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## **West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority**

### **National Needs Assessment response to the Institute of Civil Engineers**

**29 February 2016**

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**Contact**

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## **National Needs Assessment – West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority’s (WMITA) Response to the Institute of Civil Engineers**

### **Do you agree with our proposed vision and outcomes? What amendments would you propose?**

The proposed vision is supported with the suggested following amendments:

The UK will invest efficiently, affordably and sustainably in the provision of infrastructure assets and services to drive the economic growth necessary ~~to enhance the UK’s position in the global economy,~~ to give the UK a leading position in the global economy, support a high quality of life and shift towards a low carbon future”.

The second bullet point outcome needs to be amended to:

- National decision-making that it is integrated with **enhanced pan-regional, metropolitan** and local planning.

There needs to be an additional bullet point:

- Effective support to public health strategy to reduce poor air quality, obesity and diabetes in the UK

There then needs to be additional text:

*“It is vital to recognise that effective nationally significant infrastructure is not just inter – urban national infrastructure. It is critical to make sure large urban areas have effective networks and that local urban networks also function well.*

### **What will be the main drivers of demand for UK national economic infrastructure over the next 35 years that we should consider in our assessment?**

Forecast population growth and agglomeration benefits to the economy of improved connectivity within, and between, the UK’s city regions.

This is particularly relevant to the Midlands, as evidenced by the work of the “Midlands Connect” partnership. Evidence from Midlands connect shows that improved highway reliability and regular average speeds across the Midlands along with higher line-speeds on inter-regional rail and highway links can provide an economic benefit to the wider Midlands of up to £800m per annum by 2036 with 143,000 additional jobs when a 10% reduction in general travel times are achieved.

The West Midlands ITA’s strategic transport plan “Movement for Growth” (available to download at <http://www.wmita.org.uk/strategy-and-publications.aspx>) sets out challenges and future demands for the West Midlands metropolitan area.

**What will be the main constraints on the UK's ability to provide sufficient UK national economic infrastructure assets and services over the period and what solutions or mitigations of those constraints should the UK adopt?**

The main potential constraints will be limited funding, lack of political consensus over difficult decisions, insufficient skills and a lack of imagination.

There is a need to develop a cross-party commitment to invest a suitable percentage of Gross National Income in sustainable infrastructure for the next 35 years, akin to the commitment to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income on overseas aid. This should follow consideration of levels of infrastructure investment by leading global economies over the last 35 years.

There is a need to continue efforts to attract bright and committed people to the professions involved in creating a world class transport system for the UK.

There is also a need to continue and foster the rich UK tradition of innovation and creativity, for transport-related professions, and ensure decision-makers and practitioners are able to see first-hand how other successful global economies have created world class transport systems.

All this is underpinned by the role of decently maintained existing assets. Effective asset management is vital to make best use of existing capacity alongside the development of new sustainable transport capacity.

**What nationally significant investments in capacity or changes in policy & regulation should we prioritise to deliver these outcomes and deal with these drivers of demand?**

Its critical to make sure city regions have effective networks with a key role for new rail and rapid transit capacity, and that local urban networks function well – effective asset management , high levels of cycling and walking and well-used local bus services.

Effective sustainable urban mobility plans for appropriate travel to work areas of urban areas are required to assist this.

A priority is to provide the tools for ensuing high quality, integrated public transport networks and much of the funding for local devolved governance structures to improve their nationally significant city region networks.

There also needs to be effective national links based on smart motorways and rail capacity. The big issue for inter urban links is how nationally the UK Government deals with the challenge of a 43% forecast increase in general traffic on the UK's Strategic Highway Network by 2040 .

Evidence from Midlands Connect shows the importance of investing in the city regions of the Midlands and national networks contained within central England.

The Midlands Connect project is currently undertaking the following workstreams to form an evidence based West and East Midlands transport strategy with a series of strategic schemes for:

- HS2-readiness
- 4 Strategic Hubs
- 6 Strategic Corridors
- Freight and Gateways
- Smart connectivity

**In what areas can demand management or other forms of behavioural change make a significant impact? What are the blockers and enablers for realising these opportunities?**

There is a need for our city regions and urban areas to have a significant increase in rail and rapid transit capacity integrated with effective bus networks, high quality cycle infrastructure and decent conditions for walking. This all needs to be supported by smart mobility.

There is a need for our inter-urban connectivity to have increased passenger and freight rail capacity and an increase in the amount of smart motorways for our strategic highway network, again underpinned by smart mobility measures.

These are a precursor to the potential role of demand management and behavioural change which can be effective, with these building blocks in place, and as part of an integrated transport strategy, for congested urban areas and congested links on the strategic highway network.

Adequate revenue funding of behavioural change measures and cross-party support for a long term national transport strategy are required for such an overarching national long term approach.

**How can greater cross-sectoral decision making be encouraged?**

Future forecasting of NHS costs is needed to consider costs of prevention, rather than cure, of health problems arising from physical inactivity, poor air quality and climate change. Public resource then needs to be put into transport preventative measures e.g. measures to increase walking and cycling and reduce transport emissions of NO<sub>2</sub>, particulates and carbon.

**What opportunities and challenges are presented by devolution of infrastructure decision making?**

Given the right legislative tools and funding, devolved decision making will ensure transport investment is in accord with the wishes of residents and businesses of city regions. This is a great opportunity to implement transport strategies which command local support and meet the needs of our city regions.

Insufficient funding for devolved governance will render it ineffective.

**What new and emerging technologies and disruptive trends should we consider in producing this assessment?**

The role of IT in providing travel information, a variety of integrated travel choices and payment for their use, and improving the capacity of transport networks needs to be considered.

This consideration needs to be mindful of the former Mayor of Curitiba Jaime Lerner who stated “dare to be simple”. Technologies must always be solutions to identified problems, not solutions looking for problems.

**How can we improve public engagement in infrastructure decision-making?**

Wider use of focus groups representing the demographic profile of areas involved will help. Actual evidence of investment on the ground will help engagement with consultation on plans and strategies.