

PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD – 5 SEPTEMBER 2007

ACCESS TO OXFORD DEFINITION DOCUMENT

Background and Context

In August 2006, Oxfordshire County Council submitted a Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) bid to the Regional Assembly for consideration by its Regional Transport Board (RTB) for funding in the 2011-16 programme. The bid, titled 'A34/Access to Oxford' was one of only 14 (188 bids were received in total) that were approved for recommendation by the RTB to the Secretary of State. It is anticipated that the Secretary of State will provisionally approve the recommendations in the next few months. The RFA allocation is £62 million split over two financial years (£32 million in 2013/14 and £30 million in 2014/15). Further funding sources currently take the overall cost of the package to £88 million.

Access to Oxford is an integrated package of measures to tackle congestion problems on the A34 and the Oxford ring road and improve the rail corridor between Bicester and Oxford. The Access to Oxford package is required to enable future housing growth in Oxfordshire as outlined in the South East Plan.

The Access to Oxford package includes: intelligent transport systems on the A34; junction improvements on the northern and southern approaches to Oxford; improvements to Oxford rail station; and improvements to the Oxford-Bicester rail link.

The Access to Oxford Strategy will form the core of Oxfordshire's transport investment for the next 10 years, complemented by the LTP2 (and future LTP3) programmes. As such it must help to deliver the objectives of the South East plan, specifically the need to enable housing growth within the Central Oxfordshire sub-region. Access to Oxford complements the County Council's Long Term Transport Strategy as outlined in LTP2, which focuses on three key areas; Roads and Routeing, Public Transport and Influencing Travel Behaviour.

It should be noted that the Access to Oxford project is in the embryonic stage of its development and that there is still much more work to be on defining the project and to ensure that project achieves the best value for money solutions possible.

The Vision of Success

Access to Oxford is an integrated package of measures to tackle congestion on the A34 and the Oxford ring road and improve the rail corridor between Bicester and Oxford. The package is required to enable housing and economic growth for

the Central Oxfordshire sub-region as outlined in the South East Plan. It will form the core of Oxfordshire's transport investment for the next 10 years, complemented by the LTP2 (and future LTP3) programmes, and will be supported through local development frameworks and other policies.

The proposed measures include active traffic management of the A34 through Central Oxfordshire, junction improvements and bus priority measures on the links between the A34 and the Oxford ring road and enhancements to the rail corridor between Bicester and Oxford to remove capacity bottlenecks and enable increases in services to Oxford and beyond.

Aim: 'To enable an increasing population to move through and within Central Oxfordshire and into Oxford with improved choice and reliability.'

Key Indicators of Success:

Proposals should facilitate rather than curb growth

Planned housing and economic growth in Central Oxfordshire will take place without unacceptable impact on congestion.

Increase in public transport use

Public Transport Patronage will increase, enabling better use of transport capacity and improved traveller experience.

Improved journey time reliability

There will be a reduction in congestion at bottlenecks and during peak hours enabling people and goods to reach their destinations more reliably within planned times.

Real transport choice provided through attractive alternatives

Bus and rail will be attractive options for a wider range of people and user satisfaction will rise. Improved information will be available to enable all travellers to make informed choices, including information for drivers to allow them to make intelligent routing decisions. All transport will appear welcoming.

Components of Access to Oxford Project

Road Projects:

A34 Intelligent Transport Systems:

This will allow road space on the A34 to be used more efficiently using the latest active traffic management techniques such as variable speed limits and variable message signs.

Northern Approaches Improvements:

The purpose of these improvements would be to tackle the severe congestion around the Wolvercote, Pear Tree and Cutteslowe roundabouts in order to improve traffic flow and journey time reliability as well as to enhance bus priority.

Southern Approaches Improvements:

The purpose of these improvements would be to tackle the severe congestion around the Heyford Hill, Kennington and Hinksey Hill roundabouts in order to improve traffic flow and journey time reliability.

Rail Projects:

Oxford Rail Station:

Increasing capacity at Oxford Station by building a new bay platform for local services south of the current station building. Improvements to the station to integrate the new platform, improve interchange with other transport modes and develop the station into an attractive gateway to a world famous city.

Oxford-Bicester Rail Line:

Service enhancements on the Oxford - Bicester rail line arise if the East-West rail proposals are successful. The service improvements could be used to encourage people to transfer to rail at a new parkway station near the M40, freeing up capacity on the A34 and providing a fast, reliable route into the City.

In order to establish a robust evidence base on which to carry forward these elements, substantial modelling work is required over the next 18 months, including the development of a Central Oxfordshire Transport Model. This will combine previous modelling work done in Central Oxfordshire with new monitoring and modelling work of previously un-modelled parts of the sub-region.

It is also important to restate, and provide appropriate justification for the necessary linkage and interdependency between the five components to avoid the risk of the package coming apart.

Resources

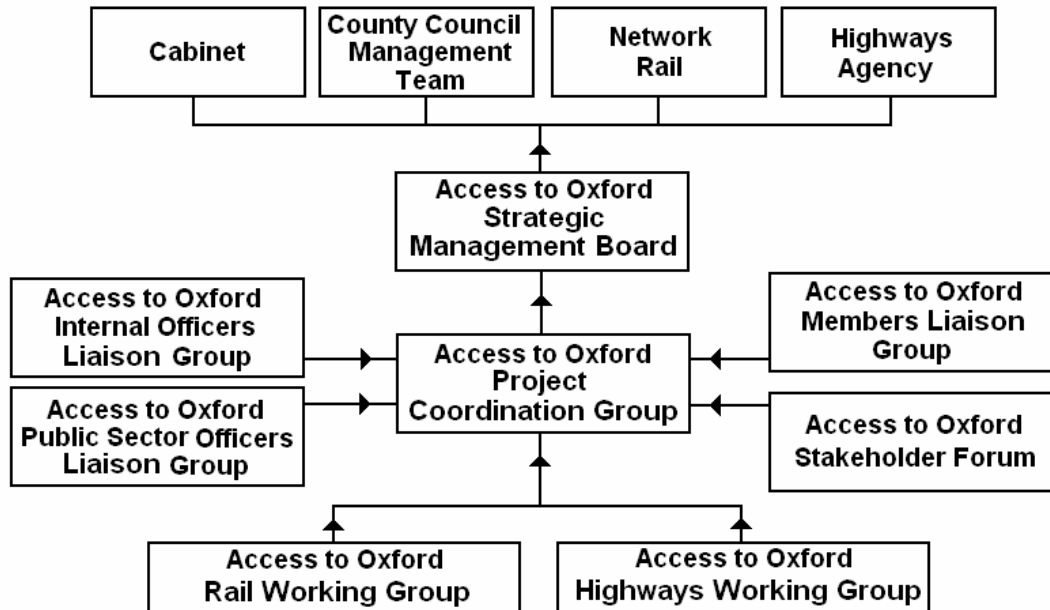
Funding

In addition to the RFA and non-RFA capital costs (£88 million in total), there will be significant development costs required to ensure that the project has been fully justified and that all potential options are properly explored. Network Rail are already contributing capital expenditure and associated revenue costs through their proposed improvements at Oxford Rail Station. Discussions will be necessary with the Highways Agency so that the Board can understand what resources can be committed to this project and its development.

Staffing

The Access to Oxford Project Team (Daniel Round and Steve Hayes) will have responsibility for day to day management of the project, drawing on expertise from other County Council Officers and Consultants as required.

Governance



Access to Oxford Strategic Management Board will include high level representation from Highways Agency, Network Rail and Oxfordshire County Council.

The Project Team will be responsible for day to day management of the project with work streams taken forward by the rail and highways teams as required, these groups will also include representation from Network Rail and the Highways Agency.

Risks

A full risk register will need to be developed and worked up for the project as a whole and it is envisaged that a draft of this will be presented and discussed at the next Board meeting (September 07). However, at present the three largest identified risks are:

Insufficient time

The timetable for the production of the A34/Access to Oxford Strategy is relatively tight. Detailed planning for the Northern and Southern approaches improvements and the rail improvements is dependent on initial investigation into the possible benefits of ITS implementation on the A34. Therefore there is a risk that delay in the early stages of this project could cause significant delays in the

more detailed stages of planning later on. The transport planning work will be progressed as quickly as possible, and consultant resource drawn in as required to support internal resources.

Lack of agreement between interested parties

Whilst unanimous agreement between all parties and the public could be achieved on some issues, the County Council will need to demonstrate that proposals have broad support from the public and stakeholders. Subsequent changes to under-supported proposals, or their replacement with new proposals, will delay the project and increase costs.

Insufficient funding and project overspends

The budget for this project needs to be decided. The sources and timing of funding available for this project also need to be studied in more detail. Due to the length of the project (i.e. from development to implementation) a rate of inflation will need to be taken into consideration particularly when taking into account implementation costs.

Timescales

Task	Timescale
Establish Data Requirements for Modelling	March 2007 – August 2007
Conduct surveys	September 2007 – November 2007
Create/Validate Central Oxfordshire Model	November 2007 – August 2008
Model Scheme Options	August 2008 – October 2008
Technical Appraisal	August 2008 – December 2008
Consultation	December 2008 – March 2009
Identify Preferred Schemes	March 2009
Prepare Major Scheme Bid	April 2009 – January 2011
Submit Major Scheme Bid	January 2011
Planning Apps & Environmental Statement	May 2010 – May 2011
Public Inquiries	May 2012 – March 2013
Implementation	April 2013 – March 2015