

## **East West Rail Consortium Strategic Board 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

### **Agenda Item 5: East West Main Line – Realising the Longer-Term Potential**

**Recommendation: It is recommended that the meeting consider the strategic issues identified in the paper as the basis for developing a proposition that sets out the longer-term potential for the East West Main Line.**

#### **1. Conext**

- 1.1. At its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> October the Consortium agreed as to the need to develop a proposition that sets out the longer-term potential for the East West Main Line.
- 1.2. The Consortium recognised the improving east-west connectivity provides the over-riding transformational opportunity for both the EEH and Transport East regions. In addition delivering the East West Main Line unlocks opportunities to improve north-south connectivity.
- 1.3. The latter has been a key aspect of the Consortium’s work throughout its existence – a reflection of how by intersecting the traditional main lines that radiate from London the East West Main Line creates new journey opportunities.
- 1.4. Identifying those points as regionally significant rail interchanges creates opportunities to offer users a range of new rail-based journey options.
- 1.5. In this way the East West Main Line will act as a catalyst for change. The development of a proposition offers the Consortium to set out the strategic case for using investment in rail to enable both the EEH and Transport East regions realise their economic potential, and deliver on the requirement to achieve net zero carbon no later than 2050.

#### **2. Strategic Opportunities**

- 2.1. The paper considered at the previous meeting identified a number of opportunities that should be used to shape the development of the proposition, including:
  - Oxford Station – addressing the acknowledged bottleneck at the station, and accelerating development and delivery of required enhancement

- Oxford Station to Didcot Parkway (including linkages westwards towards Swindon) – to improve east-west connectivity between South Wales/Bristol/Bath and Oxford – Cambridge Arc by enabling restoration of direct services: to also consider opportunities to deliver new stations along the GWML in Oxfordshire, Swindon and Wiltshire

- Cowley Branch restoration

[Note: the Consortium continues to support the work of the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study which has been examining these issues – an update on which will provide to a future meeting of the Strategic Board]

- London Road Level Crossing, Bicester – delivering a solution to the impact of barrier down-time is essential in order to realise the full potential of the current East West Rail project, including Central and Eastern Sections

[Note: the Consortium as part of its agreed work programme is funding a piece of work being taken forward by Oxfordshire County Council looking at this issue – to be reported back to the Strategic Board at its December meeting]

- Northampton – Milton Keynes/Aylesbury – High Wycombe – Old Oak Common corridor – a combination of East West Rail and opening of HS2 (which allows for reallocation of paths on the West Coast Main Line) creates the opportunity to introduce a new north-south service along this corridor
- Aylesbury – EEH has identified the potential to use the combination of investment in East West Rail as a catalyst for enabling a step-change in local connectivity in support of planned growth
- Bletchley Station – the availability of an enhanced rail offer at this station creates opportunities to support the potential for growth in this area, with the station a focus point
- Marston Vale Line – EEH has identified the Bletchley to Bedford section as an area where there is a need to develop a complementary package of local measures required to improve local connectivity to/from rail stations
- Bedford Midland Station – the opportunity to use investment in East West Rail as a catalyst for regeneration opportunities in the immediate area
- Midland Main Line – with Bedford Midland Station as an interchange with East West Rail there is a need to identify the linkages required with Luton (including the Airport) and to stations to the north, including linkages with Northamptonshire

[Note: the Strategic Board has previously received a briefing on the work commission by Bedford Borough Council to identify its longer term rail priorities]

- Sandy/St Neots – identified as a potential interchange with the East Coast Main Line as part of the preferred route for the Central Section
- Cambourne – identified as a new station on the preferred route for the Central Section, with linkages/interchange to the CAM
- Cambridge South Station – a priority scheme being taken forward to delivery, but where there remains a need to ensure the longer term potential of the location is realised
- Cambridge Station – ensuring that the capability and capacity exists to enable through running of East West Main Line services [Note: the Cambridge Rail Corridor Study provides a basis on which to build future requirements]
- Felistowe to Nuneaton corridor improvements – delivery of which is critical for both strategic and sub-regional outcomes [Note: the STBs have already written in support of this corridor]

### **3. Consideration**

- 3.1. Building on the strategic objectives that underpin the work of both EEH and Transport East as they develop their regional Transport Strategies it is clear that the approach to developing a proposition should be underpinned by a number of key principles, including:
- Improved east-west connectivity must be used to improve north-south connectivity
  - Investment in improved rail connectivity will make adequate provision for both passenger and freight movements
  - Where East West Main Line intersects existing main lines these should be identified as strategic transport hubs
  - The facilities provided at strategic transport hubs should ensure frictionless interchange between rail services for all users
  - Improvements in local connectivity to/from rail stations will be identified in order to enable users to gain easy access to rail services
- 3.2. In order to help the development of the proposition the Consortium is invited to consider the extent to which:
- Is it appropriate to consider issues relating to fares?
  - Is it appropriate to consider and comment on the structure or composition of a future rail concession(s)?
  - Is it appropriate to consider the implications of East West Main Line on the relationship with London?
  - Is it appropriate for the proposition to comment on its role in supporting delivery of planned growth (economic and housing)?

3.3. It is also helpful for the Consortium to provide a steer as to what its ambition for the proposition might be in terms of it acting as the focus for region.

**Martin Tugwell**  
**December 2020**