



EAST WEST RAIL CONSORTIUM STRATEGIC BOARD

Item 8.1

Updating the Strategic objectives and Conditional Output Statements for the Central Section

Background

The Western and Central Section presently have differing Strategic Objectives (SOs). The Central Section has a set of Conditional Outputs (COs) but we have found no evidence of COs for the Western Section. The SOs and COs for the Central Section reflect previous ambitions for the EWR route to serve primarily as a high speed, strategic corridor. As such they do not reflect the current aspirations for the route to be an interurban commuter railway which will unlock housing and development in the corridor..

This paper examines the evidence for the current Central Section SOs and COs and puts forward a case for revising these and providing a single, fully aligned set of SOs and COs for both the Central and Western sections.

Current Position

The current SOs for the Central Section were formulated by the East West Rail Consortium (EWRC) sometime prior to 2014 for the EWR scheme as a whole. They are to:

- *Improve East West Public Transport Connectivity*
- *Increase economic growth, prosperity and employment within the South East of England through improvements to East West rail links*
- *Provide faster more reliable and additional rail links from the west to Cambridge, Ipswich and Norwich*
- *Improve journey times and reliability of intercity and commuter journeys*
- *Maintain and enhance capacity for rail freight*
- *Contribute to tackling climate change*

During 2014, these SOs were used by Atkins to guide the formulation of a set of Central Section COs. These COs are:

- *Longer distance connectivity for business to business connectivity*
 - *Target of 60 mins or less between Cambridge and Oxford*
 - *1-2 tph between Cambridge and Oxford*
- *Passenger connectivity for longer distance services onto the MML, ECML, WCML and West / South West of Oxford*
- *Shorter distance connectivity to support commuting travel into Cambridge and Oxford*
 - *1-2 tph between Cambridge and Bedford, Oxford and Bedford*
 - *Target of 24 mins or less between Cambridge and Bedford*
- *Average end to end journey speed of 80mph Oxford to Cambridge*
- *Freight capacity*
 - *Provision for one freight tph*
 - *Passive provision for potential intermodal terminals on the EWRC route*

Both the SOs and COs for the Central Section have remained unchanged.



The situation on the Western Section is somewhat different. We have found no evidence of the existence of a set of COs for this Section and the original EWRC SOs have been updated on a number of occasions. The need to update the SOs for the Western Section was established as part of the “SoS Challenge” work. The revised SOs draw on the themes highlighted by the NIC’s initial (2016) report on the Ox-Cam corridor. They were approved by the Western Section Project Board in November 2017 and are set out below:

- *Improve east west public transport connectivity through rail links between Oxford, Bicester, Bletchley and Bedford/MK, and between Aylesbury, Bletchley and MK;*
- *Meet initial forecast passenger demand through new and reliable train services;*
- *Stimulate economic growth, housing and employment through new and reliable train services;*
- *Contribute to improved inter-regional passenger connectivity and journey times;*
- *Maintain current capacity for rail freight and appropriate provision for anticipated future growth;*
- *Consider and plan for future demand and economic growth, making provision as affordable; and*
- *Provide a sustainable transport solution to support economic growth in the area.*

The objectives for the Western section therefore now place a greater emphasis on improving local connectivity and helping to facilitate economic and housing growth as well as ensuring the flexibility and capability to plan for future housing and economic growth.

Rationale for Change

The Central Section COs were established at a time when a much wider set of corridor options were still under consideration. It appears that the outputs were heavily influenced by a set of connectivity-based conditional outputs which Network Rail developed and reported in its 2013 Long Distance Market Study. These outputs are shown in the table below:

| Table 7.1 Long term service aspirations tested in the analysis | | | | |
|--|----------------------|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Distance | Aspiration | Description | Typical service characteristics | |
| | | | Journey speed (end to end), miles per hour | Opportunities to travel per hour* |
| > 100 miles | Best possible future | Very fast | 160 | 3 or 4 |
| | Best current | Intercity | 100 | 2 or 3 |
| | Good current | Interurban | 80 | 1 or 2 |
| < 50 miles | Best possible future | High frequency interurban | At least 60 | 5 or 6 |
| | Best current | Medium frequency interurban | 60 | 3 or 4 |
| | Good current | New interurban connection | 45 | 1 or 2 |
| 50 - 100 miles | Best possible future | Route Study to determine whether to use outputs related to under 50 miles or over 100 miles | | |
| | Best current | | | |
| | Good current | | | |

* Either by direct services or fast, straightforward interchange

Comparing the Atkins Conditional Outputs for the Central section with this table shows that the values for “good current” interurban connection over 100 miles have been adopted. The end-to-end (average) speed of 80 mph is directly reflected in the COs, both as a general requirement and also in the two target journey times.

The use of the “good current” >100 miles characteristics is a valid approach for Oxford – Cambridge journeys (which are around 80 miles), given that, for journeys of between 50 and 100 miles, the table allows the use of values for journeys of over 100 miles or less than 50 miles.



However, Oxford – Cambridge is the only journey pair on the EWR route which is over 50 miles in length. While Oxford – Cambridge journeys will attract a higher fare than shorter journeys and were anticipated to be the single largest generator of revenue on the route, shorter journeys, such as Bedford to Cambridge, will generate greater transport user benefits (as reported in Atkins 2014 study, and subsequent work by Network Rail).

Also, given expected patterns of development in the corridor, shorter journeys will collectively be (and in some cases could individually be) more important than the Oxford – Cambridge flow.

In addition none of the route options for the Central section meet the conditional output statement for an Oxford to Cambridge journey time of 60 minutes (the best is in excess of 70 minutes)

This would tend to suggest that the characteristics in the NR table for sub 50-mile journeys are more appropriate for EWR in its role as an interurban commuter railway. A railway geared to providing for such journeys has a greater focus on service frequency (up to 6 trains per hour) and a lesser focus on speed – although journey times remain important.

Also, the Central Section objectives should take into account the Government’s vision for the corridor set out in November 2017 and the recommendations of the NIC in respect of the corridor, as is now the case with the Western Section SOs.

Proposed New SOs and COs

In order to reflect the points raised in the preceding section, it is recommended that the following single set of SOs, adapted from the November 2017 Western Section SOs, be adopted for both the Central and Western sections:

- *Improve east west public transport connectivity by providing rail links between key conurbations (current and anticipated) in the Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge corridor*
- *Stimulate economic growth, housing and employment through the provision of new, reliable and attractive interurban passenger train services in the Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge corridor;*
- *Meet initial forecast passenger demand;*
- *Consider and plan for future passenger demand, making provision as affordable;*
- *Contribute to improved inter-regional passenger connectivity and journey times;*
- *Maintain current capacity for rail freight and make appropriate provision for anticipated future growth;*
- *Provide a sustainable transport solution to support economic growth in the area.*

It is further recommended that the revised COs set out below, which are based on the “<50 miles, best possible future” characteristics, are adopted for the Central Section:

- *Shorter distance connectivity to support commuting travel into key employment hubs*
 - *Capability for up to 6 tph between Cambridge, Bedford and Milton Keynes / Bletchley*
 - *Target of 30 mins or less between Cambridge and Bedford*
- *Longer distance connectivity for business to business connectivity*
 - *At least 2 tph between Cambridge and Oxford*
 - *Target of 80 mins or less between Cambridge and Oxford*
- *Passenger interchange facilities at all node points to facilitate longer distance journeys.*
- *Average end to end journey speed of 60mph Oxford to Cambridge*
- *Freight capability to support anticipated growth, where affordable*