



Strategic Transport Leadership Board

8 December 2022

Agenda Item Number 7: Connectivity Studies

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Strategic Transport Leadership Board:

- a) Agrees the packages of interventions for connectivity studies 'Oxford-Milton Keynes' and 'Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford'**
- b) Agrees the publication of the final report for the 'Oxford – Milton Keynes' and 'Peterborough – Northampton – Oxford' connectivity studies**
- c) Notes the requirement for outputs of the connectivity studies to be part of the future investment pipeline prioritisation workstream based on transport strategy principles (agenda item 5)**
- d) Notes the update on the Swindon-Didcot-Oxford connectivity study**

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. The paper outlines the final packages and reports for the 'Oxford-Milton Keynes' and 'Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford' connectivity studies (summary maps are in the annexes below).
- 1.2. It sets the policy context in the which the studies have been developed and gives an overview of next steps toward iterating England's Economic Heartland's investment pipeline.
- 1.3. The paper also provides an update on the development of the Swindon-Didcot-Oxford study and future connectivity studies.

2. Key points to note

- 2.1. Subject to Board agreement, the Oxford-Milton Keynes and Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford connectivity studies have completed.
- 2.2. The studies have been subject to extensive engagement over the period of their development, working with stakeholders throughout.
- 2.3. The studies are based on the principles and policies of EEH's transport strategy and are framed in both the context of national policy and work being undertaken by local authorities.
- 2.4. The Swindon-Didcot-Oxford study remains in development, short list packages have now been developed ahead of modelling their outputs.
- 2.5. The outputs of the initial connectivity studies (and other technical programmes) will be considered into the investment pipeline prioritisation workstream, which was outlined in EEH's Business Plan 2022/23.

3. Context

- 3.1. The first two connectivity studies have been in development since May 2021, working extensively with stakeholders (see annex 1) to progress each of the studies in order to shape a package of the interventions for each study area.
- 3.2. The connectivity studies build on the principles and policies outlined in the transport strategy, which was published with agreement of the Strategic Transport Forum in 2021.
- 3.3. The study outputs provide options to how connectivity could be improved across set study areas and builds on work already being undertaken by local authorities, providing additionality to already committed and funded interventions.
- 3.4. Set within a national policy framework, such as the transport decarbonisation plan and future emerging updates to the local transport plan guidance – which will require local authorities to support an evidence-led, quantifiable assessment of carbon as part of the development and assessment of LTPs – our connectivity studies highlight the need for local intervention to move towards a decarbonised transport system. However, there must be strong national shift to meet net zero targets.
- 3.5. The studies consider all modes of transport, understanding that a holistic approach to transport planning is required to improve connectivity.

4. Key Outcomes

- 4.1. The packages of interventions included in the studies (including rail, bus and active travel modes) have been tested using a strategic land use model (EEHELUM) and their impact compared to a business as usual scenario by 2049. Overall, the model results show an increase use of rail, bus and active travel across each of the study areas as a result of the interventions identified.
- 4.2. Working within a whole system approach, digital connectivity has been included in the scope of the work to facilitate access to digital modes and reduce the need to travel. Interventions such as digital hubs have therefore been included in each study.
- 4.3. Building on steers provided by the Strategic Transport Leadership Board in July 2022, demand management options should be considered either nationally, within the geography of individual local authority areas, or both. A region-wide demand management solution is not currently an aspiration of the EEH Board and therefore has not been included in the modelling of these corridor-wide packages.
- 4.4. The study narratives do capture some of the benefits of demand management, when applied at the right geographical scale, stating:
"Demand management measures, such as behaviour change initiatives and optimisation of assets, seek to promote alternatives where private car (particularly single occupancy car use) is a less efficient use of limited road space and increase the appeal of alternatives such as shared transport, public transport and active modes of travel."
- 4.5. Roads continue to form an important part of the transport system, but their role and function must be considered within the national policy context and through of the lens our transport strategy.
- 4.6. EEH supports investment in the strategically important highway network where interventions protect and enhance existing infrastructure, delivers a solution to an identified problem on the existing infrastructure asset, enables access to new economic opportunities and/or housing growth and/or enables delivery of sustainable transport linkages such as public transport and active travel improvements (policy 24 of our transport strategy).
- 4.7. The study packages for enabling sustainable, planned development and a decarbonised road fleet therefore includes targeted interventions for highways measures, addressing known issues, planning for a future ready network as well as placing communities at the centre of interventions, specifically where the strategically important road network impacts the communities along them.

- 4.8. Our transport hierarchy also influences how we think about investment in infrastructure and how the highway network should be used. Targeted highway interventions must plan for sustainable modes, with public and active modes built into the core of interventions.
- 4.9. The packages for each study work as one, building the picture of connectivity across each defined area in an evidence-based manner. This approach has enabled a balanced package of options which could be progressed.
- 4.10. Each study contains packages for:
- Making the best use of re-allocated road space
 - Supporting rail to provide fast, reliable strategic connectivity
 - Supporting mode shift to active and sustainable modes
 - Sustainable and efficient freight solution
 - Enabling sustainable, planned development and a decarbonised road fleet
- 4.11. The package for 'Oxford-Milton Keynes' is included as Annex 2 and the packages for 'Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford' are included as Annex 3.
- 4.12. In July 2022, the Strategic Transport Leadership Board was presented with draft packages of interventions for each study. In addressing Board comments, we have:
- Strengthened the narrative around the measures in the sustainable, planned development and fleet package as being about supporting all road users, including public and active modes – this is in line with our transport strategy user hierarchy.
 - Ensured HGV parking was included as a package measure in the sustainable and efficient freight solutions package.
 - Removed the demand management toolkit elements of the package, but increased narrative of the benefits of locally appropriate demand management in support of partners undertaking ambitious mode shift and place making interventions.
- 4.13. The final reports are included as annexes to this report, outline the process, packages, outcomes and next steps for each study. They are for agreement by the Board.

5. Investment pipeline development

- 5.1. The outputs of the initial connectivity studies (and other technical programmes) will be considered within the context of the investment pipeline prioritisation workstream, which was outlined in EEH's Business Plan 2022/23 (see agenda item 5).
- 5.2. At this stage the interventions within the study packages do not form a prioritised list of interventions, rather a package of options which could be progressed to improve connectivity in the region.
- 5.3. The more detailed methodology for investment pipeline prioritisation is currently being scoped. We will continue to work with officer and the Board in the development of the investment pipeline.

6. Swindon-Didcot-Oxford connectivity study

- 6.1. A third connectivity study covering Swindon-Didcot-Oxford continues to develop. A long list of interventions for the study area was developed via engagement with the steering group, stakeholders and members.
- 6.2. The long list has been refined to form a shorter list of interventions for assessment and these have been modelled to determine the most effective packages for the study area and presented to the steering group.
- 6.3. It is anticipated that this study will be completed in early 2023 and presented at a later Board.

7. Next steps

- 7.1. The outputs of the initial connectivity studies (and other technical programmes) will be integrated into the investment pipeline prioritisation workstream, which was outlined in EEH's Business Plan 2022/23.

- 7.2. The Swindon-Didcot-Oxford study will continue through its study programme, with stakeholder engaged throughout.
- 7.3. The future programme of connectivity studies was agreed at the May 2022 Strategic Transport Leadership Board with two further studies commencing this financial year – 'Thames Valley-Bucks-Milton Keynes-Northampton' and 'Southern East West corridor'. The studies for Thames Valley-Buckinghamshire-Milton Keynes-Northampton' and 'Southern East West movements'. Consultancy support for the studies has now been procured and the studies will commence shortly.

Abi Nichols
Project Lead
December 2022

Annex 1: Stakeholder engagement

The below table summarises the external stakeholder engagement sessions for the connectivity studies.

*Transport Officer Group, Strategic Transport Leadership Board updates throughout and written comments from officers were invited on all outputs of the study.

** The steering group was formed of Local Authority officers (Local Transport Authorities and Local Planning Authorities) and Local Enterprise Partnerships















***The stakeholder group was formed of stakeholders such as (non-exhaustive list): DfT, National Highways, Network Rail, public transport operators, Sustrans, statutory environmental bodies, Chamber of Commerce

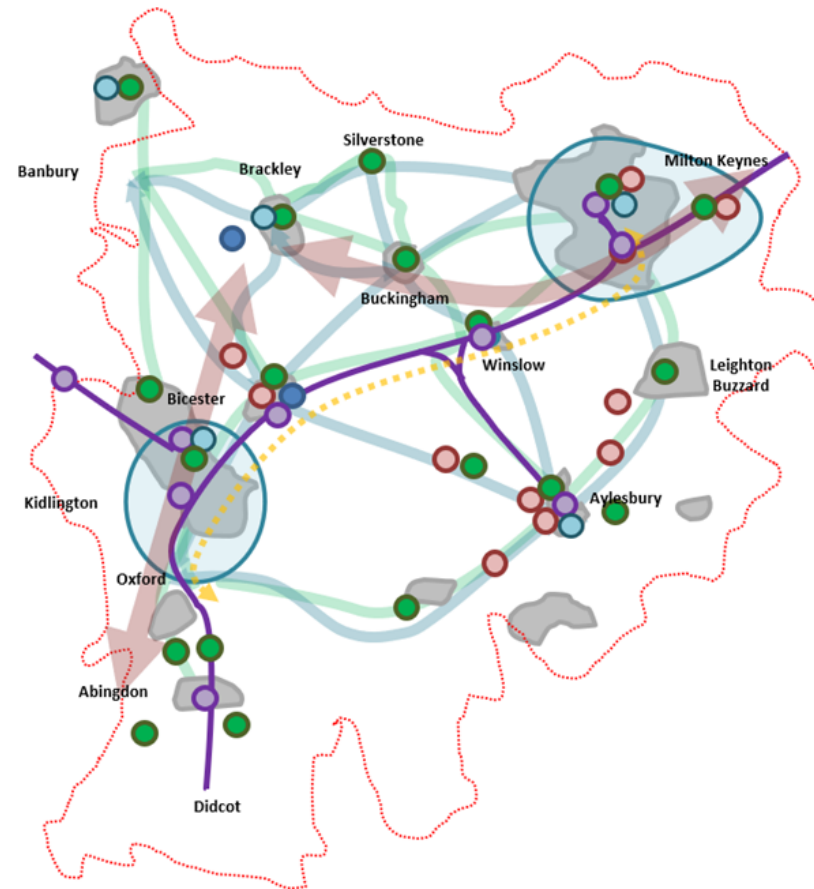
**** Where there is engagement listed for a steering or stakeholder group there were 2 sets of meetings – one for each study

| Date | Meeting |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Summer 2020 (July - August) | Engagement with senior managers at Local Authorities to gain a high-level understanding of what was important to achieve from the studies (pre-study commencement) |
| Study inception | |
| May 2021 | Steering group 1 |
| May 2021 | EEH/ National Highways engagement |
| July – August 2021 | Alternative futures development (2 x workshops for all LAs across EEH) |
| July 2021 | Stakeholder group 1 |
| 20 th July 2021 | EEH/ National Highways engagement |
| 22 nd July 2021 | Steering group 2 |
| 14 th September 2021 | Steering group 3 |
| November 2021 | Individual discussions with all Local Authority officer and LEPs during long listing development and engagement on study progress |
| 30 th November 2021 | Arc Infrastructure Group presentation |
| 24 th March 2022 | Steering group 4 |
| 31 st March 2022 | Stakeholder group 2 |
| 12 th April 2022 | EEH/ Network rail engagement |
| 4 th May 2022 | EEH/ Environment Agency engagement |
| 23 rd June | Steering group 5 |
| 24 th November | Steering Group discussion on final report updates |

Annex 2: Oxford – Milton Keynes packages

Map key

-  Connectivity study boundary
-  Key urban areas
- Package 1 - Making Best Use of Roads**
 -  Bus-based MRT
 -  Road space reallocation to Public Transport
 -  Inter-urban bus priority measures in targeted locations
 -  Additional area wide interventions (not mapped)
- Package 2 - Supporting rail to provide reliable strategic connectivity**
 -  Intervention to optimise the benefits of East West Rail
 -  Integration of East West Rail with local transport network
- Package 3 – Supporting mode shift to active and sustainable modes**
 -  Network of multimodal mobility hubs
 -  Inter-urban active travel network
 -  Support delivery of MaaS (not mapped)
 -  Increased adoption of shared transport (not mapped)
 -  Digital connectivity on public transport (not mapped)
- Package 4 – Enabling sustainable, planned development and a decarbonised fleet**
 -  Strategic Highway Safety & Resilience
 -  Highway improvements on key east-west links to support placemaking
 -  Smart & efficient highway network accelerating uptake of alternative fuel vehicles through infrastructure (not mapped)
 -  Support digital hubs in rural areas (not mapped)
 -  Residential & Workplace Parking Standards (not mapped)
- Package 5 - Sustainable and efficient freight solution**
 -  RFI proposals
 -  Freight on rail optimisation
 -  Sustainable urban goods transport (not mapped)
 -  Freight friendly highway interventions on strategic links (not mapped)



Annex 3: Peterborough -Northampton – Oxford packages

Overview of the Connectivity Plan

