



STRATEGIC TRANSPORT FORUM: Minutes

Friday 11th September 2020

11:00 – 13:00

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present:

Mayor Dave Hodgson	Bedford Borough Council
Cllr Adam Mitchell	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr Nigel Young	Central Bedfordshire Council
Cllr Yvonne Constance	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Derrick Ashley	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr David Renard	Swindon Borough Council
Cllr Steve Broadbent	BTVLEP
Hannah Bishop	Buckinghamshire Council
Tim Bellamy	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
Keith Dove	Luton Borough Council
Sue Frost	Luton Borough Council
Philip Martlew	Swindon Borough Council
Ian Achurch	Northamptonshire County Council
Patsy Dell	Hertfordshire County Council
Rajesh Kungur	Milton Keynes Council
Jon Shortland	Bedford Borough Council
John Disley	Oxfordshire County Council
Gavin Dowland	Network Rail
Alan Kirkdale	Highways England
Phil Southall	OXLEP
Paul Moorby	SWLEP
Hillary Chipping	SEMLEP
Robin Knight	EEH Bus Operators Association
Mungo Duncan	Avanti West Coast
Andrew Commons	East Midlands Railway
Kevin Hughes	East Midlands Railway
Max Taylor	East Midlands Railway
Laura Etheridge	East Midlands Railway
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:

Ruth Bagley	Representing Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce
Alan Francis	Milton Keynes Green Party

		ACTION
1	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The virtual meeting protocol was discussed and observed. Attendees agreed for the meeting to be recorded.	NONE ARISING
2	MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a true record. Naomi Green took the meeting through the action log, with all actions either completed, ongoing or addressed as part of substantive items included on the meeting's agenda. The Forum was advised that clarification from DfT officials would be sought regarding changes to the Traffic Management Act 2004 that would enable the Heartland's local authorities the same range of enforcement powers as observed in London.	NONE ARISING
	PUBLIC QUESTIONS Ruth Bagley, representing Thames Valley Chambers of Commerce requested the support of EEH in securing the delivery of Western Rail Access to Heathrow. Network Rail are on the verge of delivering a Development Consent Order application, but uncertainty around final funding is compromising its timely delivery. Martin Tugwell recommended the Forum consider this request as part of Agenda Item 5. Alan Francis asked two questions relating to the West Coast Main Line. The first question raised a concern that East West Rail is removing the Aylesbury-Milton Keynes service due to capacity constraints between Denbigh Hall South Junction and Milton Keynes Central. Martin Tugwell advised the Forum that both he, the Leader of EEH and Chair of the Strategic Transport Forum met with Baroness Vere who was not aware of any intentions for removing the connection but would endeavour to find out more. The second question was with respect to Avanti services on the West Coast Main Line post-HS2. Alan Francis suggested HS2's original business case concerning the reallocation of West Coast Mainline services proposed significantly better levels of frequency than is currently proposed between Watford Junction- Milton Keynes- Rugby post-HS2. Martin Tugwell responded by acknowledging the point and recommended addressing it as part of Avanti's presentation in Agenda Item 4.	NONE ARISING
3	DRAFT TRANSPORT STRATEGY LAUNCH Adam King led a discussion on the draft Transport Strategy consultation which ends October 6 th . A webinar, attended by approximately 300 people, acted as a set piece event to kick-start the period of engagement on July 14 th . The draft Transport Strategy has been downloaded approximately 4000 times from the website and an extensive period of meetings and engagement with partners is now underway. The Transport Strategy has been received positively, with 80% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with its vision and principles. A number of themes have emerged as part of the feedback. These include a stronger focus on accessibility and inclusivity, which includes the importance of step-free access at railway stations and affordable transport. Further, a greater emphasis on active travel measures and Mass Rapid Transport is encouraged as is the need to deliver infrastructure ahead of planned growth. A number of additional schemes have been requested, including the North Cotswold Line upgrade and a call for closer integration between land-use planning and transport. Adam King confirmed he would present an extensive report on the consultation at the Forum's next meeting and summarised the plan for EEH's 4 th Annual Conference. Cllr Nigel Young stressed his support for Mass Rapid Transport and the importance of providing segregated bus lanes for fast and reliable travel by	



	<p>public transport. Cllr Yvonne Constance reiterated previous comments made by the Forum that the region should be striving to achieve net-zero transport sooner than 2050, a suggestion which has also been raised by other organisations and members of the public. Cllr Yvonne Constance also provided her thanks to Naomi Green for her presentation to Oxfordshire Councillors.</p> <p>The Forum noted the successful launch of the draft Transport Strategy and the emerging consultation themes</p>	<p>NONE ARISING</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>STRATEGIC RAIL PRIORITIES FOR THE WEST COAST MAIN LINE AND MIDLAND MAIN LINE</p> <p>Antony Swift opened the agenda item by discussing the significance of the West Coast Main Line and Midland Main Line in the context of the region’s draft Transport Strategy and investment pipeline. The Forum were advised that two presentations from both East Midlands Railway and Avanti West Coast would set out their franchise priorities for these corridors respectively.</p> <p>Andrew Commons representing East Midlands Railway guided the Forum through a number of topics that focused on the impact of COVID-19, the summary of proposals for May 2021 timetable and the future of the franchise. East Midlands Railway have observed a significant drop in rail usage since the pandemic, most notably experiencing 4-5% of usual loadings in May 2020 compared to that time last year but the operator is experiencing a gradual return (around 20% of utilisation). The data suggests that intercity (business travel) is lagging behind regional services, which is more focused on commuting. Andrew Commons advised the Forum that the timetable change originally planned for December 2020 has been postponed to May 2021 as a result of the pandemic. The delay in the timetable process is allowing EMR to finesse the bid ahead of being submitted in October 2020 and they will provide the results of the consultation shortly after. Network Rail will validate and confirm proposals in the New Year.</p> <p>Andrew Commons outlined the summary of proposals which remain centred around a sixth train per hour to London, made possible by the Midland Main Line upgrade. In response to the feedback from EEH and other stakeholders a number of contra-peak services will be provided for Bedford and Wellingborough to connect with stations north of Kettering, subject to validation. Finally, the presentation concluded by reminding the Forum that on March 23rd, all franchised train operators were placed on Emergency Measures Agreements’ by DfT to ensure services continued to operate in light of significant reductions in passengers. These arrangements are due to end on 20th September with no replacements in place.</p> <p>Mungo Duncan, Regional Manager at Avanti West Coast began the presentation by recapping the Shadow Operator function. The franchise has three elements; operating and improving existing intercity services, shaping HS2 and post-2029 conventional services in advance of HS2 and from 2029 running integrated operations (HS2 and reconfigured intercity services). The scope of Avanti’s operations are concerned with Phase 2A and their mission is to deliver an innovative railway service for the future that generates national prosperity and pride. To achieve this the operator is working closely with HS2 Ltd and in partnership with Sub-national Transport Bodies, to understand regional aspirations for the new high-speed structure.</p> <p>Mungo Duncan confirmed that Avanti is an advisor to the DfT (in their role as client on the future operation of high-speed services). As part of offering that advice, Avanti are leading on approximately 55 different work-streams that flow from the strategic market report undertaken earlier this year. Of these work-streams, the development of the train service specification (post-HS2) and its consultation will begin in 2021 and engagement with EEH as part of this process will be ongoing, changes to the existing West Coast Main Line timetable</p>	



	<p>are scheduled for December 2022.</p> <p>The ensuing discussion began with a question from Dave Hodgson highlighting the recently announced partnership agreement between East Midlands Trains and Transport for the East Midlands, a partnership that Bedford Borough Council and Luton Borough Council are not part of. Andrew Commons was asked how this relationship would affect the Bedfordshire authorities and Bedfordshire passengers. Andrew commons confirmed that the agreement is a franchise obligation agreed between the DfT and Abellio and suggested this arrangement did not change anything with respect to the relationship with the Bedfordshire authorities and EEH. In addition to providing an update on the linkages with Midland Main Line priorities and the work underway on the Phase 2 Passenger Rail Study, Antony Swift recommended that it would be useful to formalise discussions that are already taking place between EEH and EMR.</p> <p>The Forum raised a concern with the quality and speed of rolling stock between Corby-London despite the growing importance of Bedford as a key interchange hub for Thameslink, EMR and East West Rail Services. Further, Antony Swift enquired as to when the detail of proposed contra peak services would be announced and also, whether COVID-19 presents an opportunity to rethink the London-centric focus that has traditionally dominated franchise requirements.</p> <p>The Forum was advised that details on the proposed contra-peak services will be published in October 2020 along with results to the consultation and final timetables being published 12 weeks before May 2021. Andrew Commons reiterated that the driver behind the franchise was largely predicated on increasing journey speeds to London north of Kettering and the priority south of Kettering was building in fast, capacity increases to towns such as Bedford and Luton. Whilst these remain the fundamental principles of the timetable bid, EMR have accepted that new methods of working has brought into focus the need to plan for the new travel patterns. Max Taylor representing EMR argued it was too early to understand the impact of the pandemic on travel behaviour.</p> <p>The future of Bedford Midland Station was discussed, with Forum members noting that previous plans for development, originally envisaged in 2010 have yet to come to fruition. Antony Swift agreed to raise this with colleagues at Network Rail and the Department. The need to progress the delivery of a new station at Wixams, whether that is two or four platforms was agreed as being of strategic importance.</p> <p>Antony Swift concluded the agenda item by responding to previous concerns raised regarding the proposed timetable set out in HS2's full business case, launched in April 2020. Supported by Mungo Duncan, the Forum was advised this was an indicative train service specification and that further engagement would take place in 2021 between EEH and Avanti West Coast.</p> <p>The Forum:</p> <p>a) Noted presentations provided by Avanti West Coast Partnership and East Midlands Railway setting out their current franchise priorities</p> <p>b) Considered and reinforced the region's priorities for the West Coast Main Line and Midland Main Line</p>	<p>ANTONY SWIFT</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>ACCELERATING AND ENSURING DELIVERY</p> <p>Martin Tugwell proposed a number of additional recommendations in addition to the package of infrastructure measures set out in the Transport Strategy that form part of EEH's proposed input to the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review. The first, recommended that the Forum delegated to the Chair a letter of support with respect to the delivery of Western Rail Link to Heathrow. The second proposed that that Forum, taken forward by the EEH Business Unit, restates the pivotal role of delivering East West Rail in its entirety.</p>	



	<p>It was assumed that the Comprehensive Spending Review might be constrained by the pressure on public finances in response to the pandemic. As such, it was argued that economic recovery must be underpinned by a firm commitment to the package of infrastructure referred to in the response to the spending review. Martin Tugwell discussed the proposed Transport Innovation Fund as a way of responding to our obligations to deliver net-zero transport and a proposed programme of work with Satellite Applications Catapult to deliver a Digitally Enabled Landscape. The letter's reference to exploring options for improved rail connectivity between Milton Keynes and the East Midlands towns/cities was discussed and recommended to be taken forward by way of SOBC development.</p> <p>Cllr Nigel Young drew the Forum's attention to subsection 5.5 of the paper that referred to the A1 corridor. He raised a concern that the A1 corridor had not featured in correspondence with Highways England Regional Operations Director in early September 2020. The correspondence he received laid out a number of schemes being brought forward over the next 5-years (RIS2) but excluded any reference to the A1. Alan Kirkdale representing Highways England responded by confirming that upgrades to the A1 is referenced in the HE 5 Year Delivery Plan (2020-2025). Notwithstanding, Alan Kirkdale advised the Forum that its status in the plan describes the need for Highways England to work with the Department for Transport to understand the scale and arrangement of growth along the A1 corridor. Cllr Nigel Young was surprised to hear that Highways England are waiting to understand the level of growth when he and other councillors have been invited to discuss land value capture with the DfT associated with the A428.</p> <p>The Forum raised a number of further points. Cllr Steve Broadbent asked for clarity on whether or not the list of transport infrastructure requirements needed to be prioritised. Martin Tugwell responded by confirming this package of infrastructure measures should be considered the minimum requirement to enable the region to move forward and deliver growth.</p> <p>Phil Southall representing the EEH Bus Operators Association reminded the Forum of Government's commitment to spend £5 billion as part of a national bus strategy and to improve active travel. Whilst circa £2 billion has been announced as part of the Emergency Active Travel Measures, colleagues are yet to hear anything on the remaining £3 billion and subsequently it was recommended this point is reflected in the paper to Government. Martin Tugwell agreed to strengthen the link to active travel measures and mass-transit systems using the virtue of the EEH Bus Operators Association.</p> <p>The Forum:</p> <p>a) Supported the decision to submit to Government, in the form of a Spending Review submission, a package of measures that are identified as priorities to support the delivery of strategic infrastructure, in line with the EEH Transport Strategy.</p> <p>b) Agreed, subject to the drafting amendments discussed, the package of measures</p> <p>c) Agreed to prepare a letter to the Chancellor in support of Western Rail Link to Heathrow</p>	MARTIN TUGWELL
6	<p>PLANNING WHITE PAPER</p> <p>Martin Tugwell began by stating that whilst it is not appropriate for EEH to comment on the changes to the local plan system itself, the proposed changes to the planning system will have a consequence for infrastructure, and it is in within that context the recommended response has been prepared. The Forum were advised that the draft paper has been shared with the officer group who have contributed positively to its content.</p>	



	<p>Cllr Nigel Young supported the response but stressed that any 'permission in principle' granted in respect of new housing developments must be matched by the timely delivery of supporting infrastructure, citing cases such as East West Rail as an example.</p> <p>Cllr Yvonne Constance expressed concerns on the emphasis of strategic infrastructure being linked to the number of homes, which could inadvertently see enhancements required at Oxford Station, not linked to growth, unfairly treated. Phil Southall, supported by other Forum members, expressed concerns that the reforms are in essence replacing local planning with a type of national urban design system. Historically bus operators have been successful in improving bus services in new development and making them more sustainable using Section 106 funding, but if this becomes a national 'tax', bus provision may feature less prominently.</p> <p>The Forum:</p> <p>a) Considered the implications for the planning, development and delivery of strategic infrastructure arising as a consequence of the proposals set out in the Planning White Paper</p> <p>b) Provided a steer on the key themes that should form the basis for a response from England's Economic Heartland to the Planning White Paper consultation.</p>	<p>MARTIN TUGWELL</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>TRANSPORT DECARBONISATION PLAN</p> <p>James Golding-Graham provided a presentation on the background and context of the DfT's Transport Decarbonisation Plan. The Department published the plan in April 2020 and the document is the first step in the challenge of developing a coordinated plan for the transport sector to reduce its carbon intensity. The feedback that EEH is providing will help shape the final plan thought to be published by the end of this calendar year. Forum members were guided through the principles of the proposed EEH response.</p> <p>Ruth Bagley supported the response but suggested reinforcing the need for a deliverable plan and echoed the need for collaboration across Whitehall departments.</p> <p>The Forum endorsed the response to the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.</p>	<p>JAMES GOLDING-GRAHAM</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>FUTURE MEETING DATES</p> <p>Friday 27th November 2020 (virtual meeting)</p>	