



STRATEGIC TRANSPORT FORUM: Minutes

Friday 27th November 2020

11:00 – 13:00

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present:

Mayor Dave Hodgson
 Cllr Jennifer Marklew
 Cllr Jason Smithers
 Cllr Ian Bates
 Cllr Gary Sumner
 Cllr Paul Castleman
 Cllr Bridget Smith
 Cllr Steve Broadbent
 Cllr Nigel Young
 Cllr Nick Naylor
 Cllr Yvonne Constance
 Simon Bowers
 Liz Watts
 Mark Kemp
 Jon Shortland
 Tim Bellamy
 Nicola Monk
 Ian Thompson
 Joan Hancox
 Claire Britton
 Jeremy Smith
 John Disley
 Philip Martlew
 Keith Dove
 Paul Moorby
 Hilary Chipping
 Phil Southall
 Gavin Dowland
 Carly Freeston

Bedford Borough Council
 Milton Keynes Council
 Northamptonshire County Council
 Cambridgeshire County Council
 Swindon Borough Council
 Luton Borough Council
 South Cambridgeshire District Council
 BTVLEP
 Central Bedfordshire Council
 Buckinghamshire Council
 Oxfordshire County Council
 Daventry District Council
 South Cambridgeshire District Council
 Hertfordshire County Council
 Bedford Borough Council
 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
 Luton Borough Council
 Buckinghamshire Council
 Buckinghamshire Council
 Buckinghamshire Council
 Cambridgeshire County Council
 Oxfordshire County Council
 Swindon Borough Council
 Luton Borough Council
 SWLEP
 SEMLEP
 OXLEP
 Network Rail System Operator
 Department for Transport

Martin Tugwell
 Naomi Green
 James Golding-Graham
 Adam King
 Abi Nichols
 Antony Swift

England's Economic Heartland
 England's Economic Heartland

In attendance: Owen O'Neill

Welland Valley Rail Partnership

		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 for the purpose of the minutes.	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 agenda items. Priorities for connectivity on the West Coast Main Line and Midland Main Line will be presented to the Forum in spring 2021.	NONE ARISING
3	PUBLIC QUESTIONS Alan Francis representing Milton Keynes Green Party welcomed the focus on the environment within the Transport Strategy consultation responses and urged that the final Transport Strategy brings forward the ambition for net-zero carbon emissions to a date of 2040/2045. The Chair responded by confirming this issue would be addressed as part of agenda item 4.	NONE ARISING
4	DRAFT TRANSPORT STRATEGY CONSULTATION FEEDBACK Adam King confirmed that during the consultation period, the Draft Transport Strategy was downloaded more than 5000 times and subject to an extensive programme of media and public engagement. The Business Unit received 210 responses on the Strategy, which included submissions from all of EEH's partners. The online survey received 76% overall support for the Strategy and captured a mixture of views, ranging from comments on the vision and principles to scheme specific infrastructure priorities. Through the consultation process six themes have been identified that are substantive in nature. These include decarbonisation and the environment, alignment of our work with wider geographies, reflecting levers for change, consideration of the balance of modes/schemes, people and safety and rural connectivity. Adam King confirmed that many of these issues will be debated in forthcoming agenda items, but the Transport Strategy's introduction will seek to tackle some of these concerns head on by being clearer on the purpose of the document. Alongside the Draft Transport Strategy, the consultation sought views on the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA). The ISA provided an independent assessment on the extent to which sustainability principles have been integrated into the Strategy. Three core themes arose in responses to the ISA consultation. Firstly, responses requested clarity on the extent to which the ISA and Strategy have been developed in tandem of one another. Secondly, what level of assessment to proposed policies and infrastructure was carried out. Finally, some responses called for scheme specific tail, which would be disproportionate to the level of ISA undertaken. The Forum was advised that these themes would be responded to accordingly in the ISA Post Adoption Statement, with a full report of the ISA and Post Adoption Statement being presented to the Forum in February 2021. Mayor Dave Hodgson commented that it was encouraging to see the theme of rural connectivity come through strongly in the consultation. He suggested that the Heartland's carbon footprint, which is above the national average, is partly attributed to its rural geography. This creates high car dependence in rural settings as public services are not well connected to amenities. Mark Kemp echoed these concerns and identified the DfT's impending National Bus Strategy as a document that may provide some guidance on the challenges of public transport viability and future opportunities for enhanced quality partnerships.	



	<p>The Forum:</p> <p>a) Noted the overall response to the Transport Strategy and Integrated Sustainability Appraisal consultations.</p> <p>b) Considered the implications of the key themes from the consultation for the final version of the Transport Strategy.</p>	<p>NONE ARISING</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>TRANSPORT DECARBONISATION – IMPLICATIONS</p> <p>The imperative of decarbonisation has underpinned the policies contained within the Draft Transport Strategy. The Forum’s preferred route map for net-zero transport at the regional level has been to set a target of 2050 at the latest, matching the Government’s ambition. Since then, the consultation feedback has called for an even more ambitious approach to the decarbonisation of transport which would require EEH to accelerate this ambition. The Forum were advised that a change to this course of action would have implications for the planning of our transport system and other policy areas that the Forum must consider. In response to the consultation feedback and recognising that approaches to decarbonisation are evolving quickly, the Forum were asked to consider several proposals.</p> <p>James Golding-Graham led a presentation on the need to decarbonise the transport system more quickly and significantly. The presentation set out the scale of the challenge to decarbonise the transport sector and analysed its contribution to carbon emissions relative to other sectors. He argued that top down strategies (expected in 2021) such as the Energy White Paper, Transport Decarbonisation Plan and the National Bus Strategy will need to be supported by committing to stronger decarbonisation policies at the regional level. A suite of policy mechanisms for inclusion in the Transport Strategy were proposed. These included, developing a standalone decarbonisation roadmap, setting a carbon budget for the region and an ambition to reduce the number of car trips by a minimum of 5% per decade. An ensuing discussion took place.</p> <p>Cllr Yvonne Constance observed that many road vehicles would continue to emit carbon beyond 2030 as the legislation stipulates that only new vehicles sold from 2030 must be electrically powered. James Golding-Graham confirmed that the assumptions in modelling work recognised combustion engines may still be mainstream beyond 2030. Further, it was difficult to ascertain the impact of this policy on achieving net-zero as much of the detail regarding the transition to electric vehicles will be contained in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.</p> <p>Cllr Nigel Young argued that Government currently afford little focus on the importance of decarbonisation in new developments. The view was that development can undermine the imperative of decarbonisation and a hub model of connectivity within settlements is not promoted. New building regulations, in draft, insist on the provision of low-carbon infrastructure in new housing developments but there is little else in the way of promoting sustainable forms of transport in new development. The Forum supported this and discussed the benefit of a car-scrapping scheme to remove petrol/diesel cars from the network. Martin Tugwell acknowledged these comments and responded by confirming our region has an above average carbon footprint and as such the package of carbon reduction measures will ensure we are able to respond to the ambition that has come through the engagement. The Forum agreed that transport’s contribution to greenhouse gases is accelerating conversations around decarbonisation and as such it must consider what consequences new transport models have for place and business models.</p>	



	<p>The Forum identified the implications an overhaul to electric vehicles will have for power networks / grid capacity and the risk of inadvertently worsening air quality caused by a shift to electric vehicles. Cllr Steve Broadbent voiced his concern that a single, regional, carbon budget may inadvertently cause smaller populations to become overlooked in decision making concerning infrastructure investment. He suggested carbon budget thresholds or weighting, based on size and type of population might be more appropriate. James Golding-Graham agreed that as there were socio-economic differences in places, carbon budget allocations should reflect this.</p> <p>The Forum:</p> <p>a) Considered the implications for investment now, and in the future of the Transport Strategy in acting more decisively in the pursuit of Net Zero carbon.</p> <p>b) Supported the proposed changes to the policy and narrative in the Transport Strategy set out in para 3.1.</p> <p>c) Supported the development of Decarbonisation Roadmap by the end of 2021.</p> <p>d) Supported the identification of a regional carbon budget for transport; and the need to commit to de-couple economic growth and traffic/carbon growth.</p>	<p>NONE ARISING</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>TRANSPORT STRATEGY – NEXT STEPS</p> <p>Naomi Green introduced the agenda item by reaffirming that the DfT have advised that they will be giving due regard to the Transport Strategy once published. The DfT have worked closely with the EEH Business Unit in shaping the Strategy and are content in the way it has been developed. In addition to the six key themes that have emerged as part of the consultation, there is a hypothesis that the Transport Strategy would benefit from a much bolder opening introduction which more explicitly sets out what the Transport Strategy is looking to deliver.</p> <p>To address this feedback the introductory chapter has been redrafted, placing decarbonisation of EEH’s transport system front and centre of the Strategy and demonstrating a commitment to achieve the net zero requirement at an earlier date. The Strategy will sharpen its focus on digital connectivity as a strategic requirement for the future of our transport system, prioritise investment in strategic public transport schemes that are complimented by increased investment in local connectivity and recognise the critical role of freight and logistics. A draft of the introductory chapter, set out in Annex 1, was presented for approval. Naomi Green recommended that the final version of the Transport Strategy should be presented on 5th February 2021 for consideration and approval.</p> <p>Phil Southall highlighted the National Bus Strategy, due for publication in January 2021 as being relevant to the ambitions of the Transport Strategy. He also questioned whether the use of ‘living labs’ to trial new transport solutions, wrongly implies a revolution, rather than evolution is necessary. Cllr Steve Broadbent sought clarification on whether EEH is proposing an ambition to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2040, Naomi Green confirmed that this was the decision being sought. The Forum supported this ambition.</p> <p>The Forum:</p> <p>a) Considered the implications of the consultation responses for the final version of the Transport Strategy.</p> <p>b) Considered and commented on the draft introductory section for the final version of the Transport Strategy.</p>	<p>NONE ARISING</p>

<p>7</p>	<p>NEXT STEPS FOR STATUTORY STATUS</p> <p>Martin Tugwell led the discussion by advising the Forum that EEH is one of seven STBs in England, with Transport for the North being a statutory body. Through the consultation on the Draft Transport Strategy EEH sought views on a proposal to become a statutory body. The key messages coming through as part of that engagement demonstrated strong support for having an overarching strategic body to help accelerate the delivery of growth and infrastructure and the need for the region’s voice to be heard and fed into decision making.</p> <p>In view of the fact Government are not convinced on the need to grant STBs with statutory powers, there is a need for EEH to build on the existing relationship it has with the DfT to develop a concordat. This would set out the expectations of the Government and the role and responsibility of EEH to deliver the ambitions of the Transport Strategy. The Government welcome this approach and Martin Tugwell advised that subject to Forum support, the EEH Business Unit would work with officials to prepare a draft of the concordat that can be presented for consideration at the next Forum meeting in February 2021, alongside the Transport Strategy.</p> <p>The Forum supported this approach and argued that EEH in its current role is capable of influencing decision making without the need for additional statutory powers. The Forum agreed that statutory status could undermine the success EEH has had in being able to develop relationships from the bottom up. Cllr Ian Bates asked how the concordat would link with other organisations, i.e. Transport East and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. Martin Tugwell advised that the concordat would build upon the existing relationships EEH shares with key partners.</p> <p>The Forum:</p> <p>a) Considered feedback from the consultation on options for creating a statutory body for England’s Economic Heartland.</p> <p>b) Noted the commitment from DfT to Sub National Transport Bodies as its preferred regional structure for strategic transport decision making.</p> <p>c) Agreed to the development of a Concordat between the Secretary of State for Transport and the Strategic Transport Forum to formalise the relationship going forward.</p>	<p>NONE ARISING</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>STRATEGIC ROAD NETWORK INVESTMENT: ROUTE STRATEGIES</p> <p>Abi Nichols provided an update on the development of Highways England Route Strategies. Highways England are beginning the third iteration of their Route Strategies to help inform Road Investment Strategy 3. Highways England are at the beginning of this process and EEH has been working closely with Highways England to ensure its regional priorities are informing this process. EEH, with the support of the Forum are looking to co-design Route Strategies to set the scope and strategic questions that they should be seeking to answer.</p> <p>Abi Nichols summarised several of the known regional infrastructure priorities that would be fed into this process. These include but are not limited to: A1 East of England Corridor, Didcot-Oxford-Bicester-Banbury corridor, M1 connections to Milton Keynes South, A47 Midlands to East of England corridor and the A43/A45/A14 corridor improvements. Abi Nichols confirmed that an officer sub-group has been established to oversee the development of regional priorities that would shape this process.</p> <p>Forum members supported the need to work with Highways England to help strengthen collaborative working, the A428, A14 projects and long-term needs of the A34 were cited as examples where engagement and information sharing</p>	



	<p>could have been improved and lessons should be learned. Abi Nichols advised she would act on the comments regarding the need for constructive engagement early in the process. She is also encouraging a strategic approach to be taken to the route studies to ensure the impact on local roads and opportunities for active travel are integrated in scheme development.</p> <p>Cllr Yvonne Constance questioned where the reference to the Oxford-Swindon-Didcot connectivity study was. Martin Tugwell and Abi Nichols confirmed details of this study were set out in the Business Unit Update and the scoping work would start in the financial year, with the study being commissioned in 2021/22, funding dependent.</p> <p>The Forum:</p> <p>a) Noted Highways England’s commencement of work for the next Roads Investment (RIS3) period through Route Strategies.</p> <p>b) Acknowledged the ambition of Highways England to work collaboratively with STBs and provide a framework for achieving that within the Heartland region.</p> <p>c) Supported the priorities for Route Strategies as set out in paragraphs 4.3 to 4.5 of this paper.</p>	<p>ABI NICHOLS</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>CONSULTATION RESPONSES</p> <p>Antony Swift began the discussion by recommending that in future meetings of the Forum, promoters of a proposal or draft strategy will be afforded the opportunity to present a short summary of their proposal/draft strategy. Following this, the Forum would be invited to consider the draft response prepared by the EEH Business Unit. Where this is not possible, primarily due to time frames, Forum Members are invited to delegate the decision to sign a consultation response to the Chair/Vice-Chair. Mayor Dave Hodgson supported this request and recommended a Vice-Chair was appointed. All proposed consultation responses and letters of support appended to the paper were supported by the Forum.</p> <p>The Forum:</p> <p>a) Agreed the proposed approach to preparing and agreeing consultation responses going forward.</p> <p>b) Agreed, subject to any amendments the proposed consultation responses and letters of support set out in Annexes 1-4.</p> <p>c) Agreed to delegate responsibility to the Chair to endorse the proposed response to Oxfordshire Growth Board’s consultation on its Strategic Vision.</p>	<p>NONE ARISING</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>FUTURE MEETING DATES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday 5th February 2021 • Friday 14th May 2021 • Friday 10th September 2021 • Friday 26th November 2021 	