



TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No: 2.5
09 SEPTEMBER 2020	PUBLIC REPORT

ENGLAND'S ECONOMIC HEARTLAND – CONSULTATIONS

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1. This paper invites the Committee to advise the Combined Authority Board on the terms of a response to proposals made by England's Economic Heartland in recent consultation documents.

<u>DECISION REQUIRED</u>	
Lead Member:	Mayor James Palmer
Lead Officer:	Paul Raynes, Director of Delivery and Strategy
Forward Plan Ref: N/A	Key Decision: No
The Transport and Infrastructure Committee is recommended to: (a) Advise the Combined Authority Board the terms of the public consultation response to the England Economic Heartland's (EEH) Transport Strategy and proposal for a sub-national transport body attached at Appendix 1; and (b) Provide feedback on the proposed Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford connectivity study to be undertaken by EEH.	Voting arrangements Simple majority of all Members

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1. England's Economic Heartland (EEH) is a partnership of Local Transport Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships that covers an area from Swindon and Oxfordshire in the west to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in the east. The Combined Authority is not a member of EEH but has Associate Member status.
- 2.2. EEH has produced a draft Transport Strategy aimed at enabling the region's transport system to support sustainable economic recovery and growth, while reaching net zero carbon emissions no later than 2050. In addition, the EEH are consulting on a proposal to establish a statutory sub-national transport body.

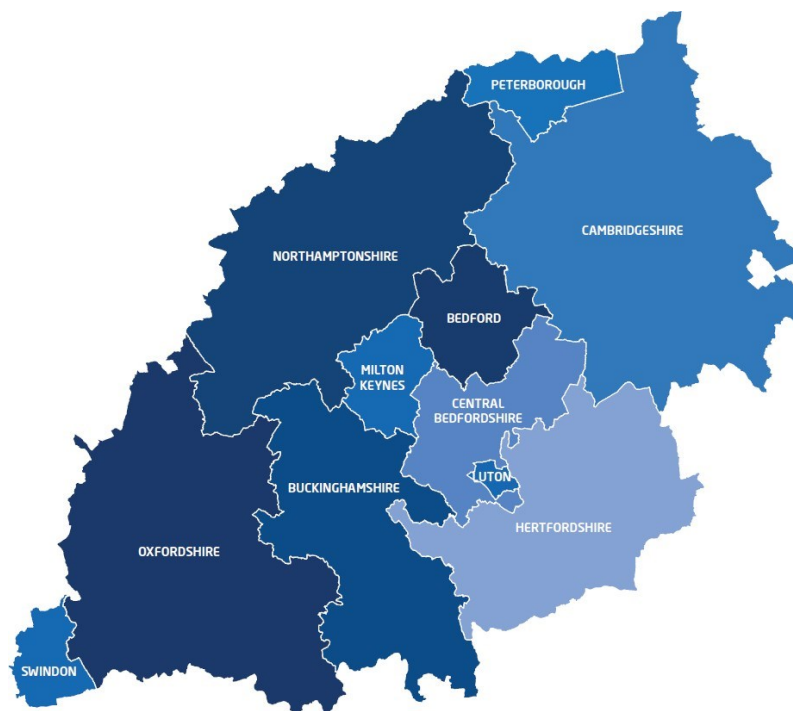


Figure 1: Map showing EEH region

- 2.3. The formal public consultation runs until 6th October and covers the draft Transport Strategy, Integrated Sustainability Appraisal and Proposal to Establish a Statutory Sub-national Transport Body. This paper forms the basis of the response from the Combined Authority.
- 2.4. Following the conclusion of the public consultation the final version of the Transport Strategy will be published at the turn of the year.

EEH draft Transport Strategy

- 2.5. The EEH's draft Transport Strategy was shaped using several methods, including:
 - Contributions from the elected members who sit on EEH's Strategic Transport Forum.

- Analysis of feedback from public and stakeholder events held during 2019; and
- Technical studies published alongside the Draft Transport Strategy.

2.6. The EEH Transport Strategy's proposed policy priorities are:

- Use the need to decarbonise our transport system as the opportunity to harness innovation and deliver solutions that in themselves generate economic growth.
- Champion investment in digital infrastructure as a means of improving connectivity, particularly within our rural communities, in order to reduce the need to travel.
- Use delivery of East West Rail as the catalyst for the transformation of our strategic public transport networks, investing in those networks to connect our economic assets and communities in a shared endeavour that unlocks added value;
- Champion increased investment in active travel and shared transport solutions to improve local connectivity and ensure that everyone can realise their potential; and
- Ensure that our freight and logistic needs continue to be met whilst lowering the environmental impact of their delivery.

2.7. The specific policies are set out in **Appendix 2**.

Fit between EEH strategy and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough strategy

2.8. EEH's Transport Strategy broadly aligns with the Combined Authority's priorities set out in the Growth Ambition Statement, Local Transport Plan, and Business Plan. The document recognises the importance of strategic transport schemes such as East-West Rail and the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro – although it does not appear to understand that CAM is not a Cambridge-only scheme – and the Felixstowe to Nuneaton rail corridor, as well as Cambridge South station.

2.9. The strategy has deliberately limited its scope to priorities that have wide significance across the region. Given its potential role as a sub-national transport body in advising government – as, for example, the gatekeeper on any future applications made for national roads funding - Members will want to consider whether they would wish to see more specific Cambridgeshire and Peterborough priorities explicitly recognised, or whether it is acceptable to leave the EEH Board and officers with wide latitude within the overall aims of the strategy about which future schemes it supports or does not support. If EEH is to play a role in determining which Cambridgeshire and Peterborough schemes are submitted to government, it may be appropriate for them to be embedded in the strategy. Members might wish to see explicit support in the strategy for key schemes under development which are likely to require government funding, such as the A10, A47 dualling, Wisbech rail restoration, and rail capacity improvements at Ely North junction.

2.10. The strategy's environmental ambitions are limited compared to the Combined Authority's policies. There is alignment on a 2050 zero carbon target, but the

strategy could go further in adopting ambitions such as the doubling nature target, the promotion of active travel and the need to investigate alternative fuels.

- 2.11. It is also, of course, highly likely that the evidence base for the transport strategy will need to be revisited in the light of the Covid pandemic as the challenges, opportunities, potential solutions and strategic direction may ultimately require changing to reflect changed travel behaviours which affect demand on the system and network. The strategy also proposes nine priority connectivity studies to begin in the near future. These would be well timed to consider this “new-norm”.

Connectivity Study

- 2.12. EEH have proposed a programme of connectivity studies as part of the Transport Strategy’s implementation. The development of the programme was shaped by the information held in the Regional Evidence Base, together with responses to their Outline Transport Strategy. The overarching programme identified parts of the region where there is a need to work with partners to identify the proposals that need to be taken forward into the investment pipeline for delivery.
- 2.13. One of the connectivity studies identified within the Transport Strategy is the Peterborough – Northampton – Oxford corridor. The aim of the study is to develop an integrated package of measures that connect key strategic locations across the region.
- 2.14. Officers have met EEH to discuss this study and CPCA has been asked to join the steering group for the study and nominate other members from the area. There is ample scope at this stage to shape the scope and purpose of the work. In line with the narrative of the strategy, EEH consider that digital connectivity should be considered alongside transport interventions. Members may wish to ensure that the study gives consideration to Peterborough’s connections with the East Midlands and the work being undertaken by partners on the A47 corridor, as well as the implications for development West of Peterborough. If members support the study, Combined Authority officers will seek to ensure proactive and appropriate involvement and engagement with EEH in the development of an appropriate brief to make sure all the key transport challenges, needs and opportunities within our region are considered.

The Authority’s EEH proposal for a sub-national Transport Body

- 2.15. The Government introduced the power to establish Sub-national Transport Bodies on a statutory basis through the Cities and Local Devolution Act 2016, amending the Local Transport Act 2008. The primary legislation sets out that a statutory Sub-national Transport Body would have a range of general functions, including:
- To prepare a transport strategy for the area.

- To provide advice to the Secretary of State about the exercise of transport functions in relation to the area (whether exercisable by the Secretary of State or others); and
- To co-ordinate the carrying out of transport functions in relation to the area that are exercisable by different constituent authorities with a view to improving the effectiveness and efficiency in carrying out those functions.

- 2.16. Once established as a statutory body the Secretary of State would have to have regard to the advice of the Sub-national Transport Body (STB). This would include, for example, DfT using the STB as a filter to prioritise funding applications, and – as set out in the consultation document – the STB having the ability to vary Highways England’s RIS plans.
- 2.17. The political leadership of EEH and the associated Strategic Transport Forum have set out an intention to seek powers they believe are proportionate and are necessary in order to implement the Transport Strategy. Within the documentation, EEH have stated that *“they have equally been clear that the proposal would complement and build on the existing powers of Local Authorities”*. Several of the powers proposed, including on public transport and highways, would be concurrent with those exercised by the Combined Authority and the two Highways Authorities. In principle, this would allow EEH to act in parallel with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough authorities. It is not at this point clear how the exercise of bus powers by a STB would be coordinated with a possible move to franchising or quality partnerships, or the introduction of CAM, in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The Highways Authorities for the Combined Authority area have not, in the recent past, been enthusiastic about the development of concurrent powers to carry out highways works.
- 2.18. EEH proposes that the members of the statutory Sub-national Transport Body would be the Transport Authorities within the region. This would represent a change from the current position under which it is the Highways Authorities which are full members of EEH.
- 2.19. In past discussions, Combined Authority members have raised the question of EEH’s geography. On one hand, EEH’s membership does not coincide with the OxCam Arc’s geography, although it supports the OxCam Arc’s transport discussions (EEH also includes Northants, Hertfordshire and Swindon, while not all Cambridgeshire and Peterborough authorities participate in the Arc). On the other, some of the key corridors in EEH’s scope run eastwards beyond Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to the East coast. Combined Authority members have in the past expressed concern that the EEH geography makes Cambridge a “bookend” and that its scope should be extended to include Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex which currently form part of the Transport for the East partnership.
- 2.20. The proposed powers sought by EEH are set out at **Appendix 3**.

Recommendations

2.21. The Committee is invited to consider the draft single consultation response attached at **Appendix 1**.

2.22. The Committee is invited to offer views on the potential objectives for the Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford connectivity study.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1. There are no direct financial implications; however, the proposed STB would be partly funded by a levy on member authorities. The Combined Authority currently pays a nominal subscription for Associate Membership of EEH.

4.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1. The recommendations accord with CPCA's powers under Parts 3 and 4 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Order 2017 (S1 2017/251).

5.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

5.1. None not set out above.

6.0 APPENDICES

6.1. Appendix 1 – England's Economic Heartland – Consultations on Draft Transport Strategy and on Statutory Status

6.2. Appendix 2 – EEH Draft Transport Strategy – Policies and Connectivity Studies

6.3. Appendix 3 – Proposed Powers and Responsibilities

<u>Source Documents</u>	<u>Location</u>
EEH Draft Transport Strategy	EEH Draft Transport Strategy
EEH Proposal to establish the Sub-national Transport Body	EEH Proposal to establish the Sub-national Transport Body