

**ENGLAND'S ECONOMIC HEARTLAND – CONSULTATIONS ON DRAFT TRANSPORT STRATEGY AND ON STATUTORY STATUS**

**RESPONSE BY CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY**

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority was established under a Devolution Deal with the government in 2017 and is the Transport Authority and, through the Business Board, the Local Enterprise Partnership for its area. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is the engine room of high-productivity growth in the Oxford to Cambridge Arc and has generated 43% of GVA growth and 31% of jobs growth in the Arc between 2014-18 while accounting for only 23% of its population. The Combined Authority values the support better transport connectivity will provide for its ambitious plans to double GVA in the region over 25 years and reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2050, and is therefore pleased to respond to EEH's consultations on a Transport Strategy and possible changes to institutional arrangements.

**Transport Strategy: carbon and the environment**

The Combined Authority welcomes the alignment between its Local Transport Plan ambitions to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2050 and the policies set out in the EEH draft strategy. It is also pleasing to see in policy 4 a broadly similar user hierarchy to that set out in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough LTP. We are also pleased that policy 20 echoes the Combined Authority's policy on digitally enabling transport corridors. It is right that policy 24 supports the delivery of high quality sustainable mass transit systems such as the CAM. It is a slight concern, however, that the policy set does not recognise the full potential of the CAM, which is a regional solution for the whole of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough rather than a Cambridge-focussed scheme, and is both a low-carbon solution, and an enabler of sustainable housing and employment growth.

The strategy's policies can go further in promoting a green future. Policy 5, for example, could consider adopting a "doubling nature" ambition of the kind embodied in the Combined Authority's policies.

**Transport strategy: connectivity**

The Combined Authority also supports the central, and in the future the Eastern, sections of East West Rail (policy 7, 8), including the new station at Cambridge South (policy 10). EEH should consider supporting the Combined Authority in pressing for Cambridge South to be delivered by 2025.

We would welcome EEH's explicit support for increased capacity at Ely North Junction and on the line between Ely and Newmarket via Soham to support both passenger and freight traffic, and for the restoration of a rail service between Wisbech and Cambridge that can take advantage of new train paths created by that capacity (policy 17, policy 30).

Stansted Airport is very significant for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area and connectivity to Stansted via the M11 should be reflected as a priority in policy 28.

The key road freight corridors mentioned in policy 33 should include the A47, and reflect the need to dual that road between Peterborough and Wisbech.

A further key regional road priority the strategy should promote is dualling the A10 between Ely and Cambridge.

### **Institutional arrangements**

In considering the role of Subnational Transport Bodies, real economic geography is a central consideration. The Combined Authority's strategies are founded on the evidence base contained in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review which anchors our approach in a deep understanding of the way the local economy and travel patterns function. Any future STB should be equally based on a strong understanding of economic geography.

From a Cambridgeshire and Peterborough perspective, it is clear that EEH's current geography does not match the area's economic connectivity. As the comments on the Transport Strategy above make clear, Cambridge is not a bookend. Key transport corridors for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough run to the East Coast by road and rail, for both freight and passengers. With a greater emphasis on international trade after Brexit, these corridors are likely to be increasingly important. The A10, A47, and the Felixstowe to Nuneaton rail corridor, as well as the CAM, are hugely important to meet our levelling-up objective of spreading Greater Cambridge's success more widely, as well as addressing housing market pressures. Significant commuting catchments run into Norfolk and Suffolk.

From a national government (DfT) perspective, it would also make sense to limit both gaps and overlaps and ensure that any new STBs it creates are genuinely strategic and include as much as possible of major corridors (such as the Felixstowe rail corridor) to ensure that the potential STB role in RIS and rail franchise decisions genuinely adds value and does not simply add noise and fragmentation that dilutes genuine national priorities.

At the same time, although the Combined Authority has welcomed EEH's important role in the OxCam Arc, it is anomalous that EEH, as the Arc's de facto transport voice, is not aligned to the Arc's geography.

The Combined Authority would therefore invite EEH to begin discussions with Transport for the East and its own members about the potential for fixing a genuinely strategic geography on which future conversations about a STB role might be based.

In advance of such discussions, the Combined Authority considers further steps towards the creation of a formal STB could be a false start.

Subject to that first step, the Combined Authority and its member councils are also sceptical about the proposed model of concurrent powers, especially in relation to highways interventions and bus partnerships.

As a matter of principle, coordinating the exercise of concurrent powers threatens the creation of a new bureaucratic industry. Effective upstream alignment of strategy is a more effective and much cheaper tool than dual-running the exercise of powers.

As a matter of practicality, the Combined Authority is far advanced with business plans for the reform of bus commissioning in this area: the potential for a further layer of bus commissioning to be added could jeopardise the good progress that has been made with operators and other stakeholders, at a time when the bus market has been seriously disrupted by Covid, rendering much work and public expense nugatory. Such a development would not be timely.

We understand that a number of the Combined Authority's member councils are not supportive of the creation of a statutory STB under any circumstances. They take the view that decision should be taken as close to the citizen as possible and that a regional STB is too remote.