Purpose of report:

- To update members on the outcome of the Study and the announcement by the Secretary of State of the entry of the new scheme into the DfT’s Programme of major schemes.

Recommendation:

1. To note the outcome of the Study, the policy commitment of the Government to the improvement of the A14 and the efforts being undertaken to raise part of the funding from local sources.

1 Background

1.1 After the A14 improvement scheme was withdrawn in October 2010 on affordability grounds, the Government undertook to study, with partners, the multi-modal needs of the whole A14 corridor. That A14 Corridor Study began in earnest following the 2011 Autumn Statement. In this, the Chancellor set out the Government’s high-level commitment to “increasing capacity and improving performance on the A14”. The Government confirmed that the scope for relieving congestion by improving other modes including freight facilities and public transport would be explored.

1.2 Cambridgeshire County Council has been working with the Department for Transport (DfT) and local partners on both a Study Project Board and a Study Steering Group. Good progress has been made with the Phase 1 study report being quickly completed in December 2011. This identified the problems (congestion, safety, lack of resilience) and challenges (supporting economic growth, social and environmental impact) associated with the A14 and this brought no particular surprises.

1.3 Phase 2 of the Study was completed in June. This part of the Study reviewed a long list of public transport, freight and highway options for the corridor and produced a list of eleven packages (three public transport, two freight and six highway options) for detailed analysis in Phase 3 of the study. The potential financing of the packages, including private sector involvement, travel demand management and revenue generation through tolling were also briefly considered.

1.4 Phase 3 of the study was completed as planned in July. At the time of writing this report, this has not yet been published but it is understood it will be shortly.

15 Although the phase 3 study report has not yet been published, given the widely recognised urgency of moving forward development issues in the A14 corridor, the Secretary of State concluded that there had been enough progress for her to make a positive policy statement
on the 18th July, crucially, this statement puts the A14 improvement scheme into the DfT’s committed major roads programme.

2 Key Elements of the Government Announcement

2.1 The Secretary of State’s announcement “Innovative New Proposals for A14 Corridor” made on the 18th July, 2012 is a policy commitment by the Government for the A14 improvement, but it does not yet amount to a detailed route plan.

2.2 Key elements identified in the announcement were, (officers’ comments in italics):

- **“A new bypass to replace the existing road around Huntingdon.”** This will be a new Huntingdon Southern Bypass, but its standard is not clearly spelt out.
- **“Upgrades along A14 as far east as Milton”.** This will be the widening of the Cambridge Northern Bypass from Girton to Milton. The standard has not been specified, but is most likely to be a 3 lane dual carriageway. The widening from Milton to Fen Ditton has not been included in this scheme.
- **“Two new roads would be built in parallel to, with one each side of, the current A14 immediately north of Cambridge for local use”**. These will be the local access roads to serve local and development traffic, and it is likely that these would be two lane roads with traffic travelling towards Cambridge on the eastern side and away from Cambridge on the western side.
- **“Meanwhile, the existing A14 carriageway will be upgraded through the removal of accesses and junctions, and improvements to junctions at the northern and southern ends”**. This is expected to amount to upgrading of the main carriageway for long distance traffic between Girton and Fen Drayton. It is assumed that the junctions at the ends would mean an upgrading of Girton Interchange and a new junction sited near the existing Trinity Foot junction, as proposed in the withdrawn scheme.
- **Tolling in part to fund improvements, but more work required.** This implies that certain lengths are likely to be tolled. This would most probably include the bypass south of Huntingdon and the length of upgraded A14 between Girton and Trinity Foot.

The tolling of the Cambridge Northern Bypass is not plausible because whilst it acts as a bypass for Cambridge, it also acts as a distributor road for the City. Tolling of the Milton to Girton section could encourage rat running through the City and so is not being proposed.

- **Rail freight Improvements**
  These are very much as expected and are linked to other recent rail investment announcements

- **Supporting Public Transport Improvements**
  These are enhancements to local bus services, guided bus and park and ride facilities which will be considered locally with DfT and others.

General Comments

2.3 The Government’s commitment to implement a major improvement of the A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon, through adding a scheme to its programme of major schemes with linking work to the next spending review, is a big step forward and provides a greater degree of certainty for taking forward much needed development proposals such as Northstowe.
2.4 At this stage, the funding for the scheme is not clear, other than an expectation from the Government announcement that it will consist of a combination of tolling, local funding and central government funding. The proportion for each of these is still to be determined, as is the likely total cost of the scheme.

2.5 The issue of the Huntingdon Viaduct has not yet been fully resolved. In respect of tolling viability, the removal of the Viaduct should generate greater revenue and thus help any tolling proposals to be more successful. In addition it would bring significant benefits to Huntingdon and Godmanchester.

2.6 It is not clear exactly how the local parallel roads would operate, but they would be expected to be toll free, so that local journeys can be undertaken without a charge, but would also be designed to be an unattractive option for long distance traffic.

2.7 The proposed widening to three lane dual carriageway of the A14 between Milton and Fen Ditton (as proposed in the previous withdrawn scheme) is not being included in this proposal.

3 Next Steps and Programme

3.1 A significant amount of work has been undertaken in the study and huge progress has been made.

3.2 As would be expected at this stage, however, much work is still required to finally define the scheme, decide how it will be procured, by whom and what role the Local Authorities will play in its delivery. Nevertheless there are steps which can and should be taken to expedite delivery. The Cambridgeshire County Council has initiated early discussions between Local Authorities and LEPs in the region to explore how far they can support the financing of the scheme from future revenue streams. In this work, the County Council will be assisted by Local Partnerships, (the 50-50 joint venture between LGA and HM Treasury), whose officers are arranging a series of meetings with the Local Authorities, LEPs and business interests.

3.3 Detailed discussions are ongoing with Government about the ultimate funding package, what special delivery arrangements might be instigated to deliver the design, part financing and delivery of the scheme. More work is also needed on determining the optimum tolling strategy to raise revenue with minimising the diversion of traffic to other routes.

3.4 The Secretary of State suggested that construction could begin in 2018. If that is to be the case, then detailed scheme design will need to commence soon. The DfT has allocated £5m to the Highways Agency within this current spending period to progress the scheme through the options and development phases review, although the design process is likely to need more funding, even if the scheme draws heavily on the preparatory work of the previous scheme.

3.5 The separate announcement, also on 18 July 2012, of the Government’s intention to underwrite £50bn of infrastructure investment, may offer an opportunity to help with the delivery of the A14 corridor transport improvements.