



England’s Economic Heartland Alliance (EEH) formation of a Strategic Transport Body (STB)

Summary

This report provides the Growth Board with an update which sets out indicative proposals from the England’s Economic Heartland Alliance (EEH) for the formation of a Strategic Transport Body (STB) covering its current footprint covering an area including Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and Milton Keynes, to Cambridgeshire.

The report is supported by the following annex:

Annex One – EEH: Developing A Sub-National Transport Body Briefing Paper

Recommendation

That the Growth Board:

- **Notes the proposals for the development of a Strategic Transport Board (STB) across the EEH geography and agrees the continued engagement in developing the proposal supported by EOG.**

1. Sub National Transport Body (STB)

The NIC Interim Report highlighted the need for a single overview on strategic transport issues to help maximise the economic potential of the Growth Corridor. In addition to this, the Department for Transport (DfT) in its recently published Transport Investment Strategy identifies the added value that Sub-national Transport Bodies can bring to improving strategic transport planning and implementation, citing examples such as Transport for the North and Midlands Metro.

In response to this, the EEH is proposing to explore the potential of submitting a bid to DfT to establish a STB. Presently, the EEH Strategic Transport Forum, comprising local transport authorities, provides a mechanism for discussions on strategic transport issues and improving east –west / north-south connectivity across the road and rail network. The Forum has commissioned independent consultancy support on the options available in developing the concept. It views the current partnership arrangements as the most appropriate building blocks to formulate the STB.

There is no fixed template as to what form an STB has to take: it is for the Local Transport Authorities putting the proposal forward to determine, and provide the case as to why their proposition is the most appropriate. The Forum is seeking to begin an engagement with prospective partners and stakeholders on the potential for the STB and to develop a detailed proposal. Once agreement has been arrived, that proposal would then be submitted to the Secretary of State for Transport for their consideration, and Parliament’s approval. Annex Two sets out the EEH initial thinking on the STB concept and its potential functions, powers and governance.

As part of the engagement process, we have held an initial meeting with the EEH Programme Team. We are broadly supportive of the idea of a strategic body that can provide greater coherence and interface with DfT and its agencies, network operators and passenger groups. It is important to stress that any STB would be the lead body with statutory powers for strategic transport matters, but not the de facto governance mechanism for the wider Growth Corridor as discussed under paragraph 2 above.

We have highlighted the importance of the EEH working with existing well established groups and structures, chiefly the OxLEP Transport Sub-Group and Oxfordshire Growth Board, to develop its thinking. The EEH Alliance (which we are a partner) is attending the next sub-group meeting to discuss the STB concept. The outcome of this session will feed into the EEH consultation process.