

England's Economic Heartland Board

24 September 2026

Item 10: Consultations

It is recommended that Board:

a) Notes the EEH technical officer consultation responses to:

- **Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement**
- **RIS3 Variation Consultation**

b) Agrees that EEH provides a technical officer response to upcoming calls for evidence and consultation responses, based on steers provided by the Board on:

- **Call for evidence: Safer Journeys for women and girls,**
- **Getting to work: transport connecting young people to jobs and training**
- **Consultation Response: TfL's London Plan**

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. To provide Members with an overview of EEH's response to key consultations that impact the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor.

2. Heathrow expansion national policy statement

- 2.1. EEH has submitted a technical response to the Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement.
- 2.2. EEH's response made it clear that Heathrow expansion would only be supported if the expansion included a funded and deliverable surface access programme. Currently the major transport schemes required to support the expansion, such as rail, are not part of the expansion plans.
- 2.3. EEH highlighted the following key priorities that are required to support the expansion:
- Public transport should be the primary access mode
 - Heathrow should fund necessary transport improvements
 - Expansion should be linked to delivery of key rail schemes including: Western Rail Link to Heathrow; Old Oak Common–Chiltern Link; Southern Rail Access to Heathrow
 - Strong monitoring and accountability are essential
- 2.4. EEH also highlighted the implications of M25 works and potential impacts on Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire. The A404 proposals being developed as part of RIS4 should be brought forward and completed prior to any M25 works to help mitigate impact of M25 closures. The A404 is a key link between M40 and M4 that acts as a diversion to the M25 for longer distance journeys.
- 2.5. The response also included the following:
- Current proposals do not go far enough to reduce road traffic



- Passenger mode PT share targets (50%-55%) are not ambitious enough
 - Focus on reducing overall vehicle trips, not just increasing mode share
 - Improve rail capacity and connectivity to support growth
 - Strengthen bus and coach provision, including priority route measures
 - Better address freight, construction traffic and network impacts
 - Protect communities and strategic routes from additional congestion
- 2.6. EEH's overall message is that "Heathrow expansion should only proceed with a comprehensive, funded and enforceable surface access strategy that delivers genuine mode shift and minimises road traffic growth."

3. RIS3 Variation Consultation

- 3.1. EEH has submitted a technical response to Department for Transport's consultation on the proposed variation of RIS3.
- 3.2. The variation proposed a reduction of £428 million in RIS3 capital funding (2026/27 to 2029/30).
- 3.3. The proposed savings comprise of the cancellation of two enhancement schemes saving £315 Million: A46 Newark Bypass and A38 Derby Junctions
- 3.4. A further 2% reduction is proposed from other National Highways capital budgets saving approximately £113 million
- 3.5. EEH's response focused on what the reduction would mean to future RIS programmes including RIS schemes currently being developed for future RIS programmes that area funded through the capital programme.
- 3.6. Key messages included:
- Concern that the proposed £428 million reduction in RIS3 funding could constrain the timely delivery of improvements required to support economic growth, housing delivery and connectivity across the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor
 - Impact on progressing RIS4 schemes which are developed through capital funding
 - Impact on decreased funding for future RIS programmes especially delivery of RIS4 and reduce funding for future RIS periods.
- 3.7. EEH also took the opportunity to highlight key road priorities including:
- A1 (Huntingdon to Biggleswade): Essential for unlocking local housing plans and a potential new town development at Tempsford and Local Plan growth
 - M1 Junction 13: Crucial for supporting the expansion of Milton Keynes New Town and Universal Studios UK
 - A404 (Bisham Roundabout to Handy Cross): Connects the M40 and M4, serving as a vital alternative the highly congested M25 and serves key business parks
 - A34 Corridor / M40 Junctions: Acts as the primary freight and transit artery between the Midlands and southern ports and key to supporting growth at Bicester
 - A1(M) Hertfordshire: developing an alternative to the cancelled smart motorway scheme
 - Upgrades to A5 Corridor: including Old Stratford Roundabout, Kelly's Kitchen Roundabout, Hockliffe Signals and a critical new relief road through Towcester.

4. Call for Evidence: Safe Journeys for women and girls

- 4.1. A Transport Committee call for evidence into safer journeys for women and girls on the public transport has launched, with a deadline of 9th October.
- 4.2. The Inquiry considers how well the safety of women and girls on public transport is understood, measures currently in place to improve safety for women and girls on the transport network and how it could be improved.
- 4.3. More females travel on public transport – especially buses – than men.



- 4.4. Work by Greater Cambridge Partnership and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority has shown that gender has a direct influence on how safety is perceived and experienced.
- 4.5. This can impact women and girls' travel choices, including the time of day and mode of travel.
- 4.6. EEH intends to submit a response to the consultation highlighting the following points:
 - An inclusive transport system ensures the needs of all are met, with an importance on a people centred approach. An integrated transport system, for example, helps eliminate the risk of increased wait times at interchange points, a point at which there may be a perceived (or real) risk, such as at a station in hours of darkness.
 - Importance of the physical environment of infrastructure and public realm such as lighting, CCTV and visibility. These are important elements to consider from the planning stages of a project to ensure that safety is considered from the outset.
 - Safe routes to bus stops, stations and interchanges as studies show if routes 'feel' or perceived as unsafe women and girls will not make the journey.
 - Road and rail safety campaigns and resources are often highly visible and more pronounced than bus safety campaigns (such as the British Transport Police 'See It, Say It, Sorted' on trains and 'Think' road safety campaigns, the latter focused on road safety rather than personal security).
- 4.7. It is also an opportunity to highlight the work of GCP and CPCA on Women and Girls Safety. The work was a result of a bid by the GCP and EEH to the Rees Jeffreys Fund.
- 4.8. The work aimed to examine the specific safety issues faced by women and girls on buses and suggest interventions related to safety and inclusion and improve the sense of security for women and girls.
- 4.9. The report found that gender has a direct influence on how safety is perceived and experienced. This can impact women and girls' travel choices, including the time of day and mode of travel.
- 4.10. Several potential interventions for improvements were identified including behavioural campaigns, safe haven schemes and help points, increased visibility of how to report safety concerns, public realm improvements and maintenance (such as vegetation clearance), comprehensive lighting strategies and increased CCTV.
- 4.11. Board is asked to agree that a technical response to the inquiry is submitted by EEH. EEH has given all LTA officers the opportunity to provide their examples or key points in EEH's response.

5. Call for Evidence Getting to Work: transport connecting young people to jobs and training

- 5.1. A Transport Committee call for evidence into 'Getting to work: transport connecting young people to jobs and training' has launched, with a deadline of 16th October 2026. EEH will be collating evidence from across the region to compile a technical officer response to the call for evidence.
- 5.2. The EEH region is polycentric with many rural areas, so there are challenges for young people in being able to access work opportunities, apprenticeships and training.
- 5.3. Young people are also not able to access school transport services over 16 but have to stay in education until they are 18. They are also too young to drive, making provision of public transport even more vital.
- 5.4. The inquiry will consider how well transport infrastructure, provisions, accessibility, and other barriers effect young people's ability to find and maintain employment or training, how well the current barriers are understood, and what actions can be taken to improve current understandings, both in public and private transport. EEH intends to submit a response to the consultation highlighting the following points:



- The importance of system-wide transport connectivity improvements, in line with EEH's Connectivity Studies and transport opportunity plans, particularly between employment hubs such as Silverstone, Wescott, Milton Park and other key employment hubs across the region.
 - Creation of car dependency when alternative transport provision is unavailable.
 - The role of bus services and frequency and hours of operation that should account for irregular shift patterns common with young people, including late evenings, early mornings, etc.
 - The prohibitive cost of rail travel that is often greater than daily wages.
 - The importance of targeted interventions, for example U25 rail cards for mainline rail and discounted bus ticket prices including Oxfordshire's 'MyBus' Scheme, Hertfordshire 'SaverCard', and Stagecoach annual student tickets.
 - Encouragement and targeted action needed to take place where public transport and private travel intersect, through mobility hubs, active travel links, and increased support for rural-specific provisions, like DRT schemes and the supporting fares like the £1 Tiger bus pass for under 25s in Cambridgeshire.
- 5.5. The call for evidence also notes actions in the 'Better Connected' Strategy aimed at 'unlocking opportunities for everyone' and their potential to improve young people's access to employment. There is an opportunity to highlight specified use-cases of private hire transport (coaches, and taxis) or employer subsidised transport schemes from the region, such as the Milton Park Shuttle and subsidised travel network in Oxfordshire.
- 5.6. Board is asked to agree that a technical response to the inquiry is submitted. LTAs officers have been asked if they would like EEH to include key points or examples from their authority area in the EEH response.

6. Draft London Plan

- 6.1. The Draft London Plan sets the Mayor's strategy for spatial development in Greater London and sets out the framework for the development of London over the next 20 years.
- 6.2. It includes requirements for homes, jobs, transport, and other infrastructure, as well as policies to ensure good quality development.
- 6.3. EEH plans to submit a technical response to the consultation covering elements relating to strategic transport only.
- 6.4. The London Plan acknowledges that London has 'inextricable links with its neighbouring regions', with mainline rail services and the strategic road network historically developed to connect to London.
- 6.5. Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire directly neighbour London in the EEH region.
- 6.6. General comments relating to EEH's connectivity with London are expected to include:
- That decisions taken on development in London can impact transport systems outside of the London borders
 - A desire, where appropriate, for London levels of transport accessibility near borders
 - EEH welcomes the recognition that improved and new public transport infrastructure will be imperative to supporting housing growth
 - The link between London and its neighbouring authorities, including connecting major business centres with London.
- 6.7. The plan also specifically outlines six 'strategic growth corridors', four of which could have implications on areas in the EEH area:
- Lea Valley (Stratford to Cambridge)
 - Elizabeth Line and Heathrow (Paddington to Reading and Heathrow)
 - HS2 (Euston and Old Oak to Birmingham)
 - Thameslink North (Kings Cross to Luton to Bedford)



- 6.8. Also identified are transport interventions in support of the plan. Three of the interventions cross into the region: HS2 (into Buckinghamshire), 'Metroisation' (into Hertfordshire) and Crossrail 2 (into Hertfordshire)
- 6.9. It is anticipated that EEH comments will cover implications of the plan on strategic transport corridors including road and rail. This includes:
- Potential impact of the strategic growth corridors on the strategic road network, such as consideration of impact (including cumulative impact of the Draft Plan and other developments) on the M1, A1 and M11
 - Support for the ongoing safeguarding of the route for Crossrail 2, as outlined on our transport strategy
 - Support in principle for the Metroisation of the ECML & Hertford Loop, with any proposals to increase frequencies on inner suburban services needing to be considered alongside demand for outer suburban and long distance services. Especially as ECML supports growth at Tempsford.
 - West London Orbital proposals are supported, enabling faster and easier orbital journeys for North and West London
- 6.10. The draft plan also states that proposals for expansion at Heathrow should be subject to commitment to contribution, provision, and/or improvement of sustainable surface access, as also reflected in EEH's response to Heathrow. Mirroring EEH's recent Heathrow expansion consultation, the response will highlight that interventions including Western Rail Link to Heathrow are supported but the plan should also include delivery of the Old Oak Common Link (OOC), which would improve access to the airport with an interchange to the Elizabeth line services at OOC.
- 6.11. Board is asked to agree that a technical response to the London Plan is submitted. Officers have been asked for any pertinent points to include in the response.

September 2026

