
Title: Oxford to Cambridge Expressway

Purpose: To inform Board Members of the Highways England process for developing the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway and to support a discussion on how BTVLEP should respond to the current consultation on the 3 corridor options.

Recommendation: That following the presentation from Highways England, members provide feedback on the likely economic impact of the individual route options, to support the BTVLEP Executive develop a final response to the Highways England consultation by 12th April 2018.

Background

The 'Oxford to Cambridge Expressway strategic study' is one of 6 strategic studies that will inform the development of the second phase of the Road Investment Strategy (RIS 2). The Road Investment Strategy sets out the long term strategic planning and funding of the Strategic Road Network (SRN).

The aim of the strategic study is to investigate the case for linking existing roads and creating an Oxford to Cambridge Expressway (known as 'Expressway' in this report). The route would link Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge, with the ambition to create a 'mile a minute' route.

Currently there is a lack of East-West connectivity with low levels of strategic long distance movements within the study area. Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge are all better connected to London than each other.

It is anticipated that existing roads will form much of the Expressway; however gaps along the network would need to be addressed.

The Expressway is one of the shadow Sub National Transport Board's key strategic projects. There would be significant impacts on Buckinghamshire with the implementation of an Oxford-Cambridge Expressway improving links between the M40 and M1, A1 and M11.

2 What are the road options being presented?

Based on work so far, three options to complete the 'missing link' between the M1 and the M40 have been identified:

- A northern option, roughly following the existing A421 to the south of Bicester and via Buckingham
- A central option, broadly following the east-west rail corridor
- A southern option via Aylesbury, linking to the M1 south of Milton Keynes.

These three options were identified by undertaking an Early Assessment and Sifting Tool (EAST) sifting process for options which fit with national and local objectives, support economic growth, deliver expected value for money and consider scale of impact.

Evidence is currently being sought to inform which of the three options is preferred. There is no public consultation during this corridor selection phase and at a recent meeting of Local Authority leaders Highways England confirmed that no route option is yet preferred. Once a corridor has been selected, there will be public consultation on possible route options through that corridor (possibly late 2018 or early 2019).

The map below shows the routes of the 3 potential corridor options.

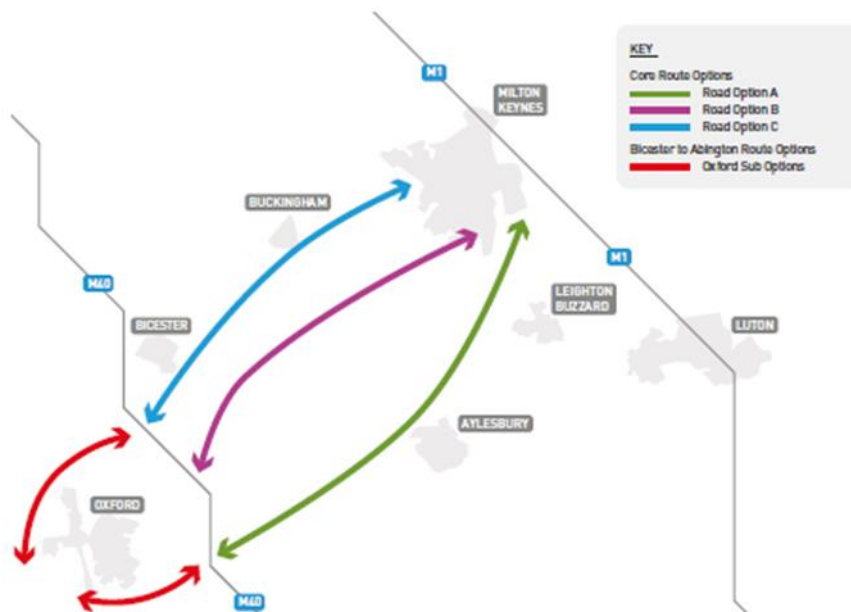


Figure 0-1: Short Listed Expressway Options

In considering the assessment of the options, Board Members are asked to consider 5 key criteria linked to the future development of the Economy of Buckinghamshire.

- **Strategic fit** – How do the route options support agreed strategic priorities such as the BTVLEP Strategic Economic Plan and well defined strategic objectives such as improving North South connectivity within the county?
- **Connectivity** – Which option will provide the greatest benefits in terms of linking communities within Buckinghamshire and across the wider growth corridor both in terms of speed and ease of movement?
- **Growth** – How will each option support emerging growth scenarios both within the current local plan timeframe and onwards up to 2050?
- **Environment and Heritage** – Which option would have the least impact on natural or heritage assets within the county and beyond?

- **Socio-Economic Impact** – Which corridor would help support the growth of major employment locations, connect networks and business clusters across the growth corridor and reduce the requirement for daily out-commuting from Buckinghamshire?

Steve Tomkins the Stakeholder Engagement lead working on behalf of Highways England will provide an overview presentation on the 3 corridor options and on the process for developing the Expressway. Highways England has recently written to BTVLEP (Appendix1) proposing a clustering of forum activity into three sections to represent perceived need across the 'arc'. I draw your attention to this as the board may wish to review the grouping methodology and recommend a variation that better represents need.

Members are asked to :- Provide feedback on the likely economic impact of the individual route options, to support the BTVLEP Executive develop a final response to the Highways England consultation by 12th April 2018.