



STRATEGIC TRANSPORT FORUM

Minutes

Friday 15th May 2020

11:00 – 13:00

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present:

Mayor Dave Hodgson	Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Paul Castleman	Luton Borough Council
Cllr Yvonne Constance	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Maureen Penny	Swindon Borough Council
Cllr Derrick Ashley	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr Adam Mitchell	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr Nigel Young	Central Bedfordshire Council
Cllr David Renard	Swindon Borough Council
Cllr Nick Naylor	Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire Council
Cllr Steve Broadbent	BTVLEP
Cllr Emily Darlington	Milton Keynes Council
Laura Church	Luton Borough Council
Ian Thompson	Buckinghamshire Council
Joan Hancox	Buckinghamshire Council
Philippa Venables	Swindon Borough Council
John Disley	Oxfordshire County Council
Jon Shortland	Bedford Borough Council
Steve Hayes	Milton Keynes Council
Simon Bowers	Daventry District Council
Keith Dove	Luton Borough Council
Clara Kerr	Huntingdonshire District Council
Ian Achurch	Northamptonshire County Council
Paul Moorby	SWLEP
Phil Southall	OXLEP
Carew Satchwell	Network Rail
Alan Kirkdale	Highways England
Robin Knight	EEH Bus Operators Association
Martin Tugwell	England's Economic Heartland
Naomi Green	England's Economic Heartland
James Golding-Graham	England's Economic Heartland
Adam King	England's Economic Heartland
Abi Nichols	England's Economic Heartland
Antony Swift	England's Economic Heartland

In attendance:

Mungo Duncan	West Coast Partnerships
Alistair Parker	Camargue Corporate and B2B Communications

		ACTION
1	<p>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The virtual meeting protocol that was sent in advance of the meeting was discussed and observed. Attendees agreed for the meeting to be recorded for meeting purposes.</p>	None Arising
2	<p>MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING</p> <p>Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a true record. The action log was discussed, with all actions either completed, ongoing or addressed as part of substantive agenda items.</p> <p>Cllr Nigel Young enquired over progress with communication to the Department for Transport regarding HGV enforcement. Martin Tugwell confirmed that the focus was presently on the draft Transport Strategy but, following approval of the draft Strategy, the next step would be to action some priority areas, such as this.</p> <p>There were no questions from the public.</p>	None Arising
3	<p>DRAFT TRANSPORT STRATEGY</p> <p>Martin Tugwell set out the process underway in order to develop the Transport Strategy. Engagement on the Outline Transport Strategy in summer 2019 identified a series of key priorities for respondents, which had formed an important catalyst for a raft of technical work underpinning the Transport Strategy.</p> <p>The Transport Strategy has now been shared with the Department for Transport (DfT), Highways England, and Network Rail. Freight and logistics continue to be a key focus of the Transport Strategy and this is indicative of the importance placed on strategic connectivity driving forward the economic needs of this region.</p> <p>An ensuing discussion took place on strategically important locations, decarbonisation, rural economies and freight and logistics.</p> <p><u>Strategically important locations</u></p> <p>The Transport Strategy distinguishes four types of regionally significant locations. These locations had been separated by the Heartland's largest urban areas where additional growth is planned, areas that form the focus of economic opportunities moving forward, areas where the scale of planned growth is significantly relative to their size and areas of potential, where intervention is required to improve social equality.</p> <p>Forum Members agreed with the geographical spread of places. Members requested Banbury and Leavesden Studios were acknowledged respectively. In addition, it was suggested that the Honda plant in Swindon should be captured on the opportunities map, owing to its impact on the surrounding transport system.</p> <p>Cllr Derrick Ashley recommended reformatting the table so it's easier to read. Phil Southall highlighted the need to include a more obvious reference to the Local Industrial Strategies.</p> <p><u>Decarbonisation</u></p> <p>Forum Members suggested that the Strategy should explore the implications of Covid-19. Members felt that the pandemic has demonstrated that many people are able to work reasonably well from home with little disruption. It was argued that this experience should feature as part of considerations for land-use planning policy and car parking. For example, repurposing road space in favour of active travel and prioritising public transport.</p>	



The Chair suggested that reducing the need to travel should act as an underpinning message in the Transport Strategy and potentially be included as part of the hierarchy of travel. The group recognised that the replacement of combustion engines with batteries will not go far enough in improving either air quality in urban areas or reducing Co2, due to the energy expended to build them.

Cllr Nigel Young commented that the Transport Strategy might benefit from more obviously integrating its principles with proposed development across the region. The group agreed that housing must be designed in such a way that encourages transport by active travel, otherwise much of the policy in the Transport Strategy will be held hostage to poor land-use planning.

Cllr Yvonne Constance felt that the Strategy's target for net-zero by 2050 should be kept under a review as opposed to a ridged target to work towards. The group agreed and suggested Government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan should be referenced.

Cllr Nick Naylor welcomed the emphasis the Strategy had placed on the need to deliver transport solutions in a way that respected and enhances the natural environment. He felt that the document would benefit from affording more attention to other environmental impacts, namely biodiversity and the preservation of landscapes.

Rural Connectivity

Members felt the narrative addressing rural connectivity should more explicitly recognise the importance of digital connectivity by referencing the fact many rural settlements do not have adequate 5G or broadband provision. A point was also made to reference government's ambition to boost levels of cycling and walking and Government's plans to update the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

The meeting agreed that the rural economy was important to a number of the Heartland's key towns and cities. The concept of smaller mobility hubs connecting rural settlements with employment catchments was supported and examples of pocket park and rides were cited as examples of good practice, as was the announcement of a £30 million fund to support these initiatives.

The Forum felt that COVID-19 presented opportunities to capitalise on the public's appetite to work at home by supporting ambitious infrastructure proposals that prioritised public transport. Cllr Nigel Young echoed this and argued that segregated bus lanes or guided busways seen in Cambridge and Luton can encourage modal shift due to journey time saving and cheaper cost of travel, comparative to rail.

Freight

Through engagement with business and infrastructure operators, the Transport Strategy reflects the importance and requirements of the freight and logistic sector in this region. To support decarbonisation of the transport system whilst continuing to unlock the region's economy, maximising the use of rail freight is a key policy for EEH.

Martin Tugwell sought views from the Forum as to the extent to which the Transport Strategy should identify sites well suited for potential strategic rail freight interchange development. The Forum agreed that, where appropriate, identifying locations would be agreed.

The Forum:

a) Considered the policies and narrative around de-carbonisation, the rural economy, strategically important locations and freight and logistics

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	<p>b) AGREED, subject to the amendments listed, the suite of policies at the core of the Transport Strategy</p>	
<p>5</p>	<p>DECARBONISATION</p> <p>James Golding-Graham began by updating the Forum that EEH continue to embrace the key decisions being taken by DfT as part of their Decarbonisation Plan.</p> <p>The Pathways to Decarbonisation work had been designed to complement work on the Transport Strategy by developing a pan-regional pathway/strategy to transport decarbonisation. The Forum was reminded that the project outputs will underpin the policies around decarbonisation set out in the Transport Strategy.</p> <p>Each proposed pathway is comprised of a variety of policy levers, using a national infrastructure transport model and applying a growth scenario that is determined by housing figures in local plans.</p> <p>The Forum was briefed on the five pathways to decarbonisation being explored in the work. These ranged from Business as Usual (with assumptions that nearly half of the vehicle fleet will have transitioned to electric vehicle), tech-led solutions and policies that achieve behavioural change.</p> <p>In discussing the routes to decarbonisation, the Forum requested that the link to the scatter emissions tool would be circulated to all members.</p> <p>Concerning pathway 4, Cllr Yvonne Constance enquired how behaviour change is envisaged to be achieved. Cllr Derrick Ashley echoed this point and advised the meeting that there are a number of different mechanisms to increase the cost of road use by 50%. James Golding-Graham responded by confirming that the pathways work has not been prescriptive; uplift in costs could be achieved by a fuel tax or road user charging.</p> <p>James Golding-Graham confirmed that the work will produce two waypoints at 2035 and 2050 respectively. This will enable EEH to see whether the 50% is fit for purpose.</p> <p>Cllr Nick Nayler, asked whether the pathways work would set interim targets, to reflect the scale of the challenge. James Golding Graham advised that a 2035 and 2050 pathway would be set, supported by a set of indicators that would serve as mechanism to monitor progress.</p> <p>Finally, Cllr Derrick Ashley aired caution with respect to the effectiveness of road user pricing. London was cited as an example, whereby people are at least anecdotally more dissuaded to travel by car because of the lack of convenience and time, rather than road user charging policy alone.</p> <p>The Forum:</p> <p>a) Considered the significant national policy developments that need to be reflected in England’s Economic Heartland’s response to decarbonisation.</p> <p>b) Noted the progress with the Pathways to Decarbonisation project and agree to consider its final outcomes alongside the Transport Strategy at its next meeting.</p> <p>c) AGREED that details of the SCATTER tool would be sent to members of the Forum</p>	<p>James Golding-Graham</p>

<p>6</p>	<p>CONNECTIVITY STUDIES</p> <p>Abi Nichols updated Forum Members on the progress underway on the EEH programme of connectivity studies. The studies will ensure that proposals for long term investment are informed by an evidence-led understanding of the challenges and opportunities relating to the connectivity in the area. The final outputs would form a sequenced programme of studies and it was anticipated that subject to funding, two studies would commence in 2020/21.</p> <p>The shortlisted 19 corridors have been informed by previous discussions of the Forum and through responses to the Outline Transport Strategy. These would undergo further appraisal against the Transport Strategy principles, in a process undertaken by independent consultants.</p> <p>Cllr Nigel Young was interested in the A1M strategic study, particularly as the scope of that boundary would cover more than the section of road that is motorway standard. Abi Nichols confirmed that the study is broader than the motorway section and as a general principle these studies are between places rather than stretches of carriageway.</p> <p>Cllr Emily Darlington enquired why the A5 was not on the shortlist. Abi Nichols confirmed that the A5 was in the initial long list of 50 corridors but, after the initial sifting phase, had been just below the cut off point. An action was taken to refer back to the long list assessment of the A5 to determine any further action.</p> <p>Cllr Maureen Penny enquired whether the A34 corridor included the A420. Abi Nichols advised the meeting that two corridors were currently being assessed separately but recognised that there may be future rationalisation of corridors. The meeting was advised that the Business Unit would be happy to respond to questions on the interdependences between the two roads and their relationship with this process.</p> <p>The Forum:</p> <p>a) Considered the approach to the development of a strategic programme of connectivity studies for inclusion in the draft Transport Strategy</p> <p>b) Noted the proposed timeline for future connectivity studies will be presented at the Strategic Transport Forum in June 2020</p> <p>c) To refer back to the long list assessment of the A5 to determine any further action.</p>	<p>Abi Nichols</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>PATHWAY TO STATUTORY STATUS</p> <p>Martin Tugwell opened the item by reminding the meeting that plans to develop the region’s Transport Strategy would be supported concurrently for proposals for statutory status.</p> <p>The list of general functions referenced are generally consistent with the four big Sub-national Transport Bodies. In addition, a number of additional powers that might be sought were presented. These ranged from being consulted on new railway franchising or road investment strategies to others that will warrant further scrutiny from the Forum.</p> <p>Martin Tugwell advised the Forum that these powers would be exercised concurrently with local transport authorities. Importantly, powers and functions deemed not appropriate for EEH to assume were presented too.</p> <p>Mayor Dave Hodgson summarised by confirming the list of core powers as presented were accepted. Mayor Dave advised the meeting that this was not the final opportunity to consider other functions, as such comments on this list should be directed to the EEH Business Unit offline.</p>	



	<p>The Forum:</p> <p>a) AGREED the proposed core functions for a statutory Sub-national Transport Body</p> <p>b) AGREED to send comments or views on the other functions a statutory Sub-national Transport Body might seek (para 3.3) to the EEH Business Unit.</p>	Martin Tugwell
8	<p>MILTON KEYNES STRATEGY FOR 2050</p> <p>Antony Swift presented an overview on the importance of Milton Keynes to the region's economy. The focus of the draft response to the MK 2050 strategy is to demonstrate support for the proposed Mass Rapid Transport System, the importance of maximising East West Rail connectivity</p> <p>Cllr Emily Darlington and the Forum were supportive of the proposed response.</p> <p>The Forum AGREED the response to the consultation on the Milton Keynes Strategy for 2050</p>	Naomi Green
10	<p>BUSINESS UNIT UPDATE</p> <p>Martin Tugwell advised the meeting that the Business Unit Update is to be taken as a written report.</p> <p>An action was taken to share the details and membership of the EEH Influencers Group with Cllr Maureen Penny.</p>	Naomi Green