

Strategic Transport Forum

7th December 2018

Agenda Item 8: Business Unit Update

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Forum:

- a) Note the expected Government Spending Review during the forthcoming year, and EEH's ambitions to provide a comprehensive, evidence-based response to that.
- b) Support the approach set out with regards to the developing of the Regional Evidence Base.

1. Context

- 1.1. England's Economic Heartland Business Unit, and work programme, continues to develop, reflecting the level of commitment and ambition that Government, and local partners, place on the emerging Sub National Transport Body.
- 1.2. The business unit is currently developing its work programme and business plan for the forthcoming financial year (2019/20). This will include an ambitious programme of work around some key project priorities: the EEH transport strategy; consideration and prioritisation of the major road network; and the Oxford – Cambridge Expressway connectivity study.

2. Spending Review

- 2.1. We are expecting there to be a Government Spending Review within the forthcoming year. EEH is well placed to develop an evidence-based, comprehensive responsive to the spending review, using the Regional Evidence Base (see Section 3 below).
- 2.2. EEH business unit is working closely with partners across the Heartland area to ensure infrastructure and connectivity, and EEH's ambitions are embedded within economic growth ambitions for the region, particularly capturing the cross-corridor Economic Vision (for the Oxford-MK-Cambridge corridor).
- 2.3. EEH's submission to the Spending Review will clearly set out that the economic ambitions for the region can only be achieved if they follow an infrastructure-led programme of growth.

3. Regional Evidence Base

- 3.1. England's Economic Heartland has been successfully developing a comprehensive, innovative Regional Evidence Base over the past 18 months. The regional evidence base will shape, and support the work we are taking forward on: the transport

- strategy; development of the connectivity study and prioritisation of the MRN, amongst other things.
- 3.2. All elements of the Regional Evidence Base are available to local transport/planning authorities across the Heartland for their own use. This allows a consistent baseline to be used at the regional or local level by all partners.
 - 3.3. The Regional Evidence Base comprises of three elements:
 - The 'Databank' (available since February 2018) –brings together information on planned growth (housing and economic), socio-economic data and transport information.
 - The 'Datahub' (work to put in place underway) – in effect a 'sandbox' that supports the development of the eco-system across the Heartland and encourages innovation.
 - The 'Policy Scenario Model', which will provide the Heartland Partners with the capacity to explore the relative implications of different scenarios. This could be related to the scale and distribution of growth, it could also be related to different policy scenarios.
 - 3.4. To ensure the data held within the Databank reflects current membership of EEH, the work expanding the coverage of the existing Databank, including Swindon Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council, is now complete.
 - 3.5. Data across the evidence platform will be refreshed annually to ensure it remains accurate and current. In addition, and by exception, the databank will be updated in interim periods should new, significant data come to light (such as a decision on major housing or economic growth locations in a particular part of the Heartland).
 - 3.6. As referred to in paragraph 3.3, England's Economic Heartland has commissioned Immense Simulations to develop a policy scenario modelling tool for the Heartland's transport system.
 - 3.7. The tool has been designed to enable EEH partners to test 'what if' scenarios up until to 2050 to ascertain their relevant impact on the network. The modelling tool will enable the implications of alternative policy scenarios to be modelled using a mixture of regional transport models and live data. This could include: the impact of connected autonomous vehicles, demand responsive transport and new types of transport that comes online.
 - 3.8. The inception meeting for the modelling tool took place on the 15th October 2018 at Transport Systems Catapult, where the prototype tool was successfully demonstrated to partners. The tool, in prototype form, continues to be available for all EEH partners to trial.
 - 3.9. EEH Business Unit is considering options for developing the next stage of the policy scenario tool, which will move the tool from being a prototype to a fully operational and validated evidence tool.

4. **Update on Engagement with Government**

4.1. The EEH Business Unit continues regular engagement with Government. Within in DfT, the business unit continue to meet a range of colleagues, to ensure the views of EEH, as an emerging sub national transport body are being reflected in their policy and decision making. Engagement includes:

- DfT Strategic Roads and MRN teams– strong engagement with the Strategic Roads and MRN teams ensures the EEH business unit is able to influence the development of both the MRN and connectivity study process.
- DfT Economists. EEH Business Unit have secured a high level meeting with DfT Economists from the Local and Regional transport teams and Transport Appraisal (webtag) teams on 10th December to discuss our emerging Regional Evidence base. This is a significant meeting, which aims to assess the interface between the current (and emerging) Webtag requirements and our innovative approach to creating a Regional Evidence Base.
- DfT Innovation team. Frequent engagement ensures the DfT innovation team is kept abreast of our ambitions.

4.2. In addition, engagement continues with the MHCLG CaMKOx team, particularly as they press for options to ensure a joined up approach to housing, infrastructure and the economy (as per the Government's recently published response to the NIC Report "Partnering for Prosperity"). EEH is pressing for a National Policy Statement for the Heartland area to achieve these ambitions.

4.3. On 24th October 2018, the EEH Business Unit was invited to present to the Council for Sustainable Business, a meeting convened by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Michael Gove. The meeting was exploring the concept of environmental net betterment, particularly considering the potential environmental, ecological and biodiversity effects of growth in the Heartland area. The Chair of the EEH Strategic Alliance followed up with a letter to the Environment Secretary, stressing his continued support towards developing a geographically-focused National Policy Statement as a means of facilitating a range of opportunities, including exploring environmental net betterment options.

5. **Feedback from Highways UK and other conference activity**

5.1. Representatives from the EEH Business Unit, and political leaders attended Highways UK on 7/8 November 2018, presenting on both the main stage and in the English Regions Hub (an area of the exhibition dedicated to the four Sub National Transport Bodies). The event was a success, with continuous reinforcement of the important role that sub national transport bodies are now playing.

5.2. On 29/30 November, the Heartland area hosted the Local Transport Summit. The event was held at Letchworth Hall Hotel, Hertfordshire. Attendance at the event was high. The Chair of the Strategic Transport Forum opened the conference and

both England's Economic Heartland and our host partner, Hertfordshire County Council, enjoyed successful showcase sessions during the event.

6. **Written Responses**

6.1. Since the previous meeting, the following formal responses have been prepared by EEH:

- Submission to PINS regarding Northamptonshire Gateway Strategic Rail Freight Interchange

<http://www.englandseconomicheartland.com/Documents/Northampton%20Gateway%20EEH%20representation.pdf>

- Consultation response to Department for Transport's WebTAG consultation

<http://www.englandseconomicheartland.com/Documents/EEH%20DfT%20WebTAG%20consultation%20response.pdf>

- Consultation response to Department for Transport's future of mobility and last mile call for evidence

Holding responses were provided to both of these consultations, acknowledging further work to be done as part of the transport strategy. We will ensure follow up discussions are held with DfT at the appropriate time.

Naomi Green
Head of Technical Programme

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