

Transcript of Examine video

Better value rail is a joint Department for Transport, Office of Rail and Road and Network Rail initiative to help those with an early idea for a rail infrastructure project.

The better value rail toolkit helps people make better decisions earlier, identify the right transport solution, which may not necessarily be rail, saving time and money later on.

This video is aimed to help you work your way through the toolkit, explain the purpose of the tools, and how to use them.

The toolkit is separated into four different sections.

Firstly, strategy that looks at the overall objectives.

Explore that looks at the options for how to achieve those goals.

Examine that looks more closely at the issues involved in potential solutions and overall a section on culture and capability around the underlying approach to project development.

In this video we will be looking at the examine stage.

If you decide rail infrastructure is part of the solution for the problem you're trying to address, you will want to then understand the complexities involved in taking this forward.

This is what the examined section of the toolkit is designed to do, to face problems early on.

It will guide you through some of the assumptions you will need to make at this early stage in developing your project before you have all the answers.

As your project matures more information will come to light which will help you develop your assumptions and plan the necessary responses.

The tools here, which are purely about rail infrastructure, will help you understand complexities and develop your ideas without spending more money or resource than you need to at this point.

The section starts with the assumptions assessment and significance tool.

This is designed to help you understand assumptions and give you an idea early on of the questions you will need to ask and their potential impact and significance.

It covers three categories of assumptions.

Firstly, delayed scope. Areas that you aren't in a position to investigate now, but that could mature into scope and cost.

Secondly, uncertainty that can be mitigated in which you and therefore need to plan for.

And thirdly, uncertainty that can't be mitigated, which may make your project unviable, such as there's no capacity to run extra services on the network.

Trying to consider all these assumptions at an early stage can be daunting, and this tool is designed to help make that process simpler.

The tool helps you to sequence how to consider assumptions and whether you need to take any further action.

The tool takes you through a whole series of assumption areas. You'll need to consider across different categories.

You'll see from the guidance here that they should be addressed in sequence and this is the only part of the BVR toolkit where that is the case.

You should validate your understanding of each assumption, and this is something promoters should do themselves rather than outsource as it really helps you to develop an understanding of your project.

We encourage you to keep records and also to plan when you will revisit these questions and keep a record of how these assumptions become scope, risk, costs or opportunity.

Here's an example to give you an idea of the type of categories included within the tool, this one being land boundary assumptions.

We have twenty categories and in each one tool helps you to ask the right questions.

As you can see, this gives you an indication of the kinds of questions you'll need to think about.

In each category, the tool then expands on the specific topic and the questions to work through become more detailed. At this early stage or we suggesting you do is give a high level yes or no answer to these issues.

This will give you the opportunity to think about your assumptions you'll need to make as your project develops without needing to necessarily spend money on them at this stage.

You'll need to use this tool when you have a reasonably clear idea of the scheme that you think will deliver your strategic objectives.

It will need to be revisited though, as new information emerges and more detailed responses can be developed.

We'll now move on to looking at benefits and costs.

This section asks you to think about the benefits that your scheme will deliver, the operating costs and the capital expenditure needed.

The intention here is to help you consider whether your scheme is commercially viable.

There are three tools in this section, which are still under development, but will be included on the site in due course.

Understanding the costs, benefits, and commercial viability of the scheme will help you to decide whether you should pause or proceed at this stage.

The benefits being considered here are direct bonds, such as the money generated from fares.

But in the business case, you will eventually have to build for your scheme. There are likely to be much wider benefits to take into account, for example regeneration or decarbonization.

Developing capital cost is a complex area and it's important that ranges and uncertainty are considered in this.

Operating costs can also be wide ranging from the direct costs of stuff on trains to maintain some track vehicles and systems to the cost of fuel.

As with earlier sections of the toolkit, we encourage you at this stage to consider whether the current proposal can deliver your strategic objectives in the light of the information you've gathered working through the examine section.

The pause or proceed plan is about testing the exit strategy before going onto the next decision stage. It gives the opportunity to review the project and realign it to the strategic objectives.

You should decide whether to carry on, wait for some more information due to issues found in the examine stage or if it's best to completely stop the project, continuing to involve stakeholders in the decisions.

Using the pause or proceed planning built in the early stages and agreed together to allow a decision to be made together.

The tool presents different steps asking why and when you might stop or pause the project and what everybody's role that may be. You should work through all these questions with your stakeholders and come to an agreement together on all the questions in the tool.

It's also useful to think about what would happen if you did nothing. It helps to consider the consequences of inaction.

It's best to do this regularly throughout the project, especially when changes in the development may mean reviewing the strategic objectives.

Asking these questions regularly should drive teams to define and deliver better projects and help manage the scope.

After using these tools and those in the preceding sections, you will have a considerable volume of information about your proposed scheme.

The next step section helps you understand where to go with this to take the proposals forward.

Any feedback you wish to send the team would be welcome.

We're always looking to improve the site and the tools on it.

If you use the tools in the development of your project, we'd also love to hear that and potentially use it as a case study on the website. So please contact us.