • Supporting BSIPs within the region with technical and policy advice. • Providing advocacy on bus funding, including by calculating the economic value per LA and region of local bus services • Creating a bus bid booster tool, to help LTAs calculate the value of bus infrastructure improvements.

	<p>generates as much as £4.55in wider economic benefits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are over 360,000 daily bus journeys 	<p>All of the bus work aligns with the overall aim for integration, and the EWR Legacy Integration Programme.</p> <p>See below under Additional thematic priorities work for further details on specific bus work.</p>
<p>Better Buses: Heartbeat Network</p> <p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p>In 2023 EEH work on bus network models led to the concept of a regional bus network using existing local routes.</p> <p>Modelling has shown the network’s positive impact on GVA, carbon, and modal shift savings.</p>	<p>EEH shared the Heartbeat Network concept diagram and narrative with LTAs to support their BSIP refresh submissions (2024). It was adopted by several partners and shared with DfT BSIP Refresh assessors. In autumn 2024 Board approved further work, commissioning Stage 2 to assess viability and funding for the Heartbeat Network. This work has been completed, and the next stage will be to collaborate with bus operators/local authorities to optimise routes and (if required) undertake further work/modelling to prioritise services and assess impacts of routes. It has also been used by EWR co to inform some of their bus focused work.</p>
<p>Targeted investment in roads (overview).</p> <p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p>Targeted investment in our strategically-important roads will unlock and support economic and housing growth opportunities across our region.</p> <p>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. 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 in the sections below.</p>	<p>Working with National Highways and the DfT to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate the region’s priorities and contribute to technical studies to make the case for investment in the region • promote and progress the next steps in the priorities identified in the OxCam Roads Study, including A1, Aylesbury Roads connectivity and M1 Ju 13. • inform and comment on RIS programme RIS pipeline schemes such as M40/A404 junction and looking for longer term solutions for A34 including challenges at junction 9. <p>EEH has responded to the Draft Third Road Investment Strategy to highlight the key SRN priorities in the Region. We continue to work with National Highways to progress the priorities highlighted in the Oxford to Cambridge Road Study.</p> <p>We continue to work with LTAs to support them on the review of MRN and LLM and are waiting for the outcome of the recent review especially schemes that are on hold.</p>

	CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH	
<p>CPCA Mass Transit/Light Rail</p> <p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p>Delivery of a light rail solution in the Greater Cambridge Area is a priority of the Mayor.</p> <p>In September 2025, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority announced the appointment of Peter Cushing as Light Rail Commissioner.</p> <p>Peter has 25 years rail and light rail national and international experience, working on behalf of private and public sector organisations.</p> <p>Peter will advise the Mayor on all aspects of assessing, planning, and potentially delivering a light rail network for Greater Cambridge and will play an advisory role in shaping the long-term transport vision needed to support sustainable growth across Greater Cambridge and the wider region.</p>	<p>Where appropriate and required, EEH will work to support CPCA with its proposals, and explore where cross-authority collaboration on MRT/BRT would be beneficial.</p>
<p>EWR Eastern Section</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>EWMLP part-funded Transport East strategic case for Eastern Section, which is due to publish in autumn.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>Targeted investment in roads.</p> <p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p><i>See overview above in cross-regional priorities above</i></p> <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) A1139 (Peterborough)</p>	<p><i>See overview above in cross-regional priorities above</i></p> <p>EEH have established the A1 Taskforce to determine the cumulative impacts of developments on all roads around the A1, especially near the proposed New Town of Tempsford. The aim of the Taskforce is to work together to understand the transport requirements to unlock and support growth around the A1 corridor.</p>

	<p>A47 Wansford to Sutton (previous RIS2 Scheme) A605 (south of Peterborough) A14 J33-J36 (Cambridgeshire) A141/A142 (Cambridgeshire) A47/A1101 Elm Road Junction (Cambridgeshire); A10 Ely to Cambridge</p>	
<p>Ely/ Haughley Junctions</p> <p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p>Critical for supporting movement of freight from Felixstowe, reducing road congestion and opening up capacity for better passenger services.</p> <p>Importance of improving Felixstowe-Nuneaton Corridor highlighted in 2019 EEH Freight Study, and included in Regional Transport Strategy (2021).</p> <p>2022 Network Rail outline business case for Ely Area Capacity Enhancements (EACE) showed cost-benefit of 4.89:1</p> <p>Other benefits include removing need for 98,000 lorry movements and improving passenger frequencies between Ipswich-Peterborough and Kings Lynn-Kings Cross.</p>	<p>EEH produced Keeping Trade on Track advocacy (2023 and updated 2024) document which highlighted business case, alongside heavy support from MPs, CPCA, local authorities, freight industry and business.</p> <p>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, Cambridge Ahead, LAs, EofE APPG, Chambers of Commerce, industry and ports.</p> <p>Following its omission from DfT spending programme Ely remains priority for CPCA, EEH and wider region.</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> <p>Evidence which may strengthen case for Ely include recently completed Network Rail route studies on the Great Eastern Main Line and Essex Thameside routes, and the upcoming West Anglia Main Line route study. Ely is strongly referenced in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Growth Plan, published October 2025.</p> <p>Consensus that more needs to be done to bring out benefits for passenger services and subsequent support of growth.</p> <p>We are exploring the potential to support, with partners, a piece of work which would consider how Ely could attract private financing.</p> <p>EEH supported MPs at the adjournment debate on 3 December, in which Minister Lilian Greenwood said: "We fully recognise the strategic importance of the Ely area capacity enhancement programme, which is</p>

		<p>why...we remain committed to supporting its place in the pipeline of future rail enhancements, and the programme will be kept under active review and considered carefully as further funding becomes available.”</p> <p>EEH, Transport East and regional partners have developed the Growth Intersection proposition, setting out the strategic importance of Ely Junction and other improvements in supporting housing growth, economic development and enhanced passenger rail services, alongside freight benefits. The work builds on previous advocacy activity and seeks to strengthen the case for investment by broadening the narrative beyond freight movements to include growth, connectivity and wider economic outcomes. The proposition was launched at UKREiiF and will form part of future engagement with Government, Network Rail and regional partners.</p> <p>EEH is working with the new strategic lead for Ely at Anglia’s Integrated Railway to set out development work streams to further strengthen the case for Ely and other interventions.</p>
	BEDFORD/ LUTON/ MILTON KEYNES/ CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE	
<p>Milton Keynes Metro</p> <p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p>Included in transport strategy (2021), connectivity study (2022), Connecting Economies (2024) and Connecting Economies (2025).</p> <p>Its Strategic Outline Business Case (2023) demonstrates strong strategic rationale for the scheme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to sustainable growth • Support a thriving economy • Promote sustainable outcomes • Support liveable communities • Deliver accessible mobility for all 	<p>EEH has consistently raised with DfT highlighting the needs for a consistent approach to funding MRT schemes regardless of devolution status.</p> <p>We are working with Milton Keynes with evidence-based advocacy, including exploring different funding models for investing in the scheme.</p> <p>In September the New Towns Taskforce explicitly referenced an MRT in relation to a new town in Milton Keynes: “A ‘Renewed Town’ in Milton Keynes; reinvigorating the city centre and expanding to the north and east whilst reshaping the way people travel, by delivering a Mass Rapid Transit system.” EEH continues to engage with MK and DfT – attending meeting and exploring cross authority collaboration opportunities and, monitoring the development of the DfT MRT Task Force.</p>

<p>Better Buses: Luton-Dunstable busway extension</p> <p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p>Potential to extend busway is reflected in EEH Connectivity Study 5 (Southern East-West Movements).</p>	<p>In December 2024, EEH Board agreed funding and work with Central Bedfordshire and Luton Council for a study to explore possible options to extend Luton Dunstable Busway services and routes.</p> <p>Working jointly with Central Bedfordshire and Luton Council and AECOM, Phase One work has been undertaken and was demonstrated at the Bus Symposium 2025. This includes an appraisal of demand for services/routes based upon considering both local authority planned housing/economic growth and using mobile phone movement data is being undertaken to identify possible 'new' services/routes to meet demand identified, due for completion at the end of January 2026.</p> <p>Subject to further stakeholder engagement, Phase Two work is due to be complete in early 2026 and includes setting out how demand will potentially be met either through route and service improvements or physical highway changes.</p> <p>Phase One of the Luton-Dunstable Busway study has now been completed, identifying existing travel patterns, growth locations and opportunities to improve connectivity through enhanced bus services and infrastructure. The work has utilised mobile phone movement data and local authority growth forecasts to identify potential future demand. Phase Two is now underway and will consider potential route enhancements, service improvements and infrastructure interventions required to support future growth and maximise the benefits of the Busway. This work is due to be complete by the end of Aug, with the full technical documents for Phases 1 and 2, due to be presented to Board for agreement in December for consideration.</p>
<p>Better Buses: Buses in Bedfordshire</p> <p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p>Building a more coordinated bus network across the three authority areas, is included in the EEH Luton-Bedfordshire-Corby Connectivity Study.</p> <p>The Bedfordshire area will see several large, investments in infrastructure, such as East West Rail, junction improvements to the A421, expansion of London Luton Airport and the building of Universal Studios.</p>	<p>The plan remains in development, with further work underway to fully define priority actions, but based on initial partner feedback, EEH early work is likely to focus on researching multi-operator ticketing and governance models for consideration by the Bedfordshire authorities.</p> <p>This will also include setting out the costs and funding required to deliver the plan, agreeing governance arrangements and delivery mechanisms, and ensuring alignment with and support for the authorities' existing bus programmes.</p>

	Ensuring buses are at the heart of these improvements will help deliver an integration transport offer, boost the current and future bus ridership, support Bedfordshire economic growth and provide public transport access.	
Bletchley North East Chord, Bletchley Eastern Entrance and capacity at MK Central (UPDATED June 2026)	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. It is identified within connectivity study and rail priorities work to maximise the benefits of EWR in the region. Featured in Connecting Economies brochures, alongside the Bletchley Eastern Entrance which is seen as key to town centre regeneration and integration.	In November 2025 East West Railway Company's 'You Said We Did' report stated: 'We're considering and have included an eastern entrance at Bletchley station within our proposals. The delivery of this additional entrance would be subject to third-party funding'. EWR Co reiterated this position in its 2026 consultation. Network Rail has commenced work on development of the 'MK Hub' strategic outline business case (SOBC) that covers: Bletchley Chord, WCML capacity improvements between Bletchley and Milton Keynes, and upgrades at Milton Keynes Central station. This is due to complete in Spring 2027.
Targeted investment in roads. (UPDATED June 2026)	<i>See overview above in cross-regional priorities above</i> A1 Sandy to Biggleswade (there is also a need for wider improvements between Huntingdon and Biggleswade) M1 Junction 13 (Central Bedfordshire) A6/ A421 (Bedford) A421 (A43 to M1 J13) A43/ A5 roundabout (Milton Keynes) A5 Old Stratford and Kelly's Kitchen roundabouts (Milton Keynes) A5 Hockliffe (Central Bedfordshire) A507 (Central Bedfordshire) Vauxhall Way (Luton Airport)	<i>See overview above in cross-regional priorities above</i> Collaborative discussions with stakeholders considering the A1 South of Buckden to Biggleswade – is an important priority. Working with DfT, National Highways and local authorities to support other major schemes promoters to facilitate joint work to help find solutions, such as the establishment of the A1 Taskforce to determine the impact and transport requirements required to support a new town at Tempsford. EEH continues to represent all the local authorities on the A5 Transport Partnership highlighting the key junction priorities on the A5 in the EEH region:

	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND NORTH AND WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE	
Targeted investment in roads.	<p><i>See overview above in cross-regional priorities above</i></p> <p>Aylesbury roads A43 Corby and Broughton Bicester roads A404 corridor (Buckinghamshire) A34/A43 including challenges at junction 9 with M40 (Oxfordshire/Silverstone) A509 Isham Bypass A5 Transport Partnership</p>	<p><i>See overview above in cross-regional priorities above</i></p> <p>In December 2025, the board wrote a letter to the Secretary of State for Transport emphasising the importance of the A404 junction improvement schemes.</p> <p>EEH continues to represent all the local authorities on the A5 Transport Partnership highlighting the key junction priorities on the A5 in the EEH region:</p> <p>A5 Hockliffe A5 Kellys Kitchen roundabout A5 Kellys Kitchen roundabout, A5 Old Stratford roundabout Towcester Relief Road and complementary public realm enhancements on the existing A5</p>
<p>Aylesbury-Milton Keynes link and wider Northampton-Old Oak Common corridor</p> <p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p>The Aylesbury-Milton Keynes link is an integral part of East West Rail.</p> <p>Realising a new rail corridor between Northampton, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and Old Oak Common, offering rapid interchange to Heathrow Airport.</p> <p>Aylesbury link was previously a core part of the EWR proposal/ original scope as promoted by Government. The link (and the wider Northampton-Old Oak Common corridor) is in the 2021 Transport Strategy, relevant connectivity study (2023); Connecting Economies; and Main Line Priorities Study.</p> <p>The corridor is key to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabling economic growth by linking world class knowledge-intensive sectors 	<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 & Milton Keynes to Old Oak Common and Heathrow.</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> <p>We are engaging with Network Rail on the West Coast Main Line Long Term Study, Chiltern Strategic Advice and the MK Hub SOBC (see above). All of these work streams could potentially strengthen the case for the Aylesbury Link.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transforming the regional and UK transport system, including links to Heathrow Airport Unlocking Aylesbury's potential for its communities, businesses and wider regional economy <p>We also know from other evidence (eg OxCam roads study) how congestion and lack of connectivity is damaging Aylesbury's economic growth potential.</p>	EEH is engaging with Buckinghamshire Council in its work to identify opportunities to further reiterate the case for the scheme and helping to co-ordinate this work with Network Rail work.
	OXFORDSHIRE AND SWINDON	
Oxford 'metro' including Cowley Branch line and wider integration and active travel in Oxford	<p>Using the existing heavy rail network to provide a co-ordinated service to deliver a metro type system for greater Oxfordshire.</p> <p>EEH Rail priorities work supports the strategic rail priorities of Oxfordshire's emerging rail strategy which further reinforces their priorities.</p> <p>Supporting full integration of bus/rail proposals that will form the Oxford metro proposals.</p> <p>Potential bus lane on the A40</p> <p>Better joined up active travel provision across the city, including bike lane infrastructure and embedding it within the Oxford Metro concept. The proposed approach aligns closely with EEH's wider work on integration.</p>	<p>Government committed to reopening the Cowley Branch in October 2025.</p> <p>EEH continues to work with all stakeholders to progress rail priorities in Oxfordshire. OCC is currently developing a rail strategy that will support the Oxford Metro.</p> <p>Included within Connecting Economies brochure.</p> <p>EEH has responded to OCC consultation on Oxfordshire Rail 2040 plan. We continue to support Oxfordshire through representation with Network Rail and DfT and the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Team, Chiltern Railways and Great Western Railways</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.	In 2024 East West Main Line Partnership part funded Network Rail economic appraisal of the benefits of hourly services between Oxford, Swindon, Bath and Bristol, building on the current 'trial' infrequent Saturday service. These findings were presented in EEH/ EWMLP/ WG's

<p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p>The need to improve Oxford-Swindon-Bristol connectivity as part of EWR Main Line identified in 2021 Transport Strategy, subsequent Oxford-Didcot-Swindon connectivity study (2023), Connecting Economies brochure (2024), and Main Line Priorities Rail Study (2024). Also appears as aspiration in Network Rail's EW Main Line Strategic Statement (2022).</p> <p>Network Rail appraisal (part funded by EEH/ EWMLP) provided strong evidence for the intervention (see right).</p>	<p>The case for reinstating Oxford-Swindon-Bath-Bristol rail services (2025).</p> <p>EEH is also supportive of Midlands Rail Hub plans which would see services introduced between Swindon and Birmingham. In October we supported an event organised by Midlands Connect at Swindon Rail Station to raise the profile of the plans.</p> <p>Following sustained advocacy by EEH and the East West Main Line Partnership, regular direct Oxford-Swindon-Bristol rail services commenced operation in May 2026. The new service restores an important strategic rail connection, improving connectivity between key economic centres and supporting wider ambitions for East-West connectivity. EEH will continue to monitor the performance and usage of the service while promoting the wider economic and connectivity benefits associated with improved rail links across the region.</p> <p>The new service runs Monday-Saturday every 2 hours in each direction. GWR's longer term ambition is to run an hourly service. EEH advocates for this service to run through to Cambridge via EWR in the future.</p>
<p>Targeted investment in roads.</p>	<p><i>See overview above in cross-regional priorities above</i></p> <p>A34 Ju 9 & 10 – M40 A40 – solutions to support congestion and unlock housing growth Repairs/Replacement of the Kennington Bridge</p>	<p><i>See overview above in cross-regional priorities above</i></p> <p>Working 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 and SFRI in Oxfordshire.</p>
<p>HERTFORDSHIRE</p>		
<p>Hertfordshire-Essex Rapid Transit (HERT).</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>The connectivity gap for which HERT is a solution was highlighted by Network Rail in EEH's Passenger Rail Study (2021). Included as priority</p>	<p>Hertfordshire County Council have undertaken public consultation on the HERT proposals and are due to publish a more detailed 'prospectus' for the project in Summer 2026, setting out the preferred routing and delivery strategy.</p> <p>EEH will continue to advocate for the HERT.</p>

	<p>in EEH Southern East-West Movement Connectivity Study (2024) and Connecting Economies (2024).</p>	<p>We have consistently raised with DfT highlighting the needs for a consistent approach to funding MRT schemes regardless of devolution status.</p> <p>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 partners and the wider transport sector on the opportunity and challenges of deploying autonomous buses on a public transport network.</p>
<p>Targeted investment in roads</p> <p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p>Targeted investment in our strategically-important roads will unlock and support economic and housing growth opportunities across our region.</p> <p>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. 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>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) A10 Broxbourne</p>	<p>EEH have established the A1 Taskforce to determine the cumulative impacts of developments on all roads around the A1, especially near the proposed new town of Tempsford. The aim of the Taskforce is to work together to understand the transport requirements to unlock and support growth around the A1 corridor.</p> <p>In addition National Highways are undertaking a Strategic National Needs Assessment (SNNA) of the A1m through Hertfordshire as a result of the cancellation of the A1m smart motorway scheme.</p>

Table 2: Additional thematic priorities

Theme	Rationale and evidence	EEH work and next steps
<p>Maximising East West Rail: Quality of Life</p>	<p>Ensuring EWR provides wider quality of life benefits to communities and businesses across and beyond its route.</p> <p>Transport Strategy (2021) highlights importance of improving quality of life. Maximising East West Rail (2024) sets out this ambition in more detail.</p> <p>Green spaces: Engagement with EWR Company and discussions with Environment Agency highlighted need for data in one place, in order to provide evidence-based narrative for the region.</p> <p>Visitor Economy: Engagement with Huntingdonshire DC and LVEPs, desktop research and academic dissertation on trip attractors (sponsored by EEH) highlighted opportunity for EWR to be a catalyst for the visitor economy.</p> <p>Thriving Communities: Transport Strategy clear on wider benefits for the region through integration, interchange and digital connectivity.</p> <p>Lessons learned: EWMLP Board members agreed there was a need to understand what went right/ wrong during CS1 design/ construction that can be used to inform future sections.</p>	<p>'Quality of life' project: focusing on the region's lifestyle offer. Items marked * utilises DfT EWR 'legacy' funding.</p> <p>Green spaces*: Following extensive engagement with data holding agencies/ orgs, consultant has gathered data. This has been ingested onto a revised EEH Data Hub, which should be live early in New Year</p> <p>Visitor Economy*: Item brought before December Board as update. Following further discussions with visitor economy partnerships and other stakeholders, we will be procuring work in December. The work is likely to look not only at connectivity to visitor destinations, but also wider issues such as skills and marketing, particularly in context of major new trip attractors such as Universal and Puy Du Fou.</p> <p>Thriving Communities*: We are considering next steps for this work, having opted not to proceed with initial delivery mechanisms due to challenges over its remit. One potential use would be to strengthen the case for 5G infrastructure along EWR, which would benefit nearby communities and businesses, including innovative agri-tech use (see digital, above).</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. An update was brought before EWMLP in October. The full report is due to be published following the next EWMLP.</p>
<p>East West Rail: engagement</p>	<p>Enabling and supporting local authorities in readiness for EWR statutory consultation and to participate as</p>	<p>EEH is focusing on supporting and enabling local authorities in these main areas:</p>

<p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p>essential stakeholder inputting into the scheme design and delivery.</p> <p>The Department for Transport’s priority of EWR denotes its importance for local authorities and the region. The engagement activity and delivery of EWR CS1 and CS2 has demonstrated the need for additional support for local authorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead and manage stakeholder relationships related to the EWR scheme including with DfT and OxCam team. • Lead on the coordination and alignment of EWR Company’s Door to Door connectivity activity • Lead, manage and coordinate all EEH delivery activity related to the EWR scheme, including all Legacy Programme delivery and activity related to EWR consultations. <p>EEH has consultancy capacity in place to manage this complex programme and stakeholder matrix – this has proved essential given the complexity of the project.</p> <p>EEH is coordinating the regional response to the East West Rail 2026 consultation. Draft responses from both EEH and the East West Main Line Partnership will be presented to the Board for approval prior to submission.</p>
<p>Rail: Main Line priorities</p>	<p>EEH’s Transport Strategy sets out the importance of ‘north-south’ and ‘east-west’ rail connectivity within the region. Our passenger rail studies phase One and two (2020 and 2021), Rail Strategic Objectives (2023) and Main Line Priorities (2024) set out broad expectations for the region’s main lines, including frequencies, ticketing and rolling stock.</p> <p>EEH works with partners, in particular Network Rail, to ensure those expectations are progressed, and that service levels are maintained and improved.</p> <p><i>Note: the work detailed on the right is in addition to other work referenced elsewhere in this table, for example on Ely, the Aylesbury link or East West Rail.</i></p>	<p>Major changes to services on the East Coast Main Line were implemented as part of the December timetable change. While many areas have increased services or faster services, the following impacts have been highlighted: Peterborough – fewer InterCity services to London in the AM peak; Stevenage – InterCity services switched to boarding/alighting only, removing ability for Stevenage residents to travel on InterCity services to London. EEH continue to work with Network Rail and Local Authority partners to ensure that local priorities are progressed. Board paper for January 2026 sets out proposed way forward for endorsement.</p> <p>Mainline Studies: EEH continue to represent the region on Network Rail’s strategic long-term advice. EEH is currently engaged on the following studies with Network Rail:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eastern Region: East Coast Main Line (ECML) Route Study; Upcoming Midland Main Line (MML) & West Anglia Main Line (WAML) Route Studies • North West & Central Region: West Coast Main Line (WCML) Long Term Strategy; Chiltern Main Line Strategic Advice • Wales & Western Region - strategic work streams include Swindon corridor assessment, depots and stabling strategy, Heathrow expansion. <p>DfT have provided an update on the Access for All programme, which provides funding to improve accessibility at railway stations. It listed a number of schemes that are 'deferred' and 'not progressing at this point'. This affects several stations in the EEH region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beaconsfield, Bucks – deferred to 2029-34 • Bushey, Herts – not progressing • Leagrave, Luton – not progressing <p>EEH is liaising with Local Authorities to determine impacts and next steps.</p> <p>HM Government have set out major proposals for new rail infrastructure in the North of England as part of Northern Powerhouse Rail. This does not entail delivery of new infrastructure in the EEH region but network impacts are likely to be significant. EEH will continue working closely with rail industry partners to ensure that NPR will deliver benefits for the EEH region.</p>
<p>Better buses: Total Transport</p> <p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p>Total Transport is the concept of generating greater efficiency and effectiveness from combining the planning and delivery of a range of passenger transport services, including commissioned transport from local transport authorities and the NHS, community transport and commercially run public transport</p>	<p>Post-September 2023 Bus Symposium: EEH commissioned Better Futures to undertake a high-level assessment of the opportunity and challenges of undertaking a Total Transport approach to transport service deliver across multiple providers (LTA, NHS, bus operator etc) within the region.</p> <p>Post-October 2024 Bus Symposium: EEH Board approved further work to be undertaken on a deep drive</p>

		<p>into the potential cost and service savings by working individual LTA within the region (Cambridge, West Northants and Swindon agreed to be part of this work).</p> <p>EEH has continued to progress its Total Transport programme, working with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, West Northamptonshire Council and Swindon Borough Council to explore opportunities for more integrated planning and delivery of transport services. A new digital Total Transport Toolkit has been developed to support local authorities in understanding transport demand, identifying service overlaps and assessing opportunities for efficiency savings and service improvements.</p> <p>The Toolkit will be demonstrated to EEH Board in June 2026.</p>
Better Buses: Bus passenger information improvements	EEH own research on attitudes to bus travel in the EEH region suggested over that over 75% of respondents said they would support integrated information and ticketing to improve bus travel.	<p>EEH supported a use case for the rollout of Journey Alerts in Bedford. This involved Journey Alerts (JA) deploying QR codes on bus stops in the Bedford area giving passengers a real-time link for a two-way what's app/texted conversation to provide real-time information in their service.</p> <p>The QR codes have been deployed to 104 stops in Bedford and over 1,225 journey information requests were made in its first 4 weeks of use.</p> <p>The outcomes of this use case are currently being prepared and will inform future work, including, potentially for example, making the case for wider regional roll-out.</p>
Better Buses: DRT	The region has three DRT schemes currently being delivered and operated by differing LTA and providers. EEH Members have asked to better understand the challenges and successes of these existing schemes, to	EEH is working with operators and LTAs to identify where DRT schemes could be implemented and identify potential funding opportunities for these schemes.

	determine how to best deliver DRT operations wider in the region.	A technical note was presented To EEH Board in January 2026, for agreement.
New Towns (UPDATED JUNE 2026)	<p>England’s Economic Heartland (EEH) is well 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> <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>Members will receive an update on EEH’s work to qualify the impact of New Towns on the region and the need for an ‘infrastructure first approach’ at the December 2025 Board meeting.</p> <p>EEH have prepared a new towns data pack - setting out the baseline conditions around the new town localities. This mapping has been shared with officers and is available to Board members. More work will be undertaken to understand impact on existing networks/capacity.</p> <p>MHCLG have recently consulted on the New Towns Draft Programme. This proposes a revised 7 locations be taken forward, including Tempsford, Milton Keynes, and Crews Hill and Chase Park, Enfield. Heyford Park is listed as a ‘reasonable alternative’ given its relatively small scale of delivery in comparison to other sites in the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor. EEH has responded to the consultation, in particular highlighting the need for infrastructure-led development and the need for government investment to achieve the transformational aspirations around connectivity and access.</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"> • Business case guidance on funding mobility hub delivery • Regional Mobility Hub Location Tool. • Mobility hubs investable proposition brochure and workshop with private sector funders.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'White Paper' on strategies for enhancing private sector investment in mobility hubs.
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 is 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.</p> <p>We have also developed with partners a free to access EV planning tool.</p> <p>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> <p>EEH has received (in draft) the report commissioned from Field Dynamics (a respected energy and EV consultancy) outlining the likely future EV energy demand in the region based on current patterns of car use. Based on DVLA /MOT records and extrapolating future demand to develop scenarios based on in-plan and future housing growth published by MHCLG, the region will require between 8 and 12 TWh of power for the private vehicle parc (fleet). This work is now available (01/26) and has been presented to Regional Leaders.</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</p>	<p>EEH represents the region on the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group and their Surface Access Group and</p>

<p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p>accompanied by improvements in sustainable surface access.</p> <p>In November 2025 the DfT have announced that Heathrow Airport Ltd's (HAL) proposal for a full-sized third runway at Europe's busiest airport is to be taken forward as part of the updated Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS). A rival private proposal for a shorter runway is not being progressed.</p>	<p>London Luton Airport Access Forum 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: One of the services we suggested (a new route between Aylesbury and Luton Airport) has recently been implemented.</p> <p>The DfT are targeting planning approval for the new Heathrow runway by 2029. EEH believes that any expansion at Heathrow must be contingent upon major improvements to surface access and will continue to advocate for this with HAL, the DfT and other key stakeholders.</p>
<p>Visitor economy</p> <p>(UPDATED June 2026)</p>	<p>East West Rail will connect a remarkable number of significant, existing visitor destinations as well as new arrivals such as Universal and Puy Du Fou bringing people to the region in unprecedented numbers. This presents significant economic opportunities. Crucially, the connectivity offered by East West Rail in creating a regional visitor economy offer which will enhance the regional lifestyle offer.</p> <p>'lifestyle offer': improving quality of life for existing communities and helping to attract and retain the talent and skills required to support the ambitions of the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor.</p> <p>As part of the East West Rail legacy funding received from Government, it was agreed that EEH undertake work to understand how East West Rail can be a catalyst for tourism.</p>	<p>Following discussions with stakeholders, EEH have commissioned the development of an action plan from sector specialists which addresses: 'How can East West Rail and major new visitor attractions such as Universal, Puy du Fou and the National Forest provide a catalyst for a regional visitor economy and enhanced lifestyle offer?'</p> <p>This work is ongoing and meetings with Local Authorities have been scheduled.</p>

<p>Convening role for Oxford-Cambridge region</p>	<p>EEH provides a key way in which leaders can work in partnership to provide the strategic voice for the region. Board feedback, including via independent review (2022), has highlighted importance of convening role. DfT have also highlighted this. Letter on funding (2025) refers to EEH's "respected convening ability".</p>	<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.</p> <p>EEH is currently organising the Regional Leaders Summit. This will bring together elected leaders with ministers, government officials.</p> <p>It will take place on 25 February 2026 in London. Invites have been sent out. We also contribute to wider regional convening, for example UKREiiF.</p>
<p>Tools/ data (updated June 26)</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Building tools and securing data at a regional scale accomplishes economies of scale and ensures a consistent baseline.</p> <p>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>	<p>EEH has recently presented the tools catalogue to the Board. More information is available in the 20 June 2025 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"> • The next iteration of the EEH Land Use model (commissioned – and in development) • Enhancing the accessibility of the intelligence derived from mobile network data. • Refreshing the data EEH hold on planned housing and employment sites as well as planned infrastructure. • A new version of the EEH data platform, available on the EEH website – more responsive, representative and with additional functionality. This is now live and will be presented to Leaders in September • EEH is undertaking work to understand the data requirements for the development of SDS plans

Centre of Excellence	EEH can play a key role in enhancing our partner local authority's skills, knowledge and capability to deliver their transport strategy and planning functions, including early-stage business case development. This is particularly important to enable local authorities to deliver the Government's economic growth mission in the current, fiscally challenging environment facing local authorities.	More information on our Centre of Excellence approach is available in the 20 June Item 4 Board paper. EEH continues to bring officers together regularly through our forums and working groups. Looking ahead, we anticipate providing further support to local authorities with the coming of new Local Transport Plan guidance and the Local Government Outcomes Framework.
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