

Transport update

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

Lead members of the People and Places Board have requested an update on the sub-national transport bodies and work on decarbonisation of transport as led by the EEHT Board.

Recommendation/s

1. That the Board notes the report
2. That board members engage with the discussion and provide any comments for consideration by EEHT board in their future work.

Action/s

As directed by P&P board

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Background

1. The future of Sub-national transport bodies (STBs)

- 1.1. The ability to create Sub-national Transport Bodies to plan and prioritise long-term infrastructure investment in a specific region was created under the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 with an amendment to the Local Transport Act 2008. The Act gave the Secretary of State powers to establish a STB in any area outside London.
- 1.2. Our current understanding is that there are 7 sub-national transport bodies outside London:
 - England's Economic Heartland (EEH)
 - Midlands Connect
 - Transport East
 - Transport for the North
 - Transport for the South East (TfSE)
 - Western Gateway
 - Peninsula Transport
- 1.3. Whilst the Government had introduced powers to establish STBs, only one, Transport for the North, has been granted statutory status (April 2018). Government policy on STBs appears to have shifted in recent months to not wishing to grant statutory status. For example, in a letter to EEH and TfSE in August 2020 Baroness Vere reaffirmed that they would not approve any proposals for statutory status. Her letter further states: "We see STBs as partnerships of local authorities, providing a strategic vision across the area for the benefit of the whole region. Department for Transport funding should be used for delivering that strategic coordination function, producing and delivering their Transport Strategy and associated Area Studies rather than on lobbying."
- 1.4. However, in his letter to TfSE in October 2020 the Secretary of State says in reference to Baroness Vere's previous correspondence: "I would like to make it clear that did not mean that any proposal would not be considered but was a reflection of the fact that I am content with the relationship the Department currently has with Sub-national Transport Bodies and we are awaiting the outcome of a Local Recovery and Devolution White Paper."
- 1.5. More positively, further grant funding has been approved to both TfSE and EEH to undertake work to support their transport strategies, such as area-based studies, policy scenario modelling and work on environmental assessments. In her letter to TfSE, Baroness Vere has also asked her officials to ensure they have regard to TfSE's strategy when developing new policies. Consideration is also being given to pooling expertise in scheme development on a regional basis.
- 1.6. Our understanding is that there continues to be further dialogue between the STBs and DfT ministers. TfSE have said they will continue to work with Government to identify the best time to put forward their case for statutory status.
- 1.7. The EEHT Board would welcome any feedback from People and Places Board on this issue.

2. Decarbonisation of Transport update

2.1. The decarbonisation of transport has been the focus of much of the EEHT's transport related work. Transport is now the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the UK and has lagged behind other sources in decarbonisation. The EEHT Board has led on LGA's work to support councils in their ambitions to decarbonise transport, and recent work has included:

- A [guide for councillors](#) to help them understand the current landscape for electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and engage with their officers, colleagues and the wider public and a report on the [economic benefits](#) of EV infrastructure,
- A programme of work to support councils in their local policy decision-making. We commissioned experts from the University of Leeds to deliver this work, which included [7 policy briefs](#) and webinars, on issues ranging from electric vehicles, demand management and online opportunities, land use planning, cycling, public transport, parking policy and setting ambition.
- On policy, the EEHT Board [fed into](#) the DfT's emerging thinking on the forthcoming transport decarbonisation plan (expected in Spring 2021). The Government's scoping document on the plan, Setting the Challenge, recognises the importance of place-based solutions and that a single solution will not be appropriate for every location.
- The LGA welcomed the Government's new vision for cycling and walking ([Gear Change](#)), and the £2 billion commitment to active travel, including the active travel fund. Gear Change included a commitment to fully implement Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004, giving local authorities the powers to enforce against moving traffic offences – something that the LGA has long called for.
- On public transport the LGA continued to make the case for councils on funding and more influence and control over local bus provision. We submitted evidence to the Transport Committee enquiry on Reforming Public Transport after the Pandemic as well as Cllr Renard, Chair of the EEHT Board, providing oral evidence. Our submission also included our call for the Government to close the £700 million concessionary fares funding gap and a long-term settlement for local public transport.

2.2. We will continue to support councils on this agenda over the coming weeks and into next year. In particular to:

- Influence the forthcoming National Bus Strategy which we now expect to be published early in the new year. We have commissioned further research exploring the ambition of councils in different places in order to influence and inform the national strategy. The research will be published in January and there is a webinar on the findings on 19th January.
- Support local leadership on driving through disruptive change. New local cycling schemes have shown the importance of strong leadership in supporting new

measures. We are commissioning good practice research and guidance on how councils can best do this.

- Seek further support on councils' roles to promote and develop local EV charging infrastructure, moving away from a limited number of exemplar schemes, such as Go-Ultra Low cities, to an approach that supports mass adoption. This is even more important given the Government's decision to bring forward the ban of sales of new diesel and petrol vehicles by 2030. Councils need greater support on working with the EV charging marketplace, the technological model, and better access to independent advice. We will continue to raise with DfT and OLEV.