

Strategic Transport Forum

24th March 2017

Agenda Item 6: Oxford to Cambridge Expressway

Recommendation: It is recommended that the meeting:

- a) Agree the principles set out in section 4 as the basis for developing the governance arrangements for the next stage of the Expressway study
- b) Agree to work with the relevant local transport authorities, local planning authorities and local enterprise partnerships in developing the governance arrangements

1. Background

- 1.1. The first Road Investment Strategy (published in December 2014) identified the need to undertake a Oxford to Cambridge Expressway Study as one of a limited number of strategic studies tasked with looking at some of the Strategic Road Network's large and complex challenges.
- 1.2. Stage 1 of the study was published in July 2016. This identified that interventions in the corridor could provide opportunities at three functional levels:
 - Strategic: the role of the corridor in the context of the national rail and strategic road network
 - Regional: supporting significant growth planned along the corridor and the contribution that these areas have to the UK economy and international markets; and
 - Local: sections of the corridor will have potential positive impacts in their own right, such as access between homes and jobs
- 1.3. Stage 3 of the study was published in November 2016. This summarised the work that had been undertaken since the publication of Stage 1, including work undertaken to look at a long-list of options that had been developed on the basis of the evidence base gathered up to that point and in response to feedback from stakeholders.
 - 1.1. Specifically the Stage 3 report short-listed three potential routes between Oxford and Milton Keynes, noting that the initial assessment work undertaken up to that point had shown that the benefits are promising enough to take them forward to the next stage of the assessment . It went on to set out that the next stage of the study would require a more detailed qualitative and quantitative assessment of the short-listed options.

Link to Stage 3

report: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/571353/oxford-to-cambridge-expressway-strategic-study-stage-3-report.pdf

2. National Infrastructure Commission: Interim Report

2.1. The Commission published its Interim Report in November 2016. The report identified the scale of potential economic opportunities across the corridor and set out the critical importance of improved connectivity – particularly east-west connectivity – to enable that potential being realised.

2.2. The Commission also set out the ‘once-in-a-generation’ opportunity to use the investment in the Expressway and East West Rail to create a multi-modal spine across the corridor.

2.3. The Commission made a specific recommendation that:

‘The government should commit £27m to the end of 2017/18 to fund the next phase of development work on the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway study, allowing the detailed design process to begin as soon as possible

- *Highways England should work with relevant local authorities to develop and assess the potential Expressway options and develop a proposal which maximises the scheme’s potential to unlock housing growth and connect it to local and regional labour markets, alongside delivering wider benefits*
- *The Commission will support this process as part of the second phase of the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford study*

2.4. In the subsequent Autumn Statement the Chancellor confirmed the allocation of £27m to fund the next phase of development work.

3. Engagement with England’s Economic Heartland

3.1. On 9th March the Andrew Jones MP (Minister for Transport) confirmed that the Department for Transport was making funding available to England’s Economic Heartland to help shape its future transport priorities.

3.2. The DfT funding is being used to match the commitment of local partners and enables the work programme set out earlier on the agenda of this meeting to be taken forward.

3.3. As a result of discussions with DfT the work programme includes a specific activity in relation to the Expressway – namely:

Working with DfT and national organisations (e.g. Highways England and Network Rail) to contribute to the effective development of nationally-led infrastructure schemes and programmes:....

iv) Expressway – agree governance for the scheme development work with Department for Transport and Highways England, and contribute to the project consistent with this role

4. Next Steps

- 4.1. Discussions with the Department for Transport on the next steps for the Expressway are on-going.
- 4.2. In seeking to develop a practical governance it is proposed that the arrangements in place for the East West Rail project are used as a starting point – whilst recognising the need to amend those arrangements in light of experience gained with the East West Rail project.
- 4.3. Using this as a starting point one can develop a set of overarching principles that might form the basis for the governance arrangements:
 - i) A sub-group of the Strategic Transport Forum be established to act as the conduit for strategic input into the Expressway study
 - ii) The sub-group to include representatives from all the relevant local transport authorities, local planning authorities and local enterprise partnerships
 - iii) Technical work input from the Forum to be overseen by an officer executive group, accountable to a steering group comprising elected Members.
 - iv) The scope of the work to be taken forward to be agreed between DfT and the sub-group.
 - v) A representative from the sub-group to be a member of the DfT/Highways England commissioning group
 - vi) Work on the Expressway to be taken forward as part of the wider programme of work to develop a longer term Transport Strategy for the Heartland
- 4.4. This meeting is invited to consider whether the overarching principles set out above reflect the expectations of local partners.

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March 2017