

**Oxford to Cambridge Expressway Strategic Study Stakeholder
Reference Group
7th July 2016
Wyboston Lakes, Bedfordshire**

Present:

Name	Representing
[REDACTED]	Department for Transport
[REDACTED]	Department for Transport
[REDACTED]	Department for Transport
[REDACTED]	Highways England
[REDACTED]	Highways England
[REDACTED]	Arup
[REDACTED]	Arup
[REDACTED]	WSP/PB
[REDACTED]	WSP/PB
[REDACTED]	Highways England (part)
[REDACTED]	Jacobs (part)
[REDACTED]	Highways England (part)
[REDACTED]	
[REDACTED]	Aylesbury Vale District Council
[REDACTED]	Bedford Borough Council
[REDACTED]	Bedfordshire Association of Local Councils
[REDACTED]	British Horse Society
[REDACTED]	Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP
[REDACTED]	Cambridgeshire County Council
[REDACTED]	Cambridgeshire County Council
[REDACTED]	Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire Constabulary
[REDACTED]	Campaign for Better Transport
[REDACTED]	Campaign to Protect Rural England
[REDACTED]	Central Bedfordshire Council
[REDACTED]	Chiltern Railways
[REDACTED]	Confederation of Passenger Transport
[REDACTED]	Cycling UK
[REDACTED]	East West Rail Consortium
[REDACTED]	East West Rail Consortium
[REDACTED]	England's Economic Heartland Strategic Alliances
[REDACTED]	Environment Agency
[REDACTED]	Federation of Small Businesses

██████████	Hertfordshire Association of Parish and Town Councils
██████████	Highways England
██████████	Highways England
██████████	Huntingdonshire District Council
██████████	Luton Borough Council
██████████	Milton Keynes Council
██████████	Milton Keynes Council
██████████	National Farmers' Union
██████████	Natural England
██████████	Northamptonshire County Council
██████████	Oxford Bus Company, Thames Travel and Carousel Buses
██████████	Oxford County Council
██████████	SG19 Road Safety Group
██████████	South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth
██████████	South Cambridgeshire District Council
██████████	St Albans City and District Council
██████████	Stagecoach East
██████████	Suffolk County Council
██████████	University of Oxford
██████████	Wildlife Trusts
██████████	Woodland Trust

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 ██████████ opened the session by welcoming everybody to Wyboston Lakes and the third Stakeholder Reference Group meeting for the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway Strategic Study.
- 1.2 ██████ described the proceedings of the afternoon and introduced the A428 Black Cat project team.

2. Update on RIS1 A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet and other schemes within the study vicinity

- 2.1 ██████████ introduced himself and explained his role as the consultant project manager to the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet scheme.
- 2.2 ██████ presented a timeline showing the A428 project timeline, the two strategic studies against the current and the future Road Investment Strategy periods. ██████ also highlighted the A428 scheme in the geographical context of other planned major improvement schemes within the locality.
- 2.3 ██████ explained that the key interface between both strategic studies and the project was the Black Cat junction.
- 2.4 The key challenges for the A428 project team to address include:
- the planned development at Cambourne, Bourne Airfield and St Neots;

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- existing environmental issues around St Neots; and
 - Improving the reliability/resilience of the road network.

The A428 project team are aware of the links to East Coast Mainline and are in contact with the relevant person within the organisation.

2.5 The A428 project is in the option identification stage and the team are currently looking at a series of options available such as offline, online widening or junction improvements; it is too early in the process to show where the route may be however, the project team will be engaging with stakeholders by holding a formal public consultation, with the view to announce the preferred route in Spring 2017. The project is aiming to begin start of works by Spring 2020.

2.6 [REDACTED] next gave a short progress update on other major schemes located within the vicinity of the two studies. [REDACTED] also referred to the M1 Junction 13 to 16 Managed Motorway scheme which is expected to begin start of works in 2018.

3. Strategic Studies Update

3.1 [REDACTED], DfT lead for the Southern Strategic Studies provided an update on the studies.

3.2 [REDACTED] gave an overview of the northern and southern studies. He explained that the process of developing RIS2 is underway with evidence being gathered from many sources. He gave an indication of current thoughts as to how RIS2 will look and how the strategic studies will be considered in the RIS. He emphasised that infrastructure is key to the Government's economic plan.

4. Oxford to Cambridge Expressway Strategic Study – From Long List to Short List

4.1 [REDACTED] introduced himself as the study consultant project manager for the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway Strategic Study.

4.2 [REDACTED] reminded attendees of the study objectives and the study area; the study will also be looking at traffic patterns outside of the study to understand the implications of any proposed options. [REDACTED] assured stakeholders that the study team have been liaising with the East West Rail consortium and their data will be incorporated into the traffic modelling to fully reflect a multi modal review of options available.

4.3 [REDACTED] explained that the study team used a variety of evidence including each authority's local plan (where available), meetings with local authorities and businesses to develop and refine a long list of options. The evidence suggests that transport is considered to be a potential barrier to growth especially in relation to housing availability and the access to skills.

4.4 Since the last Stakeholder Reference Group event held in February 2016, the study team have been continuing to review the evidence base sent in by stakeholders to develop a long list of forty multi modal options; from this, the study team have analysed each option and then used the Department's Early Appraisal Sifting Toolkit (EAST) to assess the feasibility of delivery, in terms of:

- Strategic and objective;
- Economic and environmental;

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- Managerial;
 - Financial; and
 - Commercial viability.

This has resulted into an emerging short list of three possible road based interventions.

4.5 [REDACTED] presented the three road based emerging short list explaining that around Oxford and Milton Keynes there were various sub-options available. [REDACTED] emphasised that no firm conclusions have been made on each route options and the actual route itself had not yet been defined. The study intend to also use a land use model to further understand the wider economic impact each option may have.

- **Road Option A:** This option takes a southern approach to connecting Oxford to Milton Keynes, north of Aylesbury.
- **Road Option B:** This option broadly follows the East West Rail alignment.
- **Road Option C:** This option is expected to a more northern approaching connecting Oxford to Milton Keynes, to the south of Bicester and Buckingham.

4.6 Within each road option, the study team intend to further investigate the relationship between travel between road and East West rail, the application of technology to see how this affects travel patterns as well as the role of non-motorised users to form packages. In parallel, the study team have commissioned freight modelling to further understand the effects of freight movement; initial output from the model suggests that there will be significant changes to freight movement as a result of improved East West connectivity.

4.7 [REDACTED] next highlighted the next key steps the study would be undertaking following today's event:

- Publication of Stage 1 report;
- Finalising the short list and high level modelling using the feedback from today's session;
- Progress into further detail modelling and appraisal of shortlist; and
- Prepare Strategic Outline Business Case by the end of 2016.

5. Oxford to Cambridge Breakout and Feedback Session

5.1 [REDACTED] next introduced attendees to the breakout session; the outcome will help shape and inform the packages.

5.2 Attendees broke into 3 groups and were given 15 minutes to discuss each package. Each group had a set of questions about the packages, and the points made were recorded on proformas, included below as appendix A.

5.3 Following the feedback from each group back to the attendees, [REDACTED] thanked everyone for their contribution.

6. Event Closure

- 6.1 [REDACTED] thanked everyone for attending and asked everyone to fill in their feedback forms.
- 6.2 [REDACTED] reminded everyone that the study teams would be happy to receive any further comments and this could be fed back via [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

- Event Close -

Appendix A - Oxford to Cambridge Workshop Group Output

The following questions were asked to each breakout group:

1. Comments on Expressway route options A, B and C
2. Comments on wider options (technology, urban access etc.)

In the context of the above questions:

- a) Views on East West connectivity;
- b) Patterns of growth;
- c) Constraints/barriers to growth;
- d) Market failures and role of transport;
- e) Role of improved transport in supporting economic growth

Group 1

Option A (Southern route)

- Most housing growth is planned closest to this route, so it makes this route attractive.
- Integrates with existing intra-regional growth.
- Benefits of connectivity (Luton growth).
- Near Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as well as local ecology and habitat sites, so there will be potential environmental challenges.
- The A418 report carried out in 2007 suggested that there was not specific need relating to meeting local economic growth to upgrade the A418 when considering a range of alternatives and in isolation. This was a local study and did not consider the wider strategic connectivity.
- This route could also address Bicester growth.

Option B (Generally following East West Rail route)

- HS2 + EWR interface may have the potential to unlock growth.
- Most current and likely future trips may have a 20km journey length on network and therefore this option would do most to facilitate local trips and potential integration with rail.
- Environment Special Area of Conservation (SAC) on A34 north of Oxford.

Option C (Northern route)

- Less growth is planned in proximity to this route, so less desirable option.
- More rural and longer route, so less attractive.
- Need consistency of route though on A421.
- Offers the potential for fewer environmental challenges.

General Comments

- Views of stakeholder need to be taken through to next OBC stage.
- Need to address spatial growth.
- Must protect Passenger Transport / bus (lock-in any congestion benefits for non-car modes on local roads).
- Go ahead operating services in congestion north of Oxford.

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- Need better bus and rail integration.
 - Bus revenue needs investment/support.
 - Is it about connecting growth?
 - Technology / Research and Development/freight opportunities.
 - Need to make technology work.
 - Compete with EWR rather than complement?
 - East - west connectivity very important.
 - Needs full multi-modal package.
 - Black Cat interface needs to be managed.
 - Water availability issues with growth north and south of Oxford.
 - Bucks and Aylesbury divorced from Strategic Road Network.

Group 2

Option A (Southern route)

- Not expressway but a better route.
- Consider the enhancement of current route to improve public transport, depending on which option is taken.
- High level growth rates seem to align with Milton Keynes future 2050 work.
- Junction locations need to be located (and served by local routes) to support current need and future growth.
- Important not finalise a decision on whether A, B or C options are preferred at the stage, as all need further development and assessment at OBC stage. The SOBC and study currently being completed should focus on the strategic need for an intervention in the corridor.
- Consider the impact of increased volumes of traffic trying to enter major cities and towns; would these improvements have negative impact on the towns and cities with congested routes in?
- Look at whether overall levels of service could better meet objectives by providing improvements to more than one route. This needs to be assessed as an option.
- Sort out A34 around Oxford first.

Option B (Generally following East West Rail route)

- Link with Bicester growth plans.
- Possible link E-W rail and HS2 with new road- potential for a larger new settlement.
- Junctions need to support EWR stations (opportunity for multi-modal trips).
- The sub-options around Oxford are crucial to deciding a route.
- What will happen with Oxford North-South road?
- This appears to run through the key flood and water basin areas.

Option C (Northern route)

- Glad we are looking at broadest options first.
- Access from route to settlement (the onward impact).

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- Open route(s) may be better route for South Hertfordshire to Oxford.
 - Growth of internet shopping makes it necessary to have better east-west links.
 - Would not favour southern route as increasing Chilterns AONB.
 - Preference around Oxford seems to be via (improved) A34 not to south.
 - Road option M40-M1 needs to link in south of MK to join up with A421.
 - Route via Buckingham may encourage unsustainable (car based) development – Aylesbury has better public transport links.

Group 3

Option A (Southern route)

- Fits with growth plans.
- Aylesbury has 15,000 homes planned.
- Haddenham has 4,000 homes planned.
- Could follow existing route.

Option B (Generally following East West Rail route)

- Shorter links would be provided connecting areas of housing, growth and functional economic areas, e.g. Bicester to Oxford and Milton Keynes.
- Spread funding across more than one route.
- South Oxford green belts are protected areas.
- EWR connection Bedford-Oxford will improve service.
- Link to EWR to allow movement without filling capacity. Parkway stops mixed use service.

Option C (Northern route)

- Could follow existing route.

General Comments

- Growth always under estimated from Local Authority figures.
- Strong mixed transport links are important.
- Link settlements between major economic areas to stimulate growth.
- What is the driver for the scheme- is it business? Is this a reality?
- Sustainability – need to consider whole life to be valid.
- Park and ride as a possible integration to urban areas.
- Is an expressway really required or just an improved route?

Appendix B: Questions, Comments and Responses:

Comment: The packages shown do not appear to explicitly refer to public transport improvements in terms of long distance coach travel.

Response: Local accessibility is a key element to the study. An expressway has the potential to release traffic to increase the attractiveness of using/accessing public transport such as, trains and buses.

Question: In an earlier slide, [REDACTED] referred to the reduction of greenhouse gases as a result of reduced journey times. Can you confirm how much by? What is the standard that you will use to compare? Where was the data derived from? Can you show the projections of expected greenhouse reduction?

Response: An analysis of environmental effects, including emissions, will be looked at in Stage 3 of the study in line with national guidance, but this is only expected to be high level and examining the difference between each package as is required as part of a strategic assessment.

Comment: There is currently a lot of anticipated growth within Aylesbury Vale but there are no schemes planned in the area – any future scheme will not be announced until 2020, what can be done in the meantime?

Response: There are options available. For example, the 2015 Autumn Statement announced that a Transport Development Fund has been established to progress the most promising transport projects.

Question: You've only shown the area between Oxford and Milton Keynes - what about the options between Milton Keynes and Cambridge or M4 to Oxford?

Response: It is expected the A34 and A421 will be upgraded to expressway standard as the infrastructure was either in place or is committed in the current Road Investment Strategy; today's event has largely focused on the route between Oxford to Milton Keynes due to the number of various options available.

Question: Can you confirm exactly how far into Oxford and Cambridge the study will be examining into –will it be just the outskirts or access to directly into the town centres?

Response: The study is a strategic study looking at improving the connectivity between the hubs and will not be looking directly into access to the town/city centres; the study will however examine the effects an expressway may have on the local road network and whether this needs to be altered as a result.

Question: Will the Department for Transport funding be available to use on public transport schemes?

Response: The study is considering a range of options across different modes. If the most promising option to address the transport objectives are public transport then we will need to consider the mechanics of how this should be funded.

Comment: There is currently not a strong link between the Oxford to Milton Keynes and Milton Keynes to Cambridge – where is the evidence to support that the demand? The focus should perhaps be on developing stronger local links.

Response: It is expected that an expressway has the potential to have wider economic benefits and thus potentially create greater demand between the hubs by opening up access to homes and jobs. The next stage of the study is to examine where the benefits are located in further detail.