

Lord Andrew Adonis
Chair - National Infrastructure Commission
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Date: 08 January 2016

Dear Lord Adonis

West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority and West Midlands Combined Authority Shadow Board - Submission on Critical Infrastructure Challenges

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Commission's Call for Evidence on future infrastructure challenges. However, the West Midlands Metropolitan Area and the Midlands Connect Partnership would like to express serious concerns at the limited nature of the terms of reference which exclude the Midlands infrastructure transport requirements from the scope of this work. Excluding the Midlands' critical infrastructure challenges does not reflect the commitment to rebalance the UK economy or recognise the importance of the Midlands to the national economy.

The 'Midlands Engine' prospectus, as unveiled on 04 December 2015 in Birmingham by Business Secretary *Sajid Javid*, commits Government to back Midlands Local Enterprise Partnerships in promoting jobs and growth, boosting productivity and attracting inward investment whilst recognising the importance of improving the region's infrastructure to increase connectivity.

The Midlands Engine region has an economy of £222 billion each year and is home to over 11.5 million people. The area has played a strong role in the recovery of the UK economy. Over the last year, private sector employment in the Midlands grew more than three times faster than London and the South East.

The Midlands Engine and the Midlands Connect Partnership links the UK to the rest of the world through its network of freight and passenger airports, and connects the country through road network and rail links. Our region's infrastructure is at the heart of the national network and is therefore crucial for the Northern Powerhouse, Greater London and Midlands Engine to fully integrate and further maximise benefits to UK Plc.

Connectivity across the Midlands is essential for supporting and attracting businesses as well as highly skilled workers. Midlands Connect will develop the vision for our regional connectivity and set out the long term transport strategy for the Midlands Engine. Midlands Connect Partnership has identified six "intensive growth corridors" and four major hubs of economic activity across the wider Midlands.

Further to this, the growth and development of Birmingham Airport is of crucial importance both to the West Midlands Metropolitan Area and to the UK as a whole. Enhanced global aviation connectivity will help grow our export led economy still further, securing extra benefits and opportunities for the region. High Speed Two (HS2) will see Birmingham

Interchange station built in close proximity to Birmingham Airport. Enhanced connectivity between the HS2 station and the airport has the potential to generate an additional 750,000 passenger trips per annum at the airport as well as supporting the South East's aviation needs by improving connections to Heathrow via Crossrail at Old Oak Common.

Positive change is happening in the West Midlands Metropolitan Area with the current work of the West Midlands ITA, the emerging West Midlands Combined Authority and our close collaboration with the region's Local Enterprise Partnerships. The announced Devolution Deal will see an unprecedented step change in delivery to support our collective ambitions for economic growth. Transport infrastructure is firmly at the heart of those plans, enabling wider economic and social value.

This submissions reflects the views of the West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority and West Midlands Combined Authority Shadow Board, as well supporting the wider views of the Midlands Connect Partnership area, which has also submitted a technical response submission to the Commission.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you and the wider Commission members.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Roger Lawrence
Chair of the West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority

**West Midlands Integrated Transport
Authority and West Midlands Combined
Authority Shadow Board**

**Critical Infrastructure Challenges
Submission to Infrastructure Commission**

08 January 2016

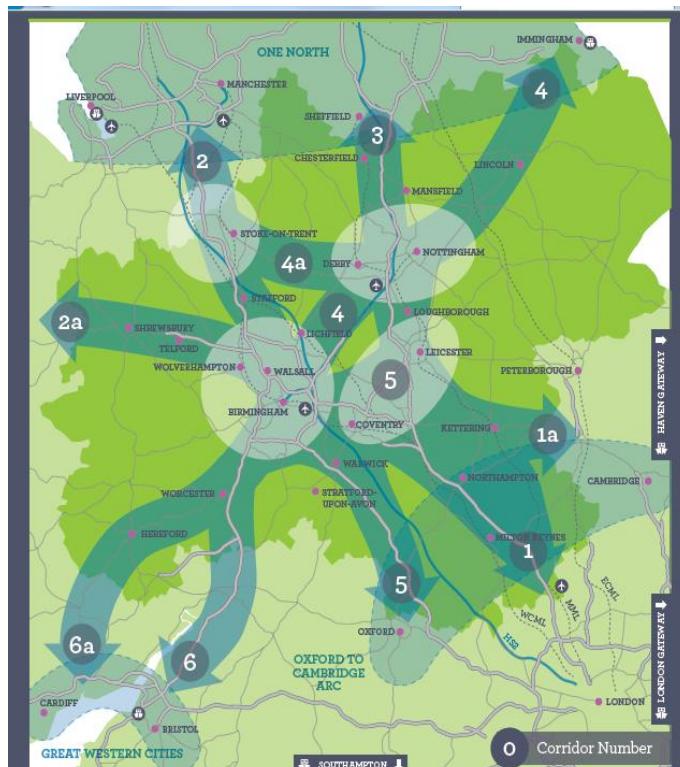
Our Story

The Midlands Engine and the Midlands Connect Partnership links the UK to the rest of the world through its network of freight and passenger airports, and connects the country through its road network and rail links. Our region's infrastructure is at the heart of the national network and is therefore crucial for the Northern Powerhouse, Greater London and the Midlands Engine to fully integrate and further maximise benefits to UK Plc.

The Midlands has an economy of £222 billion each year and is home to more than 11.5 million people. The area has also played a strong role in the recovery of the UK economy. Over the last year, private sector employment in the Midlands grew more than three times faster than London and the South East.

Connectivity across the Midlands is essential for supporting and attracting businesses as well as highly skilled workers. Midlands Connect will develop the vision for our regional connectivity and set out the long term transport strategy for the Midlands Engine.

The Midlands Connect Partnership has identified six "intensive growth corridors" and four major hubs of economic activity across the wider Midlands. These are shown in the map below.



Evidence from Midlands Connect shows that improved highway reliability and regular average speeds across the Midlands along with higher line speeds on inter-regional rail and highway links can provide an economic benefit to the wider Midlands of up to £800m per annum by 2036 with 143,000 additional jobs when a 10% reduction in general travel times are achieved.

The Midlands has ambitious plans to build on these strong foundations. As the largest infrastructure project in Europe, High Speed 2 (HS2) will be an economic catalyst for the West Midlands with a strong focus on rebalancing the economy from the south east as well as providing the first strategic connections to the north. We are committed to building a transport network that will match the best in Europe and provide the strategic links to the north and the south of the UK.

Response to Critical Challenges - Northern Connectivity

Question 1: To what extent are weaknesses in transport connectivity holding back northern city regions (specifically in terms of jobs, enterprise creation and growth, and housing)?

The analysis supporting our work on Midlands Connect shows large economic benefits from improving road and rail connectivity in the Midlands intensive growth corridors, by reducing the costs of travel, increasing output by facilitating business clustering, and unlocking job creation in our growth areas. This will require concerted action to tackle the connectivity challenges that we have identified.

There are significant connectivity challenges that will constrain the ability of the Midlands to realise its ambitions for growth. Whilst the Midlands lies at the heart of the UK's road and rail networks, the mix of long-distance, regional and local travel needs is placing heavy demands upon them.

The Midlands motorway network is subject to heavy congestion, with traffic delays and poor journey reliability, meaning that businesses, commuters and leisure travellers have to schedule additional time into the journey to give confidence that they can arrive at destinations on time.

This wasted time significantly increases the direct costs of travel, impacts on business productivity and is constraining the potential for business growth. Increased demand for travel in the Midlands will place the system under further strain, increasing costs of travel and constraining job creation. The analysis completed to date as part of Midlands Connect highlights that we will need to tackle congestion hotspots as well as looking at the reliability, resilience and quality of journeys provided by the strategic road networks. Particular pressures include the South East of the West Midlands and the M6 between M54/M6 Toll and Birmingham Central (A38M).

There are fast, frequent rail links connecting large parts of the Midlands to the north and south, via the West Coast, Midland and East Coast Main Lines. However, there are major challenges travelling by rail between the Midlands cities, with long journey times and low service frequencies impacting on connectivity. This is a particular issue for the more rural areas such as The Marches, Worcestershire and Lincolnshire as this makes travel by rail inconvenient, leading to an increased reliance on car travel and reducing the scope for interaction between our cities. In particular, the slow speeds between the key regional cities of Nottingham and Birmingham highlights the need for improvements to be made

to the classic rail networks in advance of HS2 Phase 2 which is scheduled for completion after 2030.

As connectivity between the large urban centres becomes more important in future, these slow speeds will significantly constrain the capacity for growth in the cities across the Midlands. There is also an increasing problem of capacity and crowding on services entering and crossing Birmingham. This will cause problems both in accommodating growth in Birmingham and in improving rail connections across the whole Midlands.

Whilst the commission is focused upon connectivity, the importance of integrating growth plans and transport plans should be also recognised. Improving connectivity for the Midlands will create investment opportunities, but site development viability remains a long term constraint to the central urban areas absorbing the projected growth and realising the estimated anticipated economic benefit. Integrating strategic land use and strategic transport planning is crucially important.

Question 2: What cost-effective infrastructure investments in city-to-city connectivity could address these weaknesses? We are interested in all modes of transport.

At this stage of Midlands Connect we have not defined solutions. With the support from DfT we are now developing the Midlands Strategic Transport Strategy that will set out our priorities with a clear evidence base.

Highways England and Network Rail are in the process of undertaking Route Studies across the Midlands to inform investment strategies post 2020. There are also medium to long-term opportunities to deliver HS2 Growth Strategies to fully capitalise on the opportunities for the whole Midlands. Midlands Connect will provide the mechanism to inform and draw together these elements into a single strategy that delivers much more than the sum of the parts

HS2 will transform north-south travel, bringing Birmingham within 40 minutes and the East Midlands within one hour of London. It will also significantly improve connections between Nottingham and Birmingham. However, it will be critical to develop full connectivity packages to fully capitalise on the opportunities provided by new stations serving the West Midlands, East Midlands and North Staffordshire. It will also be important to reconfigure classic rail services to better meet the connectivity needs of the whole Midlands, including Milton Keynes and Northampton, Coventry and Leicester. However, prior to the arrival of HS2 and in particular the Phase 2 links, it is vital that the classic rail network continues to be enhanced and services improved to enable the continued growth of the Midlands economy.

Investment in Birmingham International Station, for example, in readiness for the arrival of HS2 and associated automated people mover between HS2 Interchange, Birmingham International/NEC and Birmingham Airport, would help optimise connectivity with other cities in the region, north and south. This is subject to one of only two successful 'Connecting Europe Facility' (CEF) grant awards in the UK.

The West Midlands Metropolitan Area has recently developed and adopted the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan “Movement for Growth” which recognises the important contribution of local public transport services and walking and cycling investment, towards the improvement of strategic route connections. Investment in these modes should not be neglected when considering the wider strategic infrastructure as they are an essential part of the ‘whole journey’ for people and businesses by, amongst other things, providing access to rail connections for commuters and helping reduce local car trips on strategic roads.

Question 3: Which city-to-city corridor(s) should be the priority for early phases of investment?

The West Midlands Metropolitan Area’s population is forecast to grow by 444,000 people by 2035 (Office of National Statistics). This is the size of a Bristol, Liverpool, or Nottingham. The number of new homes which will need to be built to help accommodate this growth over 20 years is in the order of 165,000. The scale of new housing development increases when the wider journey to work area is considered, therefore requiring a joined-up, cross-boundary approach to housing development.

Initiatives to improve the West Midlands Metropolitan Area’s economy, air quality and quality of life all need to be supported by transport improvements. This is in the context of the - still valid - strategic economic priorities for transport policy identified in the Eddington Review:

- 1. Supporting the UKs successful agglomerated urban areas and their catchments**
- 2. Maintaining or improving the performance of the UKs key international gateways**
- 3. The key inter-urban corridors between these places**

In line with the above, there is a need for a successful integrated Metropolitan transport network supporting the growth and development of the West Midlands urban agglomeration with priority city to city/city to town corridors within this network based on the West Midlands High Speed Two Connectivity Programme corridors, which effectively “plug-in” the two HS2 stations to local networks to maximise their benefits for the West Midlands. As HS2 Phase 2 is developed further, there also needs to be access to Toton, effectively plugging the West Midlands into the three HS2 Stations.

Alongside this, a key infrastructure challenge we face is to ensure the effective and reliable operation of the Strategic Highway Network in the West Midlands. This is to serve the West Midlands Metropolitan Area’s regional and national needs whilst simultaneously serving movement of people and goods traversing the West Midlands. Wider use of the M6Toll is required as part of the solution to this challenge: we need to ensure that the M6Toll is better utilised and integrated with the wider highway network.

Better utilisation of the M6 Toll is of critical importance to the Midlands Engine. The West Midlands ITA and West Midlands Combined Authority Shadow Board are committed to working with Midlands Expressway Limited (M6 Toll owners) and Government to look at options for its better utilisation. However, there is a need for the Commission to acknowledge that the M6 Toll has a critical role to play nationally, due to its strategic importance and location on the National Strategic Highway Network.

As part of overall corridor approaches, the role of national and regional rail, including HS2 and rail freight, also need to be considered as priorities, including the Water Orton rail junction improvement which is the main rail passenger and freight bottleneck of the West Midlands network. Midlands Connect will strengthen the proposal to undertake a joint business case for central Birmingham capturing the wider economic benefits underpinning the case for investment. This will be carried out in partnership with Network Rail.

Furthermore, the West Midlands and Chiltern Route Utilisation Strategy requires construction of Camp Hill Chords, additional bay platforms at Moor Street, reinstatement of Platform 4 at Snow Hill as well enhanced infrastructure at Kings Norton Station and on the Water Orton corridor. These all form part of a package of improvements to enhance central Birmingham rail capacity which will bring national, regional and local benefits to the rail network and the economy.

Question 4: What are the key international connectivity needs likely to be in the next 20-30 years in the north of England (with a focus on ports and airports)? What is the most effective way to meet these needs, and what constraints on delivery are anticipated?

The Midlands Engine region accounts for 16% of all UK exports selling to over 178 countries worldwide.

The Midlands Engine region is well linked internationally. Inward investment projects grew by 130% between 2011 and 2015 based on a compelling Midlands offer of commercial opportunity, affordability, connectivity and quality of life. In the same period, the Midlands Engine region attracted 880 Foreign Direct Investment projects creating over 48,000 new jobs and safeguarding a further 23,000.

It goes without saying that connectivity to ports and airports will be vital for continued growth.

The international gateways at Birmingham Airport and East Midlands Airport are critical to the whole Midlands economy. Currently Birmingham Airport acts as a business gateway to major global markets, including China, and East Midlands Airport is the UK's most important air freight hub outside London. Both Birmingham and East Midlands Airports have ambitious growth plans for the future which will support the growth of the wider Midlands economy. Effective surface access links to these hubs are therefore critical to ensure they can operate effectively in the future. Both airports are challenged

in this respect, with East Midlands Airport only accessible via road and Birmingham Airport located adjacent to congested strategic road links and without direct rail links to the East Midlands.

Whilst Birmingham International Station provides a certain level of connectivity between Birmingham Airport and conventional rail services, these should be significantly strengthened through enhanced connectivity and interchange to the wider region and ultimately through the automated people mover and connections to the HS2 Interchange as promoted through the CEF proposal.

The Midlands Engine is also served directly by several ports including Grimsby and Immingham and Boston. Addressing the reliability and speed of connectivity will be essential to improve the efficiency and productivity of our businesses. With 16% of all UK exports there are significant gains to be made.

With the strong export market of the Midlands it is therefore vital to have wider connectivity to national ports. Our work to date has identified that there is a need to address reliability of the links, including enhanced road freight links (with a focus on speeds and reliability), between the Midlands logistics and manufacturing hubs and ports including Humber, Haven Gateway, Southampton, Bristol and Liverpool. Key sections of the network that need addressing include the M6, M5, A14, Birmingham Box and onward connections to ports such as Southampton.

Question 5: What form of governance would most effectively deliver transformative infrastructure in the north, how should this be funded and by whom, including appropriate local contributions?

The current proposals regarding Sub-National Transport Bodies and Combined Authorities (at regional levels) are appropriate and effective forms of governance in the Midlands Engine region to deliver our transformative infrastructure.

London's Transport Infrastructure

Question 1. What are the major economic and social challenges facing London and its commuter hinterland over the next two to three decades?

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Question 2. What are the strategic options for future investment in large-scale transport infrastructure improvements in London - on road, rail and underground - including, but not limited to Crossrail 2?

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Question 3. What opportunities are there to increase the benefits and reduce the costs of the proposed Crossrail 2 scheme?

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Question 4. What are the options for the funding, financing and delivery of large-scale transport infrastructure improvements in London, including Crossrail 2?

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Question 5. How have major metropolitan areas in other countries responded to similar challenges and priorities? Are there any lessons to be learned and applied in London?

Other successful global economies ensure all of their major metropolitan areas have world class urban and regional transport systems and effective national and international connectivity, including links with the capital city. A lesson for London is to ensure an effective HS1 – HS2 link in London to allow direct international high speed rail services for major metropolitan areas of the UK.