



Strategic Transport Leadership Board

18 February 2022

Agenda Item 7

Major Road Network 2020-2025 Programme

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Notes the letter from DfT requiring all STBs to review their Major Road Network programme 2020-2025, based on deliverability and compliances with emerging new priorities for the department**
- b) Notes the current position of EEH's programme of Major Road Network schemes**
- c) Agrees that EEH continues to support those MRN schemes that are viable for delivery in the timeframe, given they remain strategic priorities for the region**

1. Purpose of report

This paper provides an update to members on the position of each of the MRN schemes supported by England's Economic Heartland for investment in the period 2020-2025. The requirement to review the position of MRN schemes follows a letter from the Department for Transport outlining that DfT will not have sufficient funding to continue to fund all the schemes currently in the programme to the current scale or timing.

2. Key Points to Note

- 2.1. On 18 January 2022 the DfT sent a letter to STBs, attached as Annex 1, to explain that DfT would not be able to fund all the schemes currently in the programme to the current scale or timing.
- 2.2. As a first step, DfT has given all scheme promoters and relevant STBs the option to reconsider the schemes in the current programme.
- 2.3. EEH has written to all scheme promoters seeking an update on project progress.
- 2.4. This report provides an update to members on which MRN schemes should continue to be supported by EEH.

3. Context

- 3.1. The EEH MRN programme, submitted to government in July 2019 included 11 MRN/Large Local Major schemes. These are set out in Annex 2. Since July 2019, the MRN/Large Local Majors programme has evolved slightly:
 - The A5 Towcester Relief Road has been developed using alternative funding sources

- The two A10 Ely to Cambridge schemes have been merged into a single scheme.
- 3.2. As a result, there are now nine MRN/Large Local Major schemes in the region's MRN programme. These are:
- Century Park Access Road, Luton
 - Bedford Western Bypass Improvement Scheme, Bedford
 - Aylesbury Eastern Link Road, Buckinghamshire
 - Ely to Cambridge A10 Junction and Dualling Improvements
 - A1139 University Centre Access Peterborough
 - A10 Corridor Scheme, Broxbourne, Hertfordshire
 - Vauxhall Way Improvements, Luton
 - A509 Isham Bypass, North Northamptonshire
 - A43 Northampton-Kettering Phase Three, North Northamptonshire
- 3.3. On 18 January 2022, DfT sent a letter to STBs, attached at annex 1, to explain that there was not likely to be sufficient funding to continue to fund all the schemes currently in the programme to the current scale or timing.
- 3.4. As a result, DfT has given all scheme promoters and relevant STBs the option to reconsider the schemes in the current programme. It was suggested by DfT that schemes may no longer be a priority because they have increased in cost, cannot be progressed by March 2025, or no longer fit with the local authority's latest transport objectives.
- 3.5. Since the MRN/Large Local Majors programme was set up in 2019, there have been changes to government policy around transport investment especially around carbon and active travel.
- 3.6. In response to this, EEH has written to all local transport authorities with MRN schemes to confirm that they still meet government's existing and new objectives.
- 3.7. In order to determine if there are MRN bids that no longer meet the government criteria EEH requested all local authority partners with MRN bids to confirm:
- What stage in the process is the scheme at?
 - Is the scheme on track to commence construction by March 2025?
 - What is your current assessment of the scheme's value for money?
 - What is the proposed schemes carbon impact?
 - How have you reflected updated DfT guidance on provision for active travel and public transport.
- 3.8. The responses to these questions are summarised in Annex 2. The table shows that each of the schemes are at different levels with some at strategic outline business case and others being approved to proceed to outline business case. This demonstrates the varying pace of progress that has been achieved for EEH's MRN/Large Local Majors programme.
- 3.9. As a result of changed requirements, all of the schemes will need to be updated and subject to additional assessments to measure their carbon impact and how they will include passenger transport and active travel.
- 3.10. The feedback shows that costs will potentially increase as a result of having to accommodate these additional requirements. In general, further cost increases are occurring due to construction inflation costs.

4. England's Economic Heartland Response

- 4.1. The schemes included in the EEH MRN/Large Local Majors Programme in July 2019 were supported because of their strategic fit against regional priorities.
- 4.2. At the time, EEH was already testing schemes against their ability to deliver environmental, quality of life and accessibility benefits – either through the schemes themselves or the benefits they brought to the wider community (by taking traffic out of town centres, for example).
- 4.3. As a result, and within the context of the information available, delivery of the complete EEH MRN/Large Local Majors programme remains a priority for investment in the England's Economic Heartland region.
- 4.4. Despite schemes remaining a strategic fit for the region, a core requirement of schemes staying in the government's MRN/Large Local Majors programme is their ability to commence works by March 2025.
- 4.5. A majority of the responses from schemes in the EEH programme are committed to commencing work by March 2025. However, for some projects, it is recognised that this is a challenging timeline. It is imperative for schemes to remain on track with that delivery timeframe. As a result, EEH business unit will continue to work with individual scheme promoters to ensure the committed timeline remains deliverable. Where agreed with the local authority promoter, EEH business unit will seek input from the emerging EEH centre of excellence to further support scheme delivery.
- 4.6. From the responses, it was reported that the Bedford Western Bypass would not be able to commence works by March 2025. As a result, the scheme remains a priority for EEH but will be captured as part of the next phase of MRN, still expected in 2025 – 2030.
- 4.7. It is worth noting that DfT officials will now undergo a scrutiny process of all remaining MRN/Large Local Major schemes to ensure they are content to continue supporting the progress of schemes as part of the current programme.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1. Subject to Board agreement, EEH will proceed with advice to DfT that the following schemes remain strategic priorities for the region. All schemes will be subject to further support from EEH to ensure the timelines committed to in responses remain deliverable.
 - Century Park Access Road, Luton
 - Aylesbury Eastern Link Road, Buckinghamshire
 - Ely to Cambridge A10 Junction and Dualling Improvements (pending further advice from Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority)
 - A1139 University Centre Access Peterborough (pending further advice from Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority)
 - A10 Corridor Scheme, Broxbourne, Hertfordshire
 - Vauxhall Way Improvements, Luton
 - A509 Isham Bypass, North Northamptonshire
 - A43 Northampton-Kettering Phase Three, North Northamptonshire

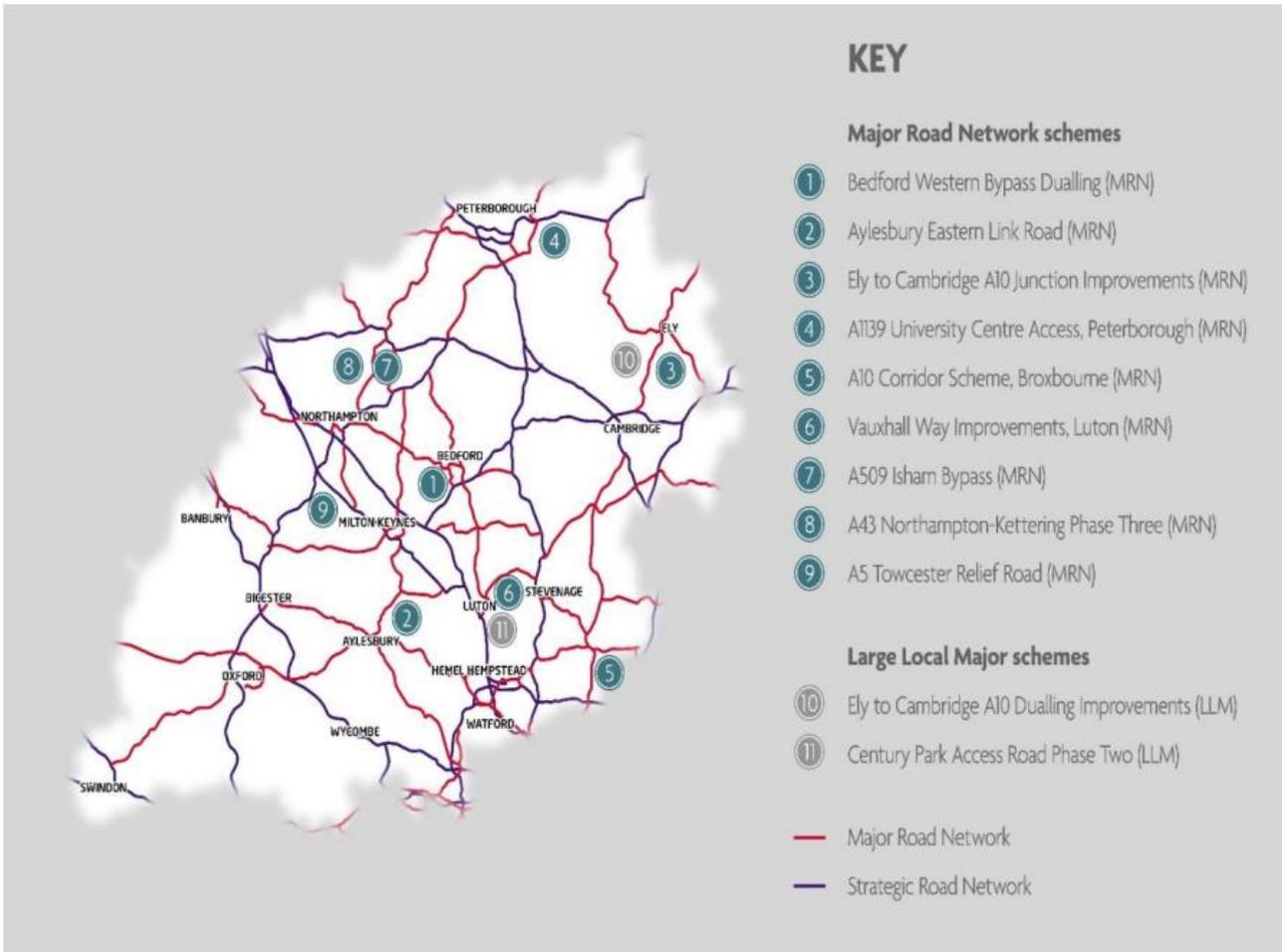
Suzanne Winkels
Principal Technical Lead
January 2022

List of Annexes

- 1. Copy of letter from DfT, dated 18 January 2022**
- 2. Plan showing EEH region MRN priorities**

3. Current position of MRN schemes, against new requirements.

Annex 2 – Map Showing Locations of MRN Schemes in EEH Region (2019)



Annex 3 – Table showing current position of MRN schemes

	What stage?	On track to commence by March 2025?	Carbon impact? How	Provision for active travel and public transport
Century Park Access Road, Luton	SOBC stage – Full SOBC is yet to be submitted	Anticipated Yes	Updated in technical work.	Will be included in the updated SOBC
Bedford Western Bypass Improvement Scheme	The scheme is at pre SOBC stage – Initial Submitted to DfT	programmed to start construction in Feb 2026	Will be included in the updated SOBC	Will be included in updated the SOBC
Aylesbury Eastern Link Road, Buckinghamshire	SOBC – to be re-submitted to DfT	Elements of work anticipated to start in 2025	Carbon impact is marginally positive at £125k. This does not effect VFM	Scheme already includes walking and cycling although not further work required to update in line with LTN1/20
Ely to Cambridge A10 Junction and Dualling Improvements	Awaiting Data	Awaiting Data	Awaiting Data	Awaiting Data
A1139 University Centre Access Peterborough	Awaiting Data	Awaiting Data	Awaiting Data	Awaiting Data
A10 Corridor Scheme, Broxbourne, Hertfordshire	Pre-SOBC has been completed and about to progress to SOBC	Works anticipated to begin on site by March 2025	Undertaking a more in-depth carbon assessment as part of the SOBC	Will be included in SOBC -Designs updated to include public transport and active travel
Vauxhall Way Improvements, Luton	SOBC stage – SOBC is yet to be submitted and approved by DfT	Anticipated works start by March 2025.	Will be included in SOBC	Will be assessed and included in the transport and economic modelling
A509 Isham Bypass, North Northamptonshire	SOBC submitted - Approval to proceed to OBC submission in October 2022.	Works programmed for September 2024.	Currently undertaking assessment of carbon impact	Will be included in OBC
A43 Northampton-Kettering Phase Three, North Northamptonshire	The SOBC is prepared, confirmation of next steps for OBC development anticipated end March 2022.	Works is currently programmed for January 2025	Carbon impact being assessed and will be part SOBC	The design incorporates an LTN 1/20 compliant two-way segregated cycle facility