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EEH business unit
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Sent by email

Date:

Dear Cllr Bentley

Transport East draft transport strategy consultation

England's Economic Heartland welcomes the opportunity to respond to Transport East's consultation on its draft transport strategy.

As neighbouring sub-national transport bodies, there are significant economic and demographic linkages between our two areas, making the performance of our transport networks of mutual interest and importance. We have many shared characteristics, including large rural populations, a polycentric geography, high dependence on the private car, high volumes of freight and above average emissions. There are many opportunities for us to continue to share learning and adopt common approaches across these areas of interest.

We already have a strong record of working together on cross boundary issues and items of common interest. This has been demonstrated by the recent cross boundary workshops held between senior officers from EEH and Transport East which discussed the next steps for the shared interests across our geographies. We have also collaborated on the recent successful bids for in-year funding from the Department for Transport, for work on decarbonisation, electric vehicles and buses. I have no doubt our strong working relationship will continue as we implement the actions within our transport strategies.

EEH supports Transport East's draft transport strategy and would like to draw your attention to the following:

Vision

The strategy's vision, 'a thriving economy for the East, with fast, safe, reliable, and resilient transport infrastructure driving forward a future of inclusive and sustainable growth for decades to come', aligns with that of our own transport strategy, published in February 2021: 'To support sustainable growth and improve quality of life and wellbeing through a world-class, decarbonised transport system which harnesses the region's global expertise in technology and innovation to unlock new opportunities for residents and businesses, in a way that benefits the UK as a whole'.

Cutting emissions

The ambition for a net zero carbon transport system by 2040, 10 years ahead of the legal requirement, aligns with EEH's transport strategy. As has been acknowledged, this is an incredibly challenging target. However, by working together as STBs with government, our local authorities and the private sector, and securing the right investment and policy framework, the EEH Strategic Transport Forum¹ agreed that this is the right ambition to work towards.

Connecting growing towns

EEH welcomes the strategy's emphasis on improving public transport and active travel networks.

Both STBs have a major shared interest in the East West Main Line. Indeed, policies nine and 10 of our transport strategy includes support for East West Rail's 'eastern section' between Cambridge and Norwich/ Ipswich, and commits EEH to working with partners, including the East West Main Line Partnership and Transport East, to realise this. The action within Transport East's draft transport strategy to help progress the business case for the Eastern Section is therefore welcomed.

The formation of the Transport East Rail Task Group is a positive step. EEH would welcome the opportunity to contribute as appropriate to this group, including on work to improve connectivity on the West Anglia Main Line. In addition, our Passenger Rail Study has highlighted other links for which a reduction in journey time would provide the greatest economic benefit, including between Peterborough and Norwich.

Both Transport East and England's Economic Heartland have been pressing for some time to improve the Leicester to Peterborough and Ely rail corridor. This would provide improved facilities to support freight on rail but also enable EEH to take forward our ambitions for improved strategic passenger rail connections, east and west, in the northern part of the Heartland region.

As both our strategies make clear, bus travel and mass rapid transit provides a key opportunity for modal shift away from private car. We welcome reference to the Herts-Essex Rapid Transit (HERT) scheme, delivery of which is a strategic priority for EEH.

We also welcome recognition of the importance of connectivity to London. Along with Transport for the South East, we have shared interests with regards ticketing, route capacity and service levels in our relationship with Transport for London. I was therefore delighted to attend the recent 'wider South East' chairs meeting with yourself and the Chair of Transport for the South East, Cllr Keith Glazier, where a common approach to London was discussed.

International gateways

All too often freight and logistics are overlooked in transport strategies – yet the sector is fundamental to the country's economic success, while addressing its impact on communities and emissions is essential for our wider environment.

¹ In September 2021, the EEH Strategic Transport Forum and EEH Leaders group merged to become a single body – the Strategic Transport Leadership Board.



We therefore welcome the significant emphasis placed on freight and logistics in the Transport East draft document.

As the draft strategy states, the Transport East region contains a significant number of internationally important gateways and a key role in the health of the UK's logistics sector. As a neighbouring area, many of the movements generated to/from Felixstowe, Harwich, London Gateway and Stansted travel through our region, which includes part of the 'golden triangle of logistics'.

Given its importance and the linkages between our two regions, we would very much welcome the opportunity to contribute to Transport East's 'Future of Freight Plan' – our own Freight Study, published in 2019, provides a useful evidence base in this regard.

The draft strategy rightly recognises the importance of modal shift for freight onto rail, a shared priority with EEH. Removing the bottlenecks on the Felixstowe to Midlands rail corridor remains an immediate strategic priority for Transport East, EEH and Midlands Connect.

Sitting on the Hertfordshire/ Essex border, Stansted Airport is a key international gateway for both our regions. EEH's transport strategy includes a policy to improve surface access by public transport to Stansted Airport, with a focus on improved travel opportunities via services on the West Anglia Main Line between Cambridge, Stansted, Bishops Stortford and London. We therefore welcome the action points in Transport East's draft strategy to support modal shift of passengers and employees to airports and surrounding businesses. We also acknowledge the potential to expand air freight at Stansted, and to improve rail freight capacity at the airport.

Corridors

Transport East's draft transport strategy includes four priority corridors for investment which extend into or impact upon the EEH region. EEH supports their identification as priority corridors which only strengthens the case for investment along them. Indeed, the corridors reinforce the important linkages between our two areas and the need to work together to realise their full potentials.

The corridors are:

- Midlands-King's Lynn-Norwich-Great Yarmouth: This corridor is focused on the A47. As the draft transport strategy states, it has no direct rail alternative for much of its length. The need to improve connectivity across the northern part of the EEH region was highlighted in our Passenger Rail Study Phase One report. The EEH transport strategy's investment pipeline includes delivery of A47 Wandsworth to Sutton and A47 Peterborough to Wisbech.



- Norfolk and Suffolk to Cambridge-Midlands-South-West: As stated above, delivery of the East West Main Line and improvements to the Felixstowe-Midlands rail freight corridor are key opportunities along this important corridor. As Transport East is aware, the Western Gateway STB has recently joined the East West Main Line Partnership, further strengthening partnership working along the length of this corridor. The EEH transport strategy identifies the A14 as a strategic corridor for road freight - we will work with National Highways, local highway authorities, local planning authorities, Transport East and the freight sector to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- King's Lynn-Cambridge-Harlow-London: EEH's transport strategy states that delivery of improvements to the West Anglia Main Line has the potential to unlock significant economic potential along the London-Stansted-Cambridge Innovation Corridor. Improvements to the A10 between Ely and Cambridge, and at Broxbourne, have been submitted for Major Road Network funding, while we also support improvements to junction 25 of the M25 as part of the Strategic Road Network. Our investment pipeline also supports the development of solutions for the M11 junctions to the west of Cambridge.
- Stansted-Braintree-Colchester-Harwich and Clacton: As Transport East's draft strategy rightly states, improved connectivity and capacity on this corridor will support adjoining corridors, including links to the A414 corridor and Hertfordshire. Prioritising improvements to east-west connectivity along a southern corridor that links Buckinghamshire with Hertfordshire, providing an orbital passenger transport route between the Chiltern Main Line and West Anglia Main Line, is a key ambition in the EEH transport strategy.

While not physically located in your region, we would suggest that the A1 corridor is an important strategic consideration for Transport East. Its current performance acts as a constraint on economic growth and delivering a solution to the road south of Huntingdon is important both regionally and nationally. As such, we would suggest that the need to improve the A1 south of Huntingdon is recognised within your strategy too.

May I again congratulate you on the draft transport strategy. We look forward to working with you to realise the ambitions many of the shared ambitions within it.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Richard Wenham

Chair

England's Economic Heartland