

MEETING OF THE BERKSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT BODY (BLTB) – THURSDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2023

CONTACT OFFICER: Stephen Brown, Chief Executive Officer, Slough Borough Council

Item 4: One Year Evaluation Report

Purpose of Report

1. At your meeting in July 2022, you approved a less intensive approach towards the impact reports being considered at BLTB meetings to reflect the reduction in reporting requirements from government whilst still demonstrating the value of investment in infrastructure.
2. This report introduces the one-year impact report for the following scheme.
 - Scheme 2.42 – South Wokingham Distributor Road – Eastern Gateway

Recommendation

3. You are recommended to note the report from the scheme promoter and the LEP conclusions.

Supporting Information

4. The LEP has a well-established and agreed process for the monitoring and evaluation of BLTB funded local transport schemes, which requires scheme promoters to produce one- and five-year-on post completion monitoring reports for each of their schemes. It has been agreed that the LEP will continue to carry out reviewing these evaluations, utilising a small amount of the funding from within the capital programme for monitoring and evaluation purposes. However, given the limited amount of funding, these reviews will continue to be light touch and proportionate and fit for purpose, whilst continuing to demonstrate the value of our investment and to inform future priorities.
5. With the reduction in reporting requirements from Central Government, the format and detail of the reports are now less prescriptive and enable the scheme promoter to tailor the reports to their own needs and make them directly relevant to supporting investment decisions going forwards.
6. The reports submitted by each of the scheme promoters continue to summarise the outcomes of the monitoring and evaluation undertaken following the completion of the schemes. The analysis gives an initial indication whether a scheme has been successful in achieving the related aims and objectives set and agreed at the start of the scheme development. It also seeks to demonstrate that the funding obtained has provided value for money and that any lessons learnt are captured as evidence to inform future decision making. The assessments focus on:
 - Scheme build;
 - Delivered scheme;
 - Costs;
 - Scheme objectives; and
 - Impacts on the economy

South Wokingham Distributor Road – Eastern Gateway

7. Wokingham Borough Council received £5m in BRRP funding towards the cost of this £20.16m scheme the remaining from Wokingham Borough Council's Capital Funding programme.

8. The Eastern Gateway scheme comprised of single carriageway road connecting Montague Park to the north with Waterloo Road to the south via a new roundabout. The scheme provided access across the Waterloo rail line in the form of a new road bridge with the previous railway crossing on Waterloo Road closing as part of the scheme proposals.
9. The objectives of scheme were to support housing delivery, replace the existing level crossing, relieve traffic using residential roads as rat runs whilst minimising the impact of traffic generated by the housing development. The scheme also sought to encourage sustainable and active transport by providing extensive pedestrian and cyclist facilities.
10. The scheme was opened to the public in February 2022 approximately 1 year after the proposed scheme opening date. This was mainly due to the COVID-19 outbreak and associated lockdowns that were in place at various times in 2020 and 2021 which delayed construction and significantly affected the scheme programme. There were also issues with coal tar and additional work to install a piling platform though these did not affect delivery significantly.
11. With respect to costs, final figures are still awaited in relation to land, Part 1 contractor claims and some other construction items. However, initial estimates suggest that the scheme was delivered well within budget, with the enabling works and construction element costs to date being delivered for £11m, against an original projection of £12.5m.
12. To assess the traffic impact of the scheme, data collection and analysis were undertaken in the months preceding the construction of the scheme to form the baseline conditions from which the 1-year analysis has been assessed; this will be repeated 5-years after opening.
13. Whilst there is quite a bit of variation on specific routes, overall traffic flow on existing roads has reduced, although it is difficult to identify the extent to which patterns are attributable to reductions in the traditional peak hour commuting due to adoption of flexible and remote working. Traffic flows will be reviewed again at the 5 year post opening stage, when the impact will be more evident once scheme dependant development and all stages of the SWDR are completed.
14. Generally, there has also been an overall reduction in journey times in 2023, with drivers diverted onto the new railway bridge, there has also been an increase in average speeds with no discernible impact on safety.
15. In terms of meeting the overall objectives of the scheme the new link has provided improved access to planned new housing locations within the South Wokingham major development. Three parcels of land (630 dwellings) have been unlocked and Section 106 agreements to bring these forward are at an advanced stage which will result in outline planning consents would be in place. The build rate will be reviewed again as part of the 5 years post opening evaluation.
16. The Waterloo Road level crossing has been permanently closed, with the original Waterloo Road upgraded with new footways and a new roundabout. The scheme has also provided quicker west east routes that relieve residential roads of cut through traffic.
17. The full one-year on impact report of the scheme is attached at Appendix 2.