

Midlands Connect Transport Strategy Refresh

Challenges, opportunities and a call for input

January 2021



Midlands Connect
Transport | Investment | Growth

The purpose of this document

Midlands Connect published its first transport strategy in 2017, and since then has made excellent progress – researching, developing and progressing schemes that will bring the biggest social, economic and environmental benefits to our region.

Despite this success, the world is a very different place now than it was four years ago. To reflect the huge changes we have experienced, including Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic and a heightening climate crisis, we are in the process of refreshing our strategy to ensure we overcome these unprecedented challenges. This updated strategy will be published in late 2021.

The aim of our strategy is to set out an investment programme that improves strategic connectivity between the east and west Midlands, better connects us

with our neighbouring regions of the North of England and Wales and strengthens existing connectivity to the south of England, our ports and airports. This strategic investment will be complemented by improvements to local connectivity made by our local authority partners and regional economic growth plans from the Midlands Engine, that will drive levelling-up both across our region and the country. Combined with the commitment to net-zero, this will make a significant contribution to UK-wide prosperity and a carbon-neutral future.

This document provides the context for our refreshed strategy; outlining some of the difficulties and opportunities that face the region and summarising the types of interventions we believe are needed to meet these challenges and achieve our objectives.

Our objectives are designed to ensure our strategic transport networks:

Are ready for HS2, to fully exploit its economic and regeneration potential

Provide reliable, fast connections that enable Midlands businesses to grow

Enable the population and employment growth planned by Midlands authorities

Integrate national, regional and local journeys for ease of travel

Enhance the quality of life of Midlands residents

Positively contribute to the 'Net Zero' carbon target by 2050

Minimise other impacts on the environment from delivering new infrastructure

Get
involved



With this information in hand, we want you, Midlands residents, businesses and transport users to give us your views. How do you think transport funding should be allocated in our region? What schemes will have the biggest impact on your future? What are your priorities for investment?

Please get involved by giving us your opinions online, via our [interactive online platform](#).

The future of our region

In these uncertain times, there are three critical challenges that will guide our future activity as we look beyond the current COVID-19 pandemic:

1. Economic recovery and growth

How transport can help the region's economy recover from COVID-19 and, beyond this, support the jobs, housing development and regeneration essential to our regional prosperity.

- COVID-19 could cause UK GDP to fall by over 10%, with the economies of the Midlands predicted to experience above average levels of contraction. (West Midlands -12.3%, East Midlands -10.9%)¹.
- At a more granular level, some of the region's largest cities are in line to bear the biggest negative impacts, including Birmingham, Leicester, Coventry and Wolverhampton, as well as the Lincolnshire coast.

2. Levelling-up

How we can deploy transport investment as a tool to boost the life chances of our communities, boosting social mobility, productivity and quality of life. Crucially, our work must act to narrow the widening inequalities between the Midlands and other parts of the UK, securing much-needed funding from Government.

- The Midlands region has suffered from decades of chronic underinvestment in transport, consistently falling below the UK average in terms of funds allocated. In 2018/19, the East Midlands received the lowest amount of funding of any nation or region in the UK².
- The region is home to many of the country's lowest performing areas for social mobility. Of these areas nationally, where children from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to do well at school and secure a skilled job, over a third are in the Midlands³. These areas are also highly correlated with those experiencing high levels of transport poverty.
- The Midlands economy has historically struggled to keep pace with growth in the capital and the south-east, and the gap is widening. Between 1998 and 2016, London's economy grew by 71% compared with the economies of the West Midlands and East Midlands which grew by approximately 30%⁴.

3. Climate change and carbon

A focus on decarbonising transport by increasing use of public transport, reducing congestion on our roads, and supporting technology and innovation that speeds our journey to a greener future.

- Between 2014 and 2019, transport emissions in the Midlands grew by 5%⁵. Nationally, transport accounts for 27% of all UK emissions⁶.
- Based on current projections it is estimated that without further intervention, the CO2 emissions figure in the Midlands will only fall by 4.3% between 2019 and 2050⁵.
- Of the total transport carbon emissions in the Midlands in 2019, 96% is from roads-based transport, i.e. cars, vans and HGVs.

¹<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06924/SN06924.pdf>

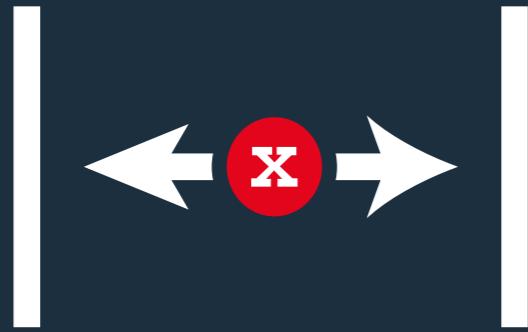
²Midlands Connect: Access to Toton, the HS2 East Midlands Hub (2020)

³Data from the Social Mobility Commission

⁴UK2070 Commission: Make no little plans (2020)

⁵Midlands Connect Carbon Baseline, 2019-20

⁶BEIS (2019) UK Local Authority and Regional CO2 emissions 2005 to 2017



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Areas of focus

Rail

As we work towards a carbon neutral future, it is essential that we make rail travel more practical, convenient and attractive, as well as leveraging strategic investments to promote job creation, regeneration and social mobility. We plan on doing this by:

Making the most of HS2

Maximising and accelerating the benefits of our new high speed network, to amplify its positive effect on local communities by:

- Enhancing local access to the network via local rail, tram and bus routes, as well as improving walking and cycling access
- Supporting regeneration, to promote job creation and new housing development
- Developing strategies to make the most of the extra space HS2 will create on the conventional network, creating much-needed new local services and more freight paths

Maximising the use of rail freight

Supporting the transportation of more goods by rail, by incorporating rail freight improvements into paths in all of our passenger rail projects, reducing carbon emissions. Transporting freight by rail produces 76% less CO2 than transportation by road.

Developing and delivering Midlands Engine Rail

Bringing forward our £3.5bn rail improvement plan to revolutionise rail connectivity in the Midlands. At the moment, just 20% of journeys between the East and West Midlands are made by rail, compared to 50% of similar journeys elsewhere in the UK. Midlands Engine Rail will create faster, more frequent services across important routes in our region.



The seven Midlands Engine Rail schemes

- 1 Midlands Rail Hub
- 2 Birmingham Airport Connectivity
- 3 Access to Toton
- 4 Midlands Connect Conventional Compatible Services
- 5 Birmingham – Black Country – Shrewsbury
- 6 Derby-Stoke-Crewe
- 7 Nottingham – Newark - Lincoln

Midlands Engine Rail



Road

Over 80 per cent of all journeys are made by road; investment in our highways is essential in promoting bus patronage, safe travel by bike, and the free and efficient movement of people and goods. However, these enhancements must not come at the expense of a reduction in carbon emissions – investment must be measured, considered and responsible.

Trade and logistics corridors

The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the crucial role of our road network in ensuring the efficient transportation of essential goods and services including medicine, food and equipment. This is also true for our businesses as they look to receive goods from suppliers and export products both across the UK and worldwide. Midlands Connect has identified three important trade and logistics corridors that if enhanced, could catalyse business growth, boost productivity and support the development of new housing and export markets. They are:



North Midlands Manufacturing Corridor (A50/A500)

A nationally-significant manufacturing corridor, home to global firms like Toyota, JCB, Rolls Royce, Bombardier, Nestle, AstraZeneca, Bentley, Michelin and Pirelli, as well as Stoke-on-Trent's world-renowned ceramics industry. Targeted interventions to improve reliability and shorten journey times on the route could support the creation of thousands of new jobs and homes.



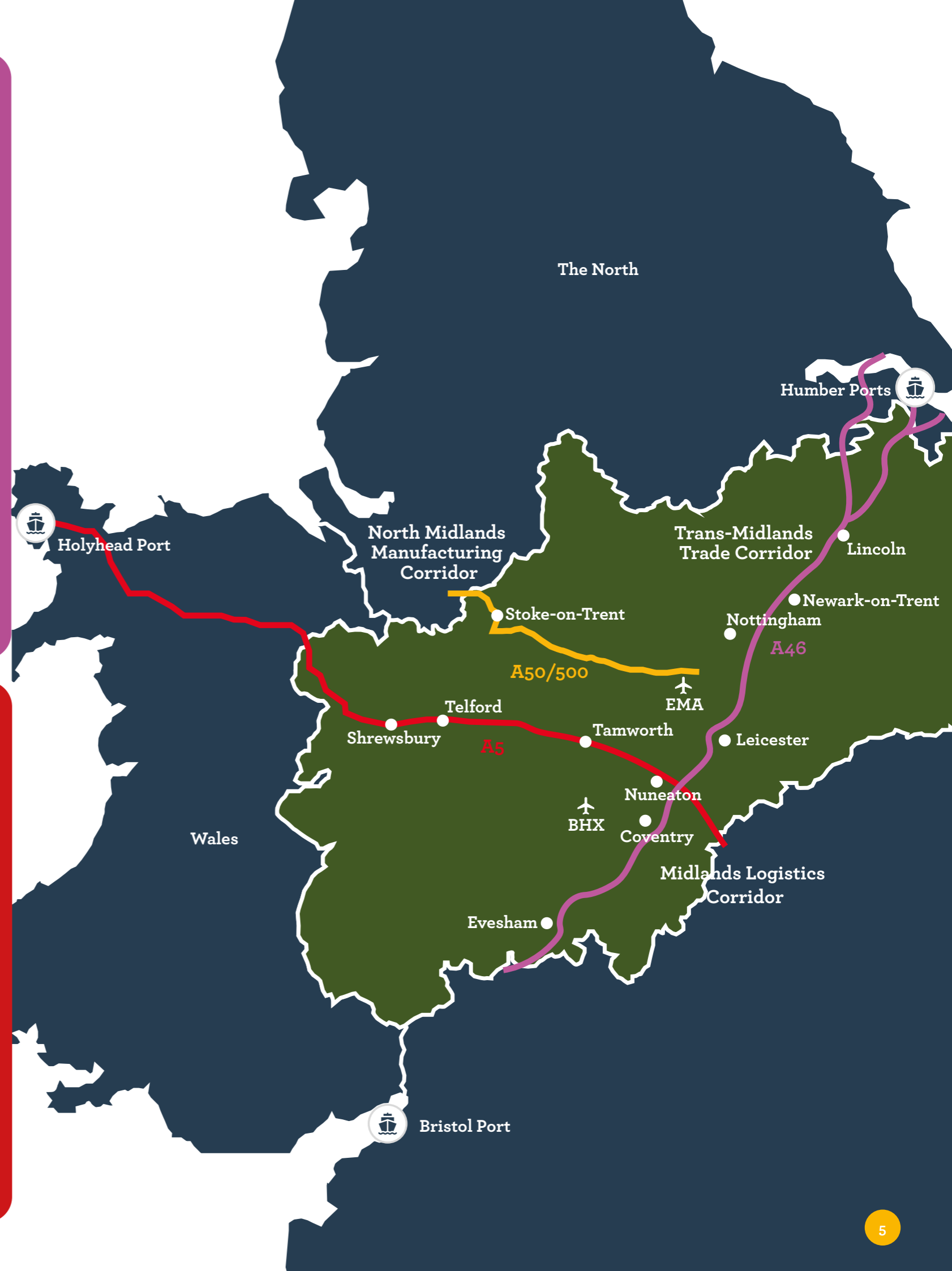
Trans-Midlands Trade Corridor (A46)

Home to a high proportion of businesses in industries that rely on a well-functioning road network including: logistics, textiles, and manufacturing. One of the country's most important east-west routes, it provides access to The Humber and Bristol ports at either end. Export rates along the corridor are 50% above the UK average.



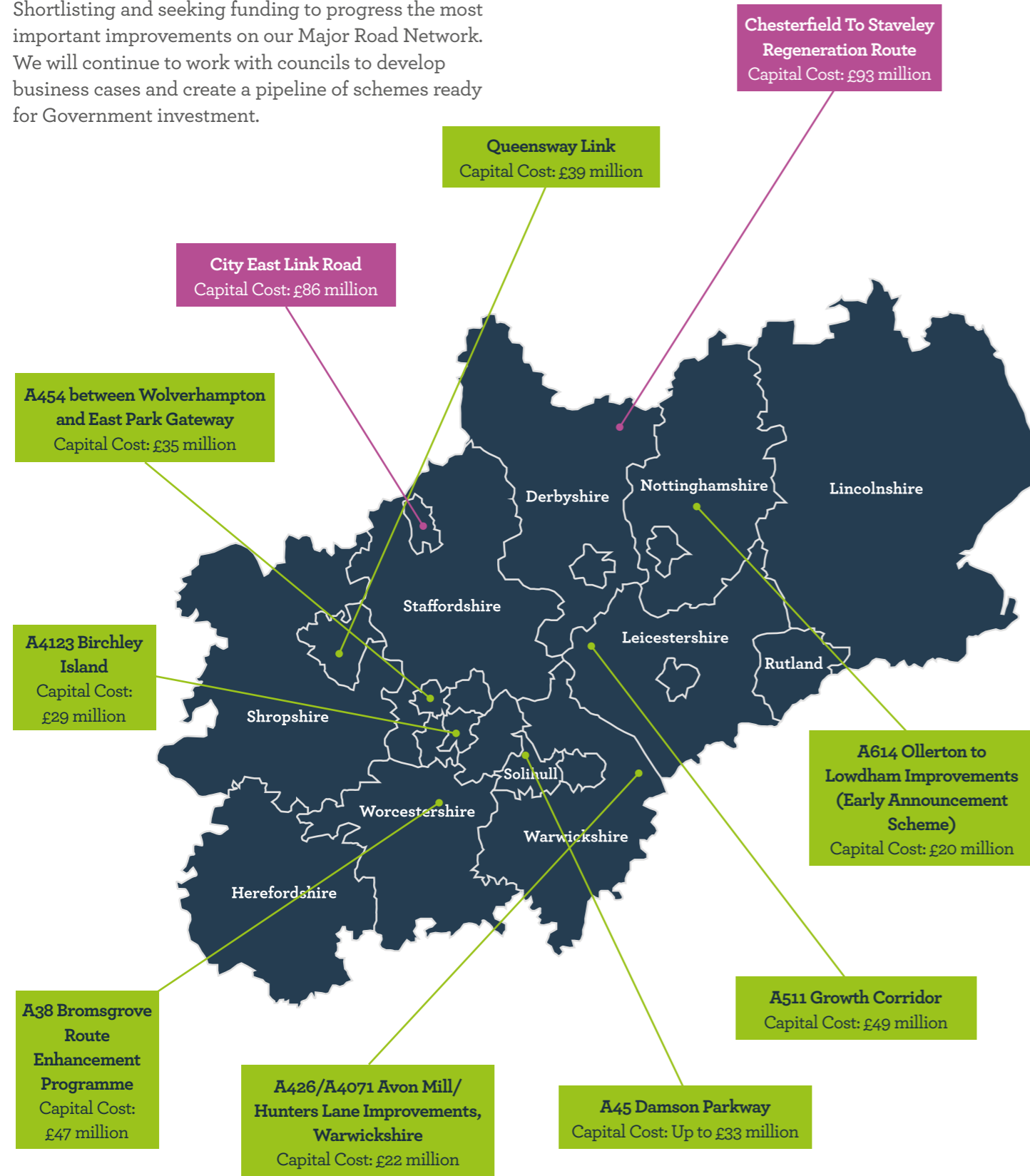
Midlands Logistics Corridor (A5)

Sat at the heart of the 'logistics golden triangle', this corridor is home to over a million people and supports major employment sites such as Magna Park and the MIRA Enterprise Zone. As well as providing links to major motorways and airports, it is used by a high proportion of vans and lorries transporting goods and components.



Major Road Network and Large Local Majors

Shortlisting and seeking funding to progress the most important improvements on our Major Road Network. We will continue to work with councils to develop business cases and create a pipeline of schemes ready for Government investment.



Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2)

Outlining the most important investments and improvements needed for key roads in the Midlands, to be funded within money set aside in Government's Road Investment Strategy.

Other corridors

Aside from those mentioned, we will also be examining options to improve other routes such as the A1, A38, A42, M42 and Midlands Motorway Hub, as well as the deployment of technology solutions on the road network.

Technology and the future of mobility

There is a clear need to explore how technology will impact on, and provide benefit to, the existing and planned transport systems in the Midlands. Our aim is to be a progressive regional partnership exploiting technology and innovation to improve transport connectivity, safety and sustainability.

Smart ticketing

As we look to welcome travellers back to public transport in greater numbers than ever post COVID-19, it's essential that the way customers use and pay for different travel modes is convenient and integrated. By working with our partnership, including Transport for the West Midlands and Nottingham City Council, we can implement a region-wide 'tap and cap' smart payment system for public transport, allowing journeys via train, tram and bus to all be paid for via a single card.



The future of rural mobility

Travel in rural areas is subject to a complex and unique set of challenges, including greater travel distances and smaller passenger numbers, the combination of which often causes public transport to be commercially

unviable. A heavy reliance on private vehicles can cause mobility barriers for those unable to drive or without access to a car. Midlands Connect is exploring the idea of mobility hubs in rural areas, which could link communities to transport, healthcare and other services, while also working with local councils to examine how technology could improve mobility.

Future Transport Zones (FTZ)

The government's Future Transport Zone (FTZ) programme is looking to pilot and test how wider solutions can make us want to travel less by car – for Midlands Connect this means getting people to and from our rail stations, coach, bus and tram hubs. We have two pilot FTZs in Transport for West Midlands and Derby/Nottingham that we can work with and learn from.

Measures being developed across the FTZ programme include:

- Being able to plan and pay for travel in one place through an App/website (referred to as Mobility as a Service) making it simple and easy to understand your travel choices.
- Better parking, charging facilities and wayfinding to encourage car sharing, riding bikes/e-bikes and walking to stations.
- Linking demand-responsive public transport that can pick people up from near where they live.
- Making use of 5G and data to ensure we manage our networks better, develop new services to get people where they want to go and keep everyone informed when incidents/events happen.
- Freight measures such as expanding consolidation of freight to smaller, electric vehicles.

We are working closely with our pilots and government to understand what the wider roll-out of such measures could mean for our regional rail and road networks.

Green technology

As well as incorporating the latest green technologies into all of our schemes, we are examining:

- How alternative fuels such as hydrogen, biodiesel and natural gas can power a sustainable road freight industry.
- The decarbonisation of our rail network, including electrification and hydrogen power.
- How we can support and accelerate the installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

Your input: what should we prioritise?

Transport investment can be the catalyst for a wide variety of outcomes, including: reducing carbon emissions, creating new jobs, boosting social mobility, promoting rural mobility, reducing congestion and spearheading local regeneration – to name but a few.

However, while we'd ideally improve journey times and connectivity across every corner of the Midlands, across every mode of transport, Government funding and the financial pressures of COVID-19, demand that we prioritise the most important improvements and target our 'asks' for investment.

As well as being a general constraint for whether or not we can achieve our outcomes, the way that funding is allocated is also problematic. At present, different

modes of transport and different Government initiatives (urban mobility, affordable housing delivery) are funded through separate streams and over different time scales. This 'siloed' approach doesn't reflect how we travel as individuals through different geographies or on multiple modes to complete one end-to-end trip; it also ignores the impact of infrastructure on wider building and regeneration.

As part of our strategy, we want to understand what your priorities are and what choices you'd make about transport investment and interventions, regardless of these constraints. This insight will help us consider the options we have at our disposal. It could also be used in discussions with Government about how it structures and allocates funding in the medium to long term.



You can give your views two ways

1. Show us your priorities via our interactive online tool

We have created an online tool that will allow you to give your insight into which improvements and outcomes you see as most important. This tool puts you in charge of how transport funding is spent in a region, asks you to make choices and allows you to see the impact of these choices on outputs such as jobs, carbon emissions and modal shift. The opinions you give will shape our thinking as we finalise our updated strategy.

Please visit www.midlandsconnect.uk to use our interactive tool

2. Respond to targeted questions via our website

1) To support the economic recovery post-Covid, which specific transport projects would you prioritise for delivery within the next 5 years? *(Please note the projects must consider pan-regional connectivity).*

2) In response to the Government's levelling up agenda, Midlands Connect is identifying major transport projects which will improve the lives of people in the region and across the UK. Which specific transport projects would you prioritise for delivery by 2030? *(Please note the projects must consider pan-regional connectivity).*

3) As a region, we need to respond to the climate change emergency. What are your top three priorities for a greener, sustainable transport network?

4) What technology solutions do you think the Government should invest in to support the Midlands achieve a greener, low-carbon economy?

To submit your responses and any relevant evidence, please email mcstrategy@midlandsconnect.uk by Monday 22nd March 2021 (maximum of four A4 pages).

For more information on our strategy refresh, please visit www.midlandsconnect.uk

If you have any questions, please email the team mcstrategy@midlandsconnect.uk.

The deadline for feedback via the tool and responses to the questions is **Friday 19th March 2021.**



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