

**Oxford to Cambridge Expressway Strategic Study Stakeholder
Reference Group
25th February 2016
Milton Keynes Christian Centre, Milton Keynes.**

Present:

Name	Representing
[REDACTED]	Department for Transport – Strategic Studies Programme Lead
[REDACTED]	Department for Transport – Project Senior Responsible Owner/ Policy Lead
[REDACTED]	Department for Transport – Regional Engager
[REDACTED]	WSP/PB – Study Consultant Project Manager
[REDACTED]	CH2M – Study Consultant, Deputy Project Manager/Traffic Modelling Lead
[REDACTED]	Highways England – Project Manager
[REDACTED]	Highways England - Project Support
[REDACTED]	WSP/PB – Study Consultant Project Director
[REDACTED]	WSP/PB – Engineering Lead
[REDACTED]	WSP/PB – Study Consultant Regional Engagement
[REDACTED]	Arup – A1 East of England Study Project Manager
[REDACTED]	Campaign to Protect Rural England
[REDACTED]	OxLEP/ Oxfordshire County Council
[REDACTED]	Stagecoach East
[REDACTED]	Huntingdonshire District Council
[REDACTED]	Aylesbury Vale District Council
[REDACTED]	Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership
[REDACTED]	Buckinghamshire County Council
[REDACTED]	Friends of the Earth
[REDACTED]	Central Bedfordshire Council
[REDACTED]	Historic England
[REDACTED]	Wildlife Trust
[REDACTED]	Northamptonshire County Council
[REDACTED]	Confederation of Passenger Transport
[REDACTED]	Environment Agency
[REDACTED]	South East Midlands LEP
[REDACTED]	Federation of Small Businesses
[REDACTED]	Cherwell and South Northants District Council
[REDACTED]	Bedford Borough Council
[REDACTED]	Highways England
[REDACTED]	Thames Valley Buckinghamshire LEP
[REDACTED]	Luton Borough Council
[REDACTED]	Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire

	Road Policing
[REDACTED]	East West Rail Consortium
[REDACTED]	University of Oxford
[REDACTED]	British Horse Society
[REDACTED]	North Wessex Downs AONB
[REDACTED]	Milton Keynes Council
[REDACTED]	West Oxfordshire District Council
[REDACTED]	Natural England
[REDACTED]	Cambridgeshire County Council
[REDACTED]	South Cambridgeshire District Council
[REDACTED]	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
[REDACTED]	Oxford Bus Company/ Carousel Buses/ Thames Travel
[REDACTED]	Campaign for Better Transport
[REDACTED]	Bedfordshire Association of Towns/Parish Councils

1. Welcome & Introductions

1.1 [REDACTED] introduced himself as the new Senior Responsible Owner for the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway and the A1 East of England Strategic Study projects and introduced the project team as follows:

- [REDACTED] - Department for Transport Programme Lead for all six strategic studies announced in the Road Investment Strategy
- [REDACTED] – Highway England Project Manager for A1 East of England and Oxford to Cambridge Expressway study
- [REDACTED] – Study consultant Project Manager
- [REDACTED] – Study consultant Deputy Project Manager and Traffic Modelling Lead
- [REDACTED] – Department for Transport, Regional Engagement
- [REDACTED] – Highways England Project Support
- [REDACTED] – Study consultant Project Director
- [REDACTED] - Study consultant Engineering Lead
- [REDACTED] – Study consultant Stakeholder Engagement

2. Objectives of the Meeting

2.1 [REDACTED] explained the objectives of the Stakeholder Meeting were to:

- To inform the reference group about the emerging findings from stage 1 of the study. The slides show a snapshot of the study team's understanding of the corridor currently and in the future;
- To seek comments on the emerging findings – have the study team missed anything?
- To introduce stage 2 of the study and seek initial views, ideas and comments from stakeholders; and
- To inform the reference group about the next steps in the process.

3. Recap from previous Stakeholder Reference Group Meeting

3.1 [REDACTED] provided a brief re-cap of what was discussed at the previous stakeholder meeting.

3.2 The previous stakeholder meeting consisted of a:

- Discussion of project geographical scope, the issues on the network and history of the study;
- Feedback session from stakeholders on network reliability, environment, safety and resilience; and
- Discussion of the interface with other studies and current major projects i.e. A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet and A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon.

4. Stakeholder Reference Group Part 1 - Overview of stage 1 evidence and findings

4.1 [REDACTED] provided an update about the activities the study team have undertaken since the last stakeholder meeting in November 2015 and welcomed further inputs following the meeting. Activities include:

- extensive data gathering and analysis through the engagement of local authorities, large companies and local enterprise partnerships;
- Assessing planned growth;
- Analysing travel demand patterns by reviewing a variety of sources such as local data, other studies, census data;
- Drafting the transport objectives; and
- Developing conceptual multi-modal improvement ideas.

4.2 [REDACTED] next highlighted where the project was currently sitting in the study programme. The study consists of three stages and the study is currently in stage 1. A stakeholder reference group meeting is planned at the end of each stage to inform and engage with stakeholders.

4.3 [REDACTED] then presented an overview of their analysis. The summary is as follows:

- Within the study corridor there are numerous environmental considerations that need to be taken into account including air quality management areas and a world heritage site;
- The relationship of travel between the study corridor and London shows that the main travel origin/destination tend to be from three main locations – Cambridge, Oxford and Milton Keynes. There are generally low levels of commuting between the three locations;
- Unemployment rates within the study corridor is generally lower than the UK average however, there are pockets where there is a weaker labour market.
- It is predicted that there will be an increase in transport demand linked to the significant pace of growth; this may result in a loss of future investment in the area if the demand is not met;
- The study team have commissioned a traffic video survey which confirms traffic master data of current travel conditions within the study corridor during peak and off peak hours. The average speed within the study corridor is between 47.9 and 49.6mph;

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- During peak hours, delays tend to occur on the A34, A4421/A421, Black Cat Roundabout and A428;
 - 75% of the strategic roads within the study area are currently close to or exceeds congestion reference flows;
 - Other modes of travel between and within the study corridor do not offer improved journey times and can be limited;
 - Without intervention, there will be significant challenges for travel, housing growth, access to jobs and associated impact on communities; and
 - The study team have commissioned TRL to investigate possible future technology that may be available in 20-25 years' time.

5. Questions, Answers and Comments

Comment: I think there is naivety in the analysis of housing growth, for example, the study has not looked at housing affordability in areas like Oxford. By improving the corridor, this does not decrease the housing competition. There seems to be a lack of understanding in how to relieve congestion at pinch point areas. What is the analysis of benefit cost ratios for undertaking this work? The lack of wider economic analysis is concerning. There has also not been any mention of carbon reduction.

Response: The analysis in the presentation shows a snapshot of the evidence gathered and analysed. The task 1 report will cover the points raised and will have looked at previous studies and their evidence. A key part of the study will be to look at the relationship between homes and transport. At this stage, the study has only looked at emerging conceptual interventions rather than the detail; this will be looked at in the future stages of the study. The study will also examine intervention options across all modes of transport to ensure that people use the most appropriate mode. Carbon impacts will also be considered

Comment: A comment on the scope of the study area. The scope plan included Aylesbury Vale which the Secretary of State for Transport identified connectivity as an issue. The study seems to focus on the northern corridor – is data being collected outside the study scope to assist with the data analysis? Looking at the SWOT analysis, why is Luton considered to a “threat”? The area has a growing international airport, is within an enterprise zone and is forecasted to grow significantly. Connectivity issues to Luton should also be considered.

Response: The presentation shows a snap shot of the study work completed and analysis of the most direct route used for traffic through the study area. The study area also includes the south of the region such as West Berkshire and the Vale of White Horse. The study is all about connectivity. Luton is outside the geographical scope of the study brief created by the Department for Transport. It is important not to create geographic creep and maintain focus on the challenges within the study corridor. However, the study has and will continue to examine influences and growth outside of the location scope as the outcome of the study will affect the surrounding areas and will include assessment of options on the northern and southern edges of the study area.

Question: Where they are severed, will there be a review of public rights of way, especially at bridges and crossing points? Public rights of way for all users, not just foot users. I am concerned about the connectivity.

Response: When the study comes to reviewing the possible intervention options, the study team will include public rights of way. It is not possible to look at specific locations

as the study is at the conceptual stage. Looking at non-motorised users is a key part of the study.

Question: With improved links, will there be a review into the balance between the environment and the anticipated connectivity? What standards are being considered for noise and how will this be defined?

Response: When the study comes to appraise the various options, noise will be considered as part of wider environmental considerations. The Performance Specification contained within the Road Investment Strategy published in December 2014, gave specific targets for Highways England to meet, one of these targets includes noise reduction.

Question: What is the definition of the term “growth” that is being used today? Do you mean physical growth such as homes, employment or economic growth? Is it correct to assume that the largest urban areas have the largest sustainability?

Response: The study will be covering growth in terms of both physical and economic with wider potential agglomeration related economic impacts/benefits. According to the analysis, urban areas tend to be where the employment is however, there tends to be a “zone of influence” to other areas.

Comment: The study should look into opportunities to better plan bus services in terms of the layout of the road infrastructure, which can have an impact on bus/rail interchanges. There should be equal weight in bus services and road investment.

Response: As part of the study, local/regional bus services connectivity will be looked at. The workshop in the second part of the stakeholder event will give you an opportunity to capture your views.

Question: What is the relationship between the study and the East West Consortium? The aim of the East West Consortium is to persuade consumers to reduce car use. How do you differentiate between the different markets?

Response: East West Rail forms an integral part of the study, which will consider intervention measures across all modes. The outcome of the study is not looking to create a conflict but to complement East West Rail as both have the potential to serve similar objectives. Due to the different trips/movements and origins and destinations by rail and road, our analysis will review their respective roles in a coordinated way. The study will also be looking at freight movement by road and/or rail; this could affect the study outcomes in terms of strategic freight connectivity. We will utilise analysis and appraisal work from East West Rail for consistency.

Comment: It is hoped that both rail and road modes of transport would be complementary. There is an opportunity for the commercialisation of bus routes and increase connectivity with London. This is an opportunity to support London growth. Does the study include a national focus or simply between the Oxford and Cambridge corridor?

Response: Yes there is an opportunity and this corridor has national significance. This will be looked at as part of the next steps of the project. Analysis suggests that the key area for improvement is the connectivity between local conurbations. Any improvements will have a zone of influence.

Comment: Looking at the evidence base, part of the East West Rail is now open at Oxford Parkway; there is an opportunity to review the effect this has had to replicate any positive effects elsewhere.

Response: Yes there is an opportunity. This will be looked at as part of the next steps of the project and considered within the analysis and option appraisal.

Comment: The study seems to concentrate a lot on Oxford and Milton Keynes however, there is also lots of planned growth planned in Aylesbury. It is essential to look at strategic and internal connectivity.

Response: This will be reviewed as part of the study and options considered in this part of the study area. Analysis suggests that the key area for improvement is the connectivity between local conurbations.

Question: What is the definition of an Expressway?

Response: The precise standards have yet to be defined, however, an expressway can generally be regarded as a trunk road with similar characteristics as a motorway. The road will generally be a minimum of a dual carriageway with minimum junctions and typically be grade separated. Users will also likely see an increase of technology on the road.

6. Stakeholder Reference Group Part 2 – Introduction to Objectives and Emerging Concepts

6.1 Following the comfort break, [REDACTED] introduced stakeholders to the second part of the stakeholder event. [REDACTED] presented the draft transport objectives and the emerging concept of possible intervention options. Stakeholders formed into 6 groups to discuss/comment/revise the draft transport objectives and the emerging concepts. Below is a summary of the feedback from each table:

Table 1: Objectives

- There were no issues with the first two objectives;
- The third objective refers to access to employment- this should widen to also include facilities; and
- The fourth objective is very specific by referring to traffic on local roads. This needs to open up to other types of transport.

Table 1: Emerging Concepts

- How does the study enable planned growth in terms of jobs, housing etc?
- There will be challenge in aligning timescales between East West Rail, other improvements and planned growth across the counties;
- Need to be clear what the priorities are. It will be challenge to find a route to connect Oxford and Cambridge all in one go. The team may find it easier to upgrade the hubs in between bit by bit to unlock the pinch points to reduce costs and disruption;
- Any road based intervention should complement East West Rail, other transport modes and planned transport enhancements such as Cambridge City Deal.
- Need to future proof the outcome;
- Due to proximity of the study to Millbrook, MK Catapult and the Oxford/Cambridge innovation centres, the route would be ideal to test future technologies;

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- Meeting expectations from local communities; and
 - Reduce the reliance on the A1.

Table 2: Objectives

- Recognise that there is an existing road network. To create an offline improvement would probably not create a high benefit cost ratio;
- Due to the number of local trips, there should be perhaps be a focus on pinch points and complementary linkages with East West Rail;
- The study should look at improving access to the city centres and its periphery; and
- Recognise that a strategic link could be made with Luton however it is important not to lose any benefits in an effort to join up as it is on the periphery.

Table 2: Emerging Concepts

- Political consideration in each area. What works in one area may not work in another area;
- Consideration of logistical distribution centres – they want low skilled employees;
- Improve links with Felixstowe and other freight movements travelling east-west;
- There is a danger of displacing road users and increasing congestion elsewhere;
- Health and well-being – improve access to hospitals for aging population, improvement of non-motorised routes to encourage exercise;
- Improve existing infrastructure such as local transport links and existing highway;
- Should target congestion points;
- Link in with East West Rail and station travel plans and other planned improvements i.e. A428;
- The focus should be on public transport;
- Need to ensure that the Benefit Cost Ratio and Value for Money reflect the noise/air reduction targets; and
- Target other forms of demand management rather than using congestion charging.

Table 3: Objectives

- Relieve housing pressures by developing the corridor to allow growth;
- Consideration of beyond the Oxford to Cambridge corridor i.e. Felixstowe. No mention of linking Milton Keynes to Birmingham;
- Ensure that the output is not another ringway dealing with the London overspill;
- Is the output all about providing relief to the M25? Is there enough traffic to warrant an Expressway?
- Consider the resilience of Oxford to Cambridge corridor;
- Seems to be all about commuting. Need to focus on the strategic road; and
- Objective 4 needs broadening out to include ecology/environment – the effects on lowering local traffic.

Table 3: Emerging concepts

- Include Swindon in the study area due to its links with the A34/M4;
- A northern A34 route to bypass Milton Keynes?
- Despite the East West Rail – there is still a need to improve the road for freight travel. Improve interchanges. Create an electric spine; and
- A southern route would impact on environmental constraints especially around the Oxford greenbelt.

Table 4: Objectives

- Can sustainability be weaved into the objectives in relation to housing and employment – this will reduce commuting and reduce the carbon footprint;
- Link to local plans;
- Need to recognise the work of Oxford and Cambridge Universities. They do a lot of collaboration however, do not forget the contributions the other educational institutions within the corridor provide;
- Improved infrastructure will provide economic and environmental benefits;
- The key concept should be connectivity to enable users to access the expressway;
- Development of technology- this was not obvious from the objectives; and
- Sustainability is not a bolt on but should be considered in its own right.

Table 4: Emerging concepts

- Improved infrastructure will affect the M25 and make it easier to reach London and vice versa. Need to make sure that there are enough jobs. It is possible that jobs once based in London will move out to the periphery;
- Need to look at key growth areas and find ways to serve it;
- Is there any appetite for job growth in the study corridor?
- Suggestions of improvement could include south of Milton Keynes and an extreme north or south improvement; and
- Need to take into account the midland mainline electrification.

Table 5: Objectives

- Draft objective 3 includes a reference to “regional urban centres”. Wider socio-economic benefits should be sought throughout the area, and not be limited to regional urban centres;
- The objectives need to better define “strategic growth”. This could include references to new housing and employment areas and increased productivity; and
- Need to recognise the interaction between an expressway and local improvements.

Table 5: Emerging concepts

- The scheme benefits need to include unlocking the potential employment growth by all key sectors identified by SEPs throughout the study area, not just science/technology growth in Oxford/Cambridge. The analysis must not be limited by exiting trends and patterns, the scheme offers potential for different patterns of growth; this needs to be understood for each scheme option. The complexity of employment markets throughout the area needs to be reflected – do not focus on growth in regional urban centres;
- Scheme options that increase journey time reliability would provide a catalyst for economic growth;
- The scheme option development must consider true origin-destinations of trips. Understanding the linkages from the Expressway to true origin-destinations is essential. This could include improved local highway access, public transport interchanges/hubs, improved public transport corridors, Park and Ride. The connectivity of all parts of the study area to the Expressway must be considered, to establish the holistic view of benefits;

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- The potential for rail to accommodate travel demand must be considered. Need to understand what schemes could be developed after the implementation of schemes such as HS2 and East West Rail;
 - The scheme should seek to have a positive impact to existing public transport corridors/services; and
 - An additional benefit associated with the new infrastructure would be providing super-fast broadband (or next generation) – this could increase connectivity in some rural areas.

Table 6: Objectives

- Reference within the objectives linking to the need to reduce travel;
- Re-word objective 1 to include the word “connectivity”;
- Refer to a range/package of measures to use;
- Resilience needs to be considered;
- Complement East West Rail and other transport hubs;
- Maximise use of existing infrastructure;
- Linking measures to areas of planned growth; and
- Wording of last objective - try to avoid harm, or at least minimise/protect to protected areas i.e. environmental/ heritage areas.

Table 6: Emerging Concepts

- Understanding the key hubs along the study corridor is key;
- The relationship to planned and existing infrastructure including rail should be considered;
- Local access and how they interrelate to measures;
- Role of technology needs to be considered;
- Avoid solo travel – making better use of passenger transport infrastructure;
- The role of the strategic road network in terms of strategic versus local trips.

7. Next Steps and Future Timelines

7.1 [REDACTED] thanked stakeholders for their input into the workshop. The study team will take away the notes from develop them into a long list of potential options.

7.2 The study team will continue to gather more data and conduct further analysis to better inform the potential interventions. Key data analysis will include freight movement and the role of technology. [REDACTED] welcomed further contact from attendees with comments and additional clarifications or detail on evidence base data.

7.3 [REDACTED] explained that the contributions from the event would inform the stage 1 report which will be published on the Gov.uk website around Spring 2016.

7.4 There will be another stakeholder event in Summer 2016 where stakeholders will have the opportunity to review options once they have been through DfT's appraisal tool.

7.5 [REDACTED] explained the wider context of the study within RIS2. RIS2 is designed on the principle that the programme will go through distinct phases.

- The first stage consists of evidence-gathering and stakeholder engagement, trying to identify the factors and options that should shape RIS2;
- The decision phase consists of the formal negotiation of a RIS, in line with the Infrastructure Act and Highways England's licence; and
- Once the RIS is agreed, the process of mobilisation and delivery begins. Each of these phases will have different needs and priorities.

7.6 It was confirmed that Minutes would be circulated and the presentation slides would be attached to these.

8. Final Questions, Answers and Comments

Question: If further options come to mind following today's event, can I still let you know?

Response: Yes, the study project manager's email address will be circulated along with the notes and presentation.

Question: Will you be amending the transport specific objectives and be feeding it back to stakeholders?

Response: Yes although it is expected that this may be some time after the notes and presentation have been sent out; it is likely to be contained within the Stage 1 report available during Spring 2016.

- The event concluded at 1.30pm -