

Strategic Transport Forum 16th March 2018

Agenda Item 5c: Connectivity Study

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Forum:

- a) Endorse the principles set out in annex 1, subject to any amendment agreed by the Forum; and
- b) Endorse the proposal to establish a Working Group to oversee the connectivity study.

1. Context

- 1.1. In its initial response to the National Infrastructure Commission's final report the Government (published as part of the 2017 Budget) committed to:

'... developing an Expressway of high-quality east-west roads between Oxford and Cambridge, key elements of which will be built in the second Roads Investment Strategy period, from 2020 to 2025. In addition, and in line with the NIC's recommendations, the government will accelerate development work, completing option selection and detailed design work on the 'missing link' elements of the Expressway between the M1 and Oxford so that it is ready to open by 2030. A decision on corridor choice will be made by summer 2018. The government will commission England's Economic Heartland to study how communities not on the Expressway itself can still benefit from it.'

- 1.2. The purpose of this paper is to seek a steer from the Forum on the way forward for what is colloquially known as the 'connectivity study'.

2. Issues for Consideration

- 2.1. The connectivity study is a major piece of work, as it will be a key input into the development of the overarching Transport Strategy.
- 2.2. The Forum's role as the emerging Sub-national Transport Body in developing the overarching Transport Strategy provides the opportunity to ensure that work currently underway in support of specific infrastructure proposals – such as the 'expressway' and EWR – are aligned with wider considerations.
- 2.3. An initial set of draft principles to be used in the development of the brief for the connectivity study is set out as Annex 1. The Forum is invited to consider and comment on the draft principles.
- 2.4. A draft brief will be prepared on the basis of the agreed principles. Given the linkage with national investment programmes it is appropriate for the brief to be finalised in partnership with the Department for Transport.

- 2.5. Given the national significance of the Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge corridor it would also be appropriate for the connectivity study to be taken forward on a collaborative basis with the Department.
- 2.6. It is proposed that a Working Group is established to support the core programme team in taking the connectivity study forward, with representatives of local transport authorities, local enterprise partnerships and local planning authorities forming part of the Working Group.
- 2.7. It is important that work on the connectivity study does not inadvertently introduce inertia to work already underway in respect of both EWR and the 'expressway'. At the same time it is important that these three major pieces of work are aligned and the inter-relationships understood.
- 2.8. The teams involved in the three pieces of work are already actively working together to ensure activity is co-ordinated. Working arrangements for the connectivity study will build on this collaborative approach.

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Programme Director
March 2018

Connectivity Study: Draft Principles

1. The connectivity study will form an input into the development of the overarching Transport Strategy.
2. The objectives for the study will be developed within the framework provided by the objectives for the overarching Transport Strategy.
3. The study will consider the strategic issues for the transport system supporting England's Economic Heartland for the time period upto 2050.
4. In order to consider how communities not on the 'expressway' itself can still benefit from it, the study will need to consider issues across the study area for the 'expressway' – i.e. from M4 Junction 13 across the Heartland to M11 Junction 14.
5. In considering the issues across the study area it will be appropriate to consider wider linkages – e.g. in considering connectivity along the A34 corridor between Didcot and Oxford it will also be necessary to consider the role of the A420 between Swindon and Oxford and the role of the rail corridor between Didcot and Oxford.
6. In considering the linkages between the 'expressway' and the wider highway network, the study will need to take into consideration:
 - Committed improvements to the Strategic Road Network set out within the current Roads Investment Strategy
 - The output from other Highways England led strategic studies – specifically A1(M) Corridor and M25 South West Quadrant
 - East West Rail – including the need for improved connectivity to/from rail stations along the rail corridor
 - The output of relevant Network Rail Route Strategies
7. In considering future connectivity requirements the study will consider the implications for future travel patterns and travel need arising from:
 - The transformational impact of delivering the 'multi-modal spine'
 - The implications of the digital economy and further development of digital infrastructure
 - The development of new business models for transport use and services

Use will be made of 'policy scenarios' to explore the implications of these and any other relevant factors.
8. The development of policy scenarios will be build upon the regional evidence database assembled by the Forum.