



# Fairer, greener, stronger: our Strategic Transport Plan for the Midlands



**Midlands Connect**  
Transport | Investment | Growth

April 2022

# Foreword

“In the past five years, we’ve seen some of the most radical changes to our political, societal and environmental landscape in living memory. Dealing with the impacts of a global health emergency has put extraordinary pressure on public finances, changing beyond recognition the way we work, live, and travel. The world’s first climate change conference combined with ground-breaking decarbonisation pledges from Governments around the world has spurred on a technological revolution in alternative fuels, green energy generation and electric vehicles. Closer to home, the UK’s exit from the European Union has encouraged businesses to rethink how they trade, where and with whom.

**Sir John Peace, chairman**



**Maria Machancoses  
CEO of Midlands Connect**

“This Strategic Transport Plan is focused on meeting these challenges, seizing the opportunity to deliver a greener, fairer and stronger Midlands region – one where communities are connected to the jobs, places and services they need to succeed. Our research has analysed how people travel, why they travel and where to, both now, and how this needs to change in future. These insights have led us to this plan, one that seeks investment and innovation in the places that need it most, whether it be improving rail services, boosting mobility in rural areas, future-proofing our road network or cementing the Midlands’ place at the forefront of the electric vehicle revolution.

“Although many of the changes we’re experiencing are universal, it’s equally important that we focus on what sets us apart. As a region, the Midlands is a manufacturing giant, a centre for innovation and a pioneer of new, green technologies. That said, we are also home to pockets of poor social mobility, areas where educational attainment is below par and rural communities where a lack of public transport causes feelings of loneliness and isolation.

“By working with our partners, playing to the region’s strengths and making a clear case for investment to Government, we can ensure that every single person in the region gets to where they need to be. Yes, we must tackle climate change, of course we must spread opportunity but we must also pursue a future where the Midlands and its people are empowered to reach their full potential.

“Our pledge to this region is simple – we will work behind the scenes to gather evidence, to make plans and bring forward delivery, but most of all, we will not forget the people behind these plans. This grand vision is about giving the Midlands, its businesses and its communities the future they deserve. We will now forge ahead and work to deliver this vision.”

# Introduction



Since Midlands Connect published England's first regional transport strategy in 2017, we've had a great deal to adapt to. While five years on, next day deliveries and online shopping are the norm, working in an office from 9-5, Monday to Friday is not. The impacts of the COP26 climate conference and an increased drive towards sustainability mean that policies to secure a carbon-neutral transport network by 2050 are now enshrined in law. Meanwhile, the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have caused us to rethink how we make the case for transport investment and evaluate what interventions are needed most to support our long-term economic revival.

This said, there is much more change to come. Government's Integrated Rail Plan and the highly anticipated Williams-Shapps Review have outlined a new future for our railways, one where a high-speed network runs to, through and from the East and West Midlands and where Great British Railways runs our network in a more stable and efficient way. We will play an active role, as this policy is shaped and implemented over the coming years. Our own research predicts a boom in the use of electric vehicles, innovative advances are being made in the realms of green energy and alternative fuels such as hydrogen, while Government has reaffirmed its commitment to future-proofing our road network, as part of its ongoing Road Investment Strategy.

Perhaps most importantly, last year's Transport Decarbonisation Plan set out how policymakers intend to shift from fossil fuels to renewables, while Government and the Midlands Engine's 10-Point Plan for Green Growth provided clarity on the measures we must take, across our partnership to tread the path to net neutrality.

At a local level, the Midlands' local authorities are progressing with their Local Transport Plans and have ambitious plans to decarbonise, to boost bus patronage, walking and cycling, to use data to their advantage and to embrace new technology. It's clear that we stand on the edge of a huge step-change in the transport industry, one that is being embraced by our partners - whether in the development of Very Light Rail in Coventry, the building of HS2 trains in Derby or tram extensions in the Black Country.

As a Sub-national Transport Body, Midlands Connect has a clear mandate from Government – to research, develop and progress strategic transport projects, bringing forward priority investments that will benefit our region, its people and businesses.

This plan outlines the action we must take to secure a fairer, greener and stronger Midlands.

# A view from the Midlands

The Midlands matters. A region of over 10million people and 5million jobs, it creates an economic output of £248billion a year<sup>1</sup>, bigger than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of countries such as Greece, Portugal or Hungary<sup>2</sup>.

The heritage of our region is rich - we're home to everything from the birthplace of the industrial revolution at Ironbridge to the Staffordshire Potteries, the home of Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon, and the outstanding coast and nature reserves of Lincolnshire. This plan however, is focused on our future, not our past. There is a solid platform on

which to build - the Midlands produces 20% of the UK's exports<sup>3</sup>, more than any other region of the UK, including London and the South East, it is home to over a quarter of its manufacturing jobs, to the UK's largest logistics hub and a burgeoning professional services industry.

Transport investment in our region will help us to reach our full potential, benefitting people and businesses that travel to, through and from the Midlands, we are after all, at the heart of the UK.

## Our grand challenges

Our overall ambition is to make the Midlands region fairer, greener and stronger. Our plan proposes; the right strategic infrastructure investments, how the decarbonisation of the transport system could be accelerated and a focus on the connectivity needs of local people and businesses.



### Fairer

**1. Levelling-up and strengthening the region and uk**

Fairer: improving access to jobs, education and opportunities to level up social mobility and quality of life outcomes across the Midlands



### Greener

**2. Decarbonising transport and adapting to climate change**

Greener: making investments that encourage behaviour change, promote public transport use and encourage the take up on new technologies such as electric vehicles and alternative fuels to reduce emissions



### Stronger

**3. Driving resilient economic growth**



Stronger: increasing productivity and economic output by making it easier for businesses to trade, access suppliers and employees, and empowering local people to access jobs, education and healthcare services



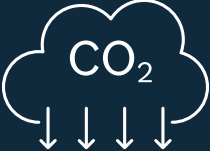
<sup>1</sup> Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: local authorities by ITL1 region - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) (As referenced by Midlands Engine Observatory)



<sup>2</sup> [https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.FCST.CD?end=2019&locations=EU&name\\_desc=false&start=1970&view=chart](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.FCST.CD?end=2019&locations=EU&name_desc=false&start=1970&view=chart)

<sup>3</sup> Regional Trade in Goods Q3 2021: Midlands Engine Observatory

# Our Strategic Transport Plan in numbers

<p><b>1.7 million EVs</b> on Midlands roads by 2030. <b>A 2,475%</b> increase on today</p> 	<p><b>8,909 new public charging points</b> needed by the end of 2030 to keep pace with this growth</p> 
<p>Forecasts predict up to 65 hydrogen fuelling stations could be needed by 2040 to meet demand from hydrogen-filled HGVs</p>	

<p><b>Over 80% of Midlands residents live within 5km of a railway station</b> but less than 3% of journeys starting or ending in the Midlands are made by train</p> 		
<p>Our Midlands Engine Rail programme will create <b>&gt;</b> 19 million more passenger seats on our railways</p>	<p>In the period from 1990 - 2019 UK transport emissions fell <b>by just 5%</b></p>	
<p><b>Road transport generates 92% of carbon emissions</b> in the Midlands</p> 		
<p>Every parcel or person transported by rail instead of on our road network <b>creates over 70% less CO2</b></p>	<p><b>5 of the UK's 6 major road freight routes</b> run through the Midlands and 6 of its 11 strategic rail freight routes</p>	

 <p>The plan is forecast to grow the region's economy <b>by £1.9bn per year, rising to £4.1bn per year by 2061</b></p>	<p>This plan will support the Midlands Engine aspiration to create <b>334,000 additional jobs by 2030</b></p>	
<p>Industries that rely on the strategic road network - construction, logistics, manufacturing and energy - <b>generate over £80bn for the Midlands economy each year</b></p>		

# What's in this plan?

Midlands Connect has a clear directive from Government - to develop, analyse and prioritise the most important transport investments – the projects we need to support a more productive, prosperous and sustainable Midlands.

## Our priorities can be grouped into three distinct areas:



### Rail

Encouraging more people to use the rail network is an essential step in reducing transport-related carbon emissions. Our Midlands Engine Rail programme includes a series of improvements to boost rail connectivity across our region. The interventions we're suggesting include; making journeys faster, allowing trains to run more frequently and creating new connections that don't currently exist.

Building on the long-term projects outlined in Government's Integrated Rail Plan, our plan will create more space for passengers and rail freight, as well as using the extra capacity freed up on existing lines by High Speed Two (HS2). We will also work with Network Rail and other bodies including West Midlands Rail Executive and Transport for East Midlands to deliver a more integrated transport system – our 'Access to Rail' project will examine how rail can be better linked with local public transport such as buses and trams, using technology to provide better travel information and ticketing solutions to passengers.

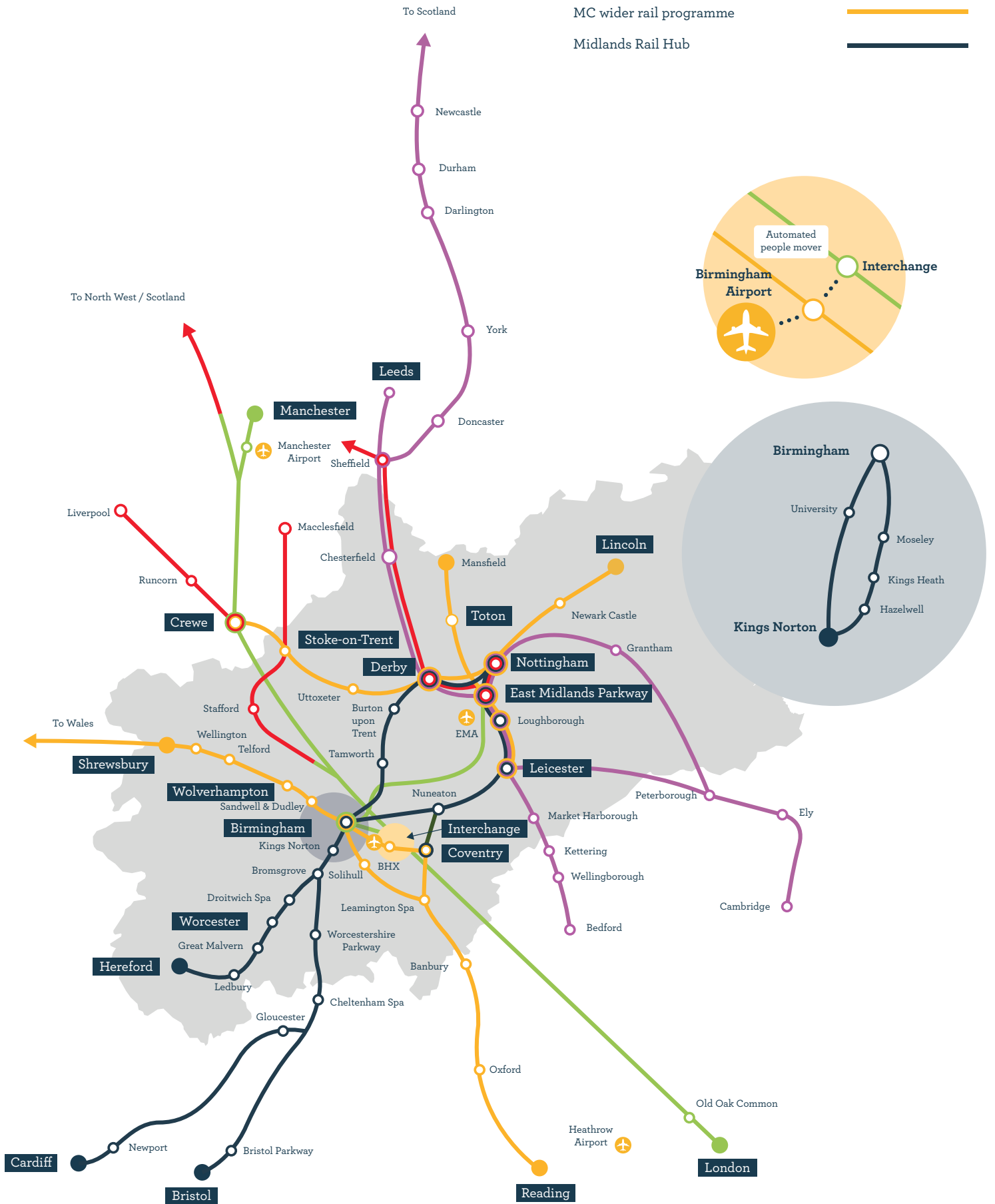
## Our rail priorities include:

- Establishing a direct rail service between Coventry, Leicester and Nottingham
- Acceleration of Midlands Rail Hub schemes at Kings Norton and Snow Hill
- Delivering 'early win' journey time improvements on several corridors including the Birmingham-Shrewsbury, Birmingham-Nottingham and Nottingham-Lincoln routes
- Continuing to develop business cases for larger infrastructure investment projects including Midlands Rail Hub
- Service improvements between Birmingham and Leicester
- Improving connectivity between the Midlands and the North, feeding into Government's consultation on the future of HS2's Eastern Leg from the East Midlands to Leeds and beyond.

# Midlands Engine Rail

## Key

- HS2
- HS2 conventional compatible services
- MC cross-boundary services
- MC wider rail programme
- Midlands Rail Hub





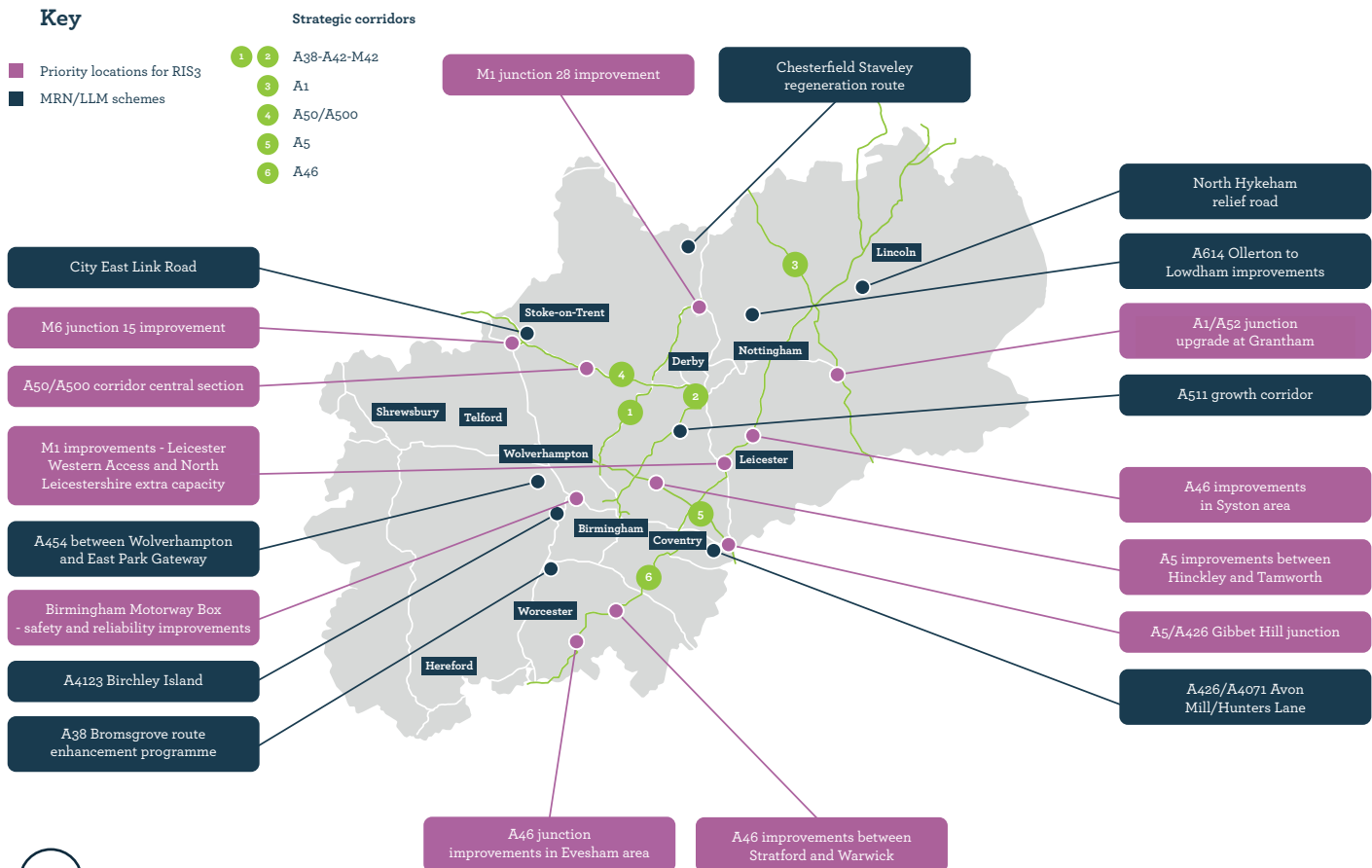
## Road

Over seven out of every ten journeys we make are made by road<sup>4</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the essential role our road network plays in our daily lives, allowing us to keep food on the supermarket shelves, medicine in our hospitals and providing access to schools and universities. This said, in a climate emergency, we must look to invest in roads in a sustainable way – supporting new housing and jobs, reducing congestion-related emissions and improving the infrastructure road users need to travel via alternative modes such as bus or alternatively fuelled vehicles.

Insight from National Highways suggests that the logistics, manufacturing, energy and construction industries are most reliant on the strategic road network for their operation and success. In 2019, these industries contributed over £80billion to the Midlands economy<sup>5</sup>.

### Our road priorities include:

- Improvements to important east-west corridors including the A46, A5 and A50/500, developed with support from the wider Midlands Engine partnership, delivering on ambitions for increased global reach and trade, innovation, skills and infrastructure
- Enhancing access to important junctions on the M1, M6 and M5 motorways
- Assisting local councils to develop business cases for targeted investments on the major road network, particularly those that improve traffic flow and encourage integration with public transport and active travel modes such as walking and cycling
- Shaping and informing the decisions made by Government as it chooses which schemes to progress as part of its Road Investment Strategy (RIS) 3, for delivery in 2025-2030







## Technology, innovation and decarbonisation

We're at the biggest crossroads in personal transport since the horse and cart was replaced by the motor vehicle. Midlands Connect is working to secure a future where digital technologies make our roads more efficient, public charging points are available to our growing cohort of electric vehicle drivers and new, innovative mobility solutions connect isolated communities in our rural areas to the services they need. Our schedule of works also reflects the need to meet the biggest challenge facing our industry – using Government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan as a blueprint for how we can create a cleaner, greener and truly sustainable transport network.

The Collaboration Agreement Midlands Connect signed with Government last year sets out our role in bringing together the region's experts and organisations, fostering collaboration, research and new thinking.

### Our technology and innovation priorities include:

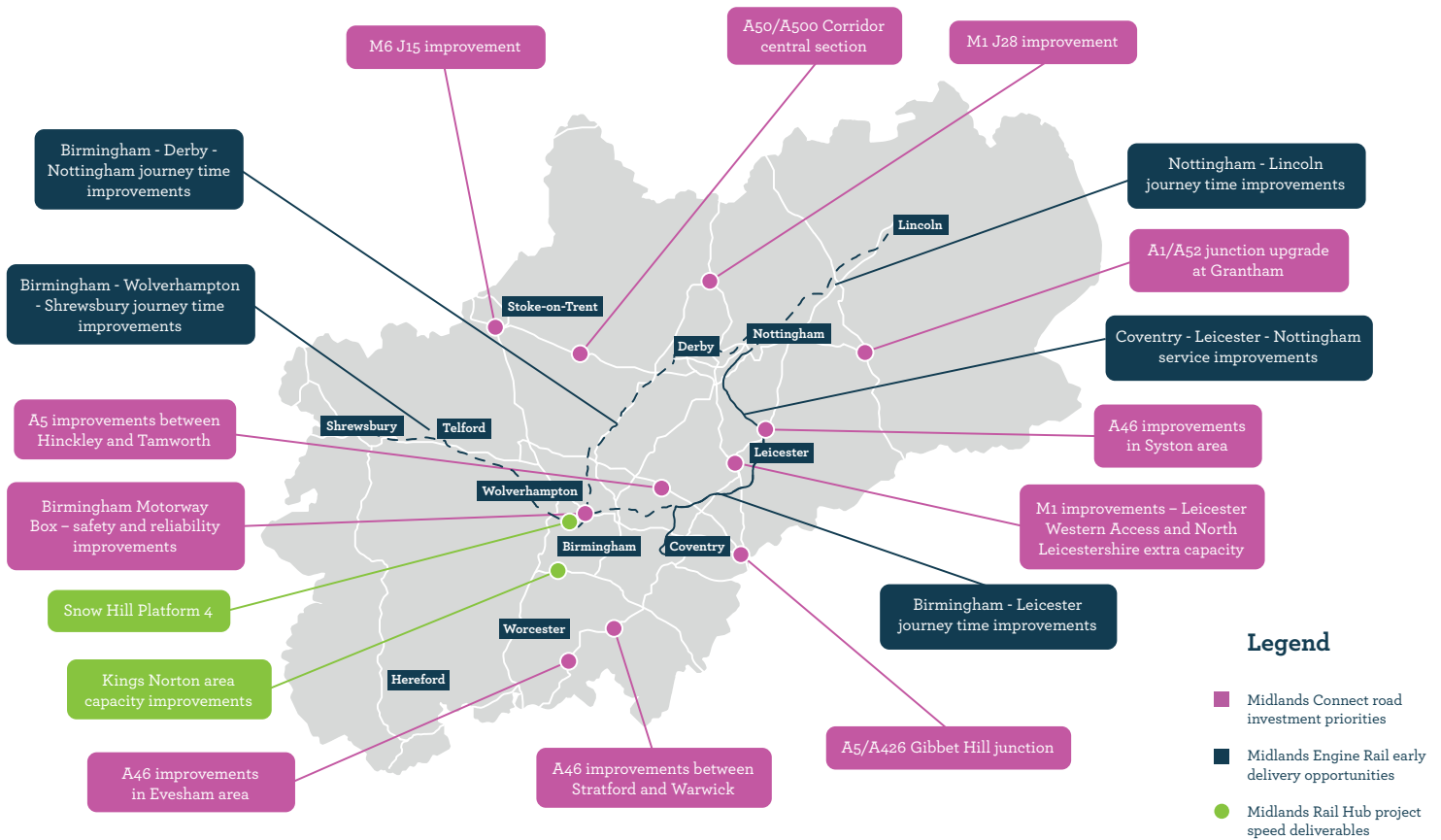
- Supporting the roll-out of public electric vehicle chargers across the Midlands region, with a commitment to publishing the first Midlands-wide Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure implementation plan by Autumn 2022
- Analysing how technology and improved 5G coverage can support connected and autonomous vehicles and provide in-driver information on the Major Road Network
- Linking up businesses and local authorities to develop innovative new mobility solutions to improve connectivity in rural areas
- Working with the Midlands Engine Energy Hub to understand how hydrogen and other alternative fuels can be used to power our fleet of freight vehicles and HGVs
- Establishing industry 'centres of excellence' where partners come together to share knowledge, collaborate and work together on new emerging technology areas or topics such as decarbonisation, freight and alternative fuels
- Delivering a regional decarbonisation policy toolkit that will provide evidence to partners on the decarbonisation potential of various interventions and policies that could be used in their local sustainability plans
- Supporting partners in the take up of a region-wide smart ticketing platform, as developed for Transport for the West Midlands
- Applying the 10% increase in biodiversity required for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) to all, smaller, transport projects
- Creating a network resilience map to understand how transport, technology and energy generation interventions can work together to address climate change

4 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/906276/national-travel-survey-2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/906276/national-travel-survey-2019.pdf)

5 ONS Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: local authorities by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region

# Our short-term infrastructure priorities

(to be delivered in the next 5-10 years)



## Speeding up delivery

Traditionally, developing transport projections from conception to completion is a process that can take decades. We want to work with Government and our partners to accelerate the delivery of our short-term priorities so that local people and businesses feel the benefit sooner. We will achieve this by:

- **Developing stronger business cases**, using the economic, social and environmental data we have available and working with partners to identify the jobs, growth and investment needed in the region, making a stronger case for investment
- **Engaging with Government to understand how we can better fund these improvements** – could we get more funding and more benefits by combining government money for transport investment with money that is currently spent separately on skills, education or housing?
- Working with our local authority partners to ensure we have **enough people with the right skills** to develop and deliver the major transport projects, schemes and innovations

# What next?

Midlands Connect will now work with its partners, including local authorities, transport bodies, Midlands Engine and Government to deliver the improvements outlined in this Strategic Transport Plan.

## Our immediate commitments:



Building on the Integrated Rail Plan, we will deliver a Business Case for our full Midlands Engine Rail (MER) programme by spring 2023, including our flagship scheme the Midlands Rail Hub



Publish a Freight Improvement Plan to support strategic freight movements across the region



Provide evidence to Government as it investigates how high speed trains will run from the East Midlands further north, to Leeds and beyond



Develop a funding strategy that outlines the opportunities to bring in private sector funding and finance to deliver on our regional priorities



Strengthen the position of the Midlands as a leader in the take-up of Electric Cars, publishing guidance for partners alongside a tool to help identify sites where public chargers are needed



Support the development of rural mobility solutions, empowering businesses to work with local authorities to solve isolation and poor access to services in areas across the region



Publish a Transport Technology Route Plan examining how technology can make our transport network safer, more sustainable and more efficient



Deliver a Decarbonisation Policy Toolkit, supporting local authorities to examine ways to decarbonise our transport network, analysing the carbon footprint of every project or policy proposed, as well as ways transport initiatives can reduce emissions and encourage behavioural change



Develop a clear plan to assist the take up of alternatively fuelled vehicles in the freight sector (including hydrogen and natural gas)



Establish a Midlands Transport Decarbonisation Forum, bringing together experts from across the region to share best practice



Continue to invest in the development of new ideas to improve the major road network for all road users, including pedestrians and cyclists

More information on the projects/priorities in this Strategic Transport Plan can be found in our detailed technical version of this plan, available via [www.midlandsconnect.uk](http://www.midlandsconnect.uk)



# Midlands Connect

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