



Strategic Transport Forum

29th March 2019

Agenda Item 7: Strategic Transport Forum Business Plan 2019/2020

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Forum considers and comments on the proposed programme of work for the Strategic Transport Forum during 2019/20.

1. Context

- 1.1. Since its creation, England's Economic Heartland has established itself as a credible strategic collaborative partnership, providing leadership on issues relating to strategic infrastructure – strategic transport, digital infrastructure, utilities and water resource.
- 1.2. This position has now been cemented by the Government, following publication of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Vision on 13th March 2019, where England's Economic Heartland was identified as the "single local voice for strategic infrastructure across the Arc and beyond its boundaries".
- 1.3. Coupled with that, the Heartland's larger spatial geography already ensures wider linkages with adjoining areas are realised.
- 1.4. In its capacity as a Sub-national Transport Body, England's Economic Heartland has established itself as an industry leader, particularly when it comes to thought leadership and ambition. The Strategic Transport Forum, as the governance, oversight and leadership function for the Sub-national Transport Body has played a key role in achieving this reputation.
- 1.5. These successes have led us, to date, to developing an ambitious programme of work. Looking forward to the forthcoming year and beyond, it is clear that there are a number of key opportunities for England's Economic Heartland to add value to, and a number of programmes and ambitions we have been working towards that will come to a conclusion.
- 1.6. As we move towards this peak period of activity, it is essential that the Forum receives the appropriate level of support. This includes: programme planning; the level and quality of technical advice; support for the Forum Chair; and consideration for the overall structure in which the Forum is operating.
- 1.7. This paper [and the subsequent presentation to the Forum,] sets out a proposed approach for ensuring that the Forum has the right level of governance, advice and support.

2. Business Planning – Overview

- 2.1. The England's Economic Heartland Leaders Alliance has agreed that a three year business plan for England's Economic Heartland should be developed. Within this wider context, there is a clear need for the Strategic Transport Forum to plan priority areas for activity, particularly focusing on the forthcoming year.

- 2.2. As set out in earlier agenda items, adopting this approach will also ensure local partners have clarity over how the connectivity theme of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc will be delivered.
- 2.3. The confirmation of a Spending Review, due to commence shortly and conclude by autumn statement, presents a further and important opportunity for England's Economic Heartland to set out its investment priorities. The Spending Review will be challenging, not assisted by the fact that investment in the national programmes (both Highways England Road Investment Strategy and Network Rail major infrastructure) is taking longer and costing more than anticipated.
- 2.4. Taking all these factors into consideration, the work programme for the Strategic Transport Forum over the forthcoming year should incorporate the following priority areas of work:
- a) *Overarching Transport Strategy* – the initial framework for the Strategy is scheduled for publication in the summer 2019. This will mark the start of a wider engagement with residents, businesses and potential investors before the final version of the Strategy is prepared for publication in summer 2020. Prior to publication of the final Strategy, England's Economic Heartland must undertake the right level of environmental assessment, reflecting wider work underway to establish a baseline review of natural capital across the Oxford – Cambridge Arc.
 - b) *Investment Prospectus* – reflecting the vision and priorities set out in the overarching Transport Strategy, and taking advantage of the potential of the National Policy Statement for Strategic Infrastructure, the Prospectus will set out EEH's medium and long term strategic infrastructure requirements ahead of the Spending Review.
 - c) *Major Road Network and Large Local Majors* – meeting our commitment for the Sub-national Transport Bodies to put forward their submission for the first 5-year investment programme in July 2019.
 - d) *Commissioning Connectivity Studies* – taking forward the work in association with the proposed expressway between Oxford and Milton Keynes, and extending the approach to the rest of the Heartland area (working with partners to the east of the M1 to co-commission the studies): using the output from these studies (along with work undertaken by Highways England) to make the case for investment in the Major Road Network (including Large Local Majors).
 - e) *Regional Evidence Base* – continuing to develop and maintain the Regional Evidence Base in order to provide an evidential basis for the work of the EEH Business Unit – as well as continuing to make the Regional Evidence Base available to all local partners Government and its agencies and companies.
 - f) *Innovation and Technology* – using the Innovation Working Group to develop proposals to secure funding, and using the Memorandum of Understanding with the Transport Systems Catapult to engage with the entrepreneur/SME community to encourage innovation in transport services.
 - g) *Integrated Ticketing* – working with the Heartland Bus Operators Association and Transport Systems Catapult to explore options for expanding integrated ticketing models across wider parts of the Heartland.
 - h) *Freight and Logistics* – building on the technical work commissioned in 2018/19, there is a need to develop the business case for investment in network capacity and facilities that enable the freight and logistics sector to support the level of planned growth, including the construction requirements of planned growth.
 - i) *Strategic Rail* – continuing to support the delivery of the East West Rail project so that it meets the needs of the local partners, in particular working to ensure the potential of both the Central and Eastern Sections are realised; ensuring that the Heartland's requirements are reflected in the recommendations of the Williams Rail Review; engaging with passenger franchise competitions as and when they come forward.

- j) *Strategic Capability to Accelerate Delivery* – working with Heartland partners during 2019/ 20 to develop the Business Case that will enable the establishment of a ‘centre of excellence’ that will provide additional support to partners as they deliver the agreed programme of strategic investment

2.5. The Forum is asked to consider the proposed work programme, and to provide a steer on any areas of priority or concern, which will then be reflected in the emerging EEH Business Plan.

3. Governance

3.1. The Strategic Transport Forum is a well-established and well regarded forum for scrutiny, decision making and debate. England’s Economic Heartland is one of the only Sub National Transport Bodies to currently undertake Forums in public, demonstrating the commitment that Forum members have towards transparency and good governance.

3.2. At the same time, Mayor Dave Hodgson, Chair of the Strategic Transport Forum is continuing to raise the profile of England’s Economic Heartland through opportunities such as speaking engagements and media coverage. An example of this is the fact the Forum Chair was invited to be a key speaker to the East of England All Party Parliamentary Group event on 26th March 2019, demonstrating the interest and geographic spread of EEH’s work.

3.3. Proposals to establish Unitary Local Government in Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire are being taken forward: the intention being that shadow new authorities will emerge during the course of 2019/20, with the new authorities (two unitary authorities proposed in Northamptonshire and one in Buckinghamshire) coming into existence in April 2020.

3.4. It is important that the governance and working arrangements that operate as part of England’s Economic Heartland are reviewed and updated to reflect the change in local government in the two areas.

3.5. The working assumption is that any change required to the governance and working arrangements will come into effect as the shadow authorities become established, thereby ensuring that the views of the new authorities are taken into account at the earliest opportunity possible.

3.6. The need to update the Terms of Reference to reflect these changes also provides an opportunity to undertake a review more generally of the Terms of Reference and governance framework. A report on this will be brought to the next meeting of the Forum.

4. Sub-national Transport Body

4.1. England’s Economic Heartland is committed to develop a proposal that will see the establishment the Forum as a statutory body.

4.2. Transport for the North was designated a statutory body in April 2018; Transport for the South East and Midlands Connect continue to move forward with the development of proposals that could provide the basis for them likewise seeking statutory status.

4.3. The Heartland has been consistent that the proposal for statutory status would be developed in parallel with the overarching Transport Strategy to ensure that the proposed roles and responsibilities sought for the Body are aligned with the needs of the overarching Transport Strategy.

4.4. The ambition for England’s Economic Heartland remains to have the new statutory Body formally established in the latter part of 2020/21.

4.5. The Forum will be invited to consider the next steps on this journey at its next meeting.

Naomi Green

Head of Technical Programme

March 2019

