

Forward Plan reference number: FP/AB/154

Report title: A131 Braintree to Sudbury Route Based Strategy LGF funding decision	
Report to Accountability Board	
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Date: 15 th June 2018	For: Decision
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SELEP Partner Authority affected: Essex	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to make the Accountability Board (the Board) aware of the value for money assessment for the A131 Braintree to Sudbury Route Based Strategy (the Project) which has been through the Independent Technical Evaluator (ITE) review process, to enable £1.8m Local Growth Fund (LGF) to be devolved to Essex County Council for Project delivery.
- 1.2 The ITE report sets out the detailed analysis for the Project. This report is included in Appendix 1, of Agenda Item 5.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Board is asked to:
 - 2.1.1 **Approve** the award of £1.8m LGF to support the delivery of the Project identified in the Business Case and which has been assessed as presenting high value for money with high certainty of achieving this.

3. A131 Braintree and Sudbury Route Based Strategy

- 3.1. The Project is for the delivery of a package of schemes to improve safety and reduce delays along the A131 corridor from Braintree to the Suffolk border, just south of Sudbury.
- 3.2. The A131 is the primary route from Braintree, through Halstead, to Sudbury. The route covers 13.5 miles (21.6 km), along which there is one roundabout, three mini roundabouts, a signalised junction, two zebra crossings and one signalised pedestrian crossing.
- 3.3. Braintree is undergoing significant growth and there is the potential for exponential growth with the adoption of a new garden community to the west of Braintree. The A131, leaving the north of Braintree, also provides an essential commercial link, via the A1017, on to the A14 and the M11.
- 3.4. Similarly, there are significant growth plans for Sudbury, which, together with developments in Halstead halfway between the two destinations, will put increased pressure on the capacity and performance of this corridor.

4. Project Options

- 4.1. A Route Based Strategy has been developed for the Braintree to Sudbury corridor highlighting the following transport –related problems along the corridor:
 - 4.1.1. Congestion
 - 4.1.2. Reliability
 - 4.1.3. Junction Capacity
 - 4.1.4. Link Capacity
 - 4.1.5. Safety; and
 - 4.1.6. Sustainable Transport
- 4.2. In addition, six route-specific objectives were identified for the corridor, including:
 - 4.2.1. Providing the transport improvements needed to accommodate housing and employment growth;
 - 4.2.2. Improving safety on the route and reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured
 - 4.2.3. Tackling congestion;
 - 4.2.4. Improving journey-time reliability; and
 - 4.2.5. Providing for, and promoting, sustainable forms of travel.
- 4.3. During February 2016 an Options workshop was undertaken involving teams within Essex County Council, including Network Operations, Traffic Management, Passenger Transport, Safety Engineers, Intelligent Transport Systems and Development Control. This workshop exercise identified a total of 20 potential options. A full list of these potential options is available in the Project Business Case.
- 4.4. The 20 options identified through this exercise were then sifted using an approach based on the Department for Transport's (DfT) Early Assessment and Sifting Tool (EAST) and based on the options performance against the following three criteria:
 - 4.4.1. Identified Route Problems;
 - 4.4.2. Study Objectives (as set out in 4.2); and
 - 4.4.3. Scheme Deliverability, Feasibility and Affordability
- 4.5. Through this sifting process, a total of four proposed interventions were identified for delivery. The options to be taken forward for delivery as part of this Project include:
 - 4.5.1. **Marks Farm** - widening of all four entry flares, introduction of a left turn slip from the A120 heading south and general improvements to the roundabout;
 - 4.5.2. **Broad Road** – improving entry flare from Broad Road and realignment to improve traffic flow.

- 4.5.3. **High Garrett junction with A1017** – major improvements to layout, changes to signals, relocated and improved crossings and pedestrian facilities; and
- 4.5.4. **Plaistow Green and Bulmer Tye** – safety improvements, including improved signage and non-slip surfacing.
- 4.6. The transport modelling which has been undertaken to support the development of these projects indicates that if the proposed interventions are not delivered then the planned development along the corridor will constrain the route as traffic increases.
- 4.7. The delivery of the four interventions is set to achieve the following six outcomes:
- Improve journey times and reliability for all vehicles
 - Improve safety, especially for cyclists and pedestrians
 - Improve sustainable transport
 - Support the completion of at least 1,550 new homes
 - Support economic growth and businesses; and
 - Provide for incremental jobs associated with the new development.

5. Project Cost and Funding

- 5.1. The total cost of the Project is estimated at £3.6m. In addition to the £1.8m LGF contribution, a £1.8m contribution has also been confirmed from Essex County Council, as per the funding profile set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 A131 Braintree to Sudbury RBS Funding Profile

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Total
SELEP LGF	0.445	1.355	0.000	1.800
Essex County Council	0.000	1.155	0.645	1.800
Total	0.445	2.510	0.645	3.600

6. Outcome of ITE Review

- 6.1. The ITE has assessed the Project Business Case through the Gate 1 and 2 process and has determined that the Project is expected to achieve very high value for money with high certainty of achieving this.
- 6.2. The Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 10.48:1 has been calculated following a robust approach, following Department for Transport (DfT) WebTAG guidance.
- 6.3. The ITE review confirms that the Business Case provides a clear rationale for the need for intervention supported by evidence regarding congestion and safety concerns along the corridor. The expected housing growth in the area underpins the case for highway capacity improvements and investment in road safety measures.

7. Project Compliance with SELEP Assurance Framework

7.1. Table 2 below considers the assessment of the business case against the requirements of the SELEP Assurance Framework. The assessment confirms the compliance of the Project with SELEP's Assurance Framework.

Table 2 Assessment of the Project against the requirements of the SELEP Assurance Framework

Requirement of the Assurance Framework to approve the project	Compliance (RAG Rating)	Evidence in the Business Case
A clear rationale for the interventions linked with the strategic objectives identified in the Strategic Economic Plan	Green	The business case provides a clear rationale for the need for intervention. It provides diagrams showing congestion data from Trafficmaster. In addition, the business case also provides road collision statistics and comparator rates, demonstrating that safety is an issue along the corridor.
Clearly defined outputs and anticipated outcomes, with clear additionality, ensuring that factors such as displacement and deadweight have been taken into account	Green	The expected project outputs and outcomes are set out in the Business Case and detailed in the economic case. Transport Users Benefits Appraisal (TUBA 1.9.9) has been used to estimate the user benefits associated with the scheme.
Considers deliverability and risks appropriately, along with appropriate mitigating action (the costs of which must be clearly understood)	Green	The business case demonstrates experience in delivering schemes of similar size and complexity. A risk register and Quantified Risk Assessment have been developed with minimum and maximum expected costs
A Benefit Cost Ratio of at least 2:1 or comply with one of the two Value for Money exemptions	Green	A BCR has been calculated as 10.48:1, which indicates very high value for money.

8. Financial Implications (Accountable Body comments)

- 8.1. Any funding agreed by the Board is dependent on the Accountable Body receiving sufficient funding from HM Government. Funding allocations for 2018/19 have been confirmed, however, funding for this Project for future years is only indicative.
- 8.2. In considering allocating funding to this project, the Board should take into account the following risks:
 - 8.2.1. The high level of slippage within the overall programme which totalled £37.8m by the end of 2017/18; this presents a programme delivery risk due to the increased proportion of projects now due to be delivered in the final years of the programme; and it presents a reputational risk for SELEP regarding securing future funding from Government where demonstrable delivery of the LGF Programme is not aligned to the funding profile. This risk, however, is offset in part by the recognition that the profile of the LGF allocations did not consider the required spend profile when determined by HM Government.
 - 8.2.2. This misalignment of the funding profile has created a further risk, however, in 2019/20; whilst there is sufficient funding for all LGF projects across the duration of the programme, in 2019/20 there is currently a funding gap of £35.9m (including the requirements of this project); This risk is being managed in part through a planned slippage of £24.3m into 2019/20 from the current year, leaving a remaining funding gap of £11.6m.
 - 8.2.3. It is noted that this risk is being carefully monitored by the SELEP Capital Programme Manager with potential options for mitigation being considered with partners. Potential options include: reviewing options to advance alternative funding sources ahead of LGF spend; and delaying delivery of projects into 2020/21 where the funding is available. In reviewing the options across the whole programme, minimising the risk to delivery and assuring value for money should be key considerations.
- 8.3. There are SLAs in place with the sponsoring authority which makes clear that future years funding can only be made available when HM Government has transferred LGF to the Accountable Body.

9. Legal Implications (Accountable Body comments)

- 9.1 There are no legal implications arising out of the recommendations within this report.

10. Equality and Diversity implication

- 11.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when a public sector body makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
 - (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act

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- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 11.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation.
- 11.3 In the course of the development of the project business case, the delivery of the Project and their ongoing commitment to equality and diversity, the promoting local authority will ensure that any equality implications are considered as part of their decision making process and where possible identify mitigating factors where an impact against any of the protected characteristics has been identified.

11. List of Appendices

- 12.1 Appendix 1 - Report of the Independent Technical Evaluator (As attached to Agenda Item 5).

12. List of Background Papers

- 13.1 Business Case for A131 Braintree to Sudbury

(Any request for any background papers listed here should be made to the person named at the front of the report who will be able to help with any enquiries)

Role	Date
Accountable Body sign off Stephanie Mitchener (On behalf of Margaret Lee)	 6/6/18