

Emailed to: LTC.CONULTATION@TRAVERSE.LTD

12 August 2020

Dear Sirs,

Transport for the South East response to the Lower Thames Crossing design refinement consultation.

I am writing to you as Lead Officer for Transport for the South East (TfSE) to provide a response to the Lower Thames Crossing design refinement consultation.

Transport for the South East (TfSE) is a sub-national transport body (STB), which represents sixteen local transport authorities. These are Brighton and Hove, East Sussex, Hampshire, Kent, Medway, Surrey, West Sussex, the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton, and the six Berkshire unitary authorities. These authorities are represented on the Shadow Partnership Board along with representatives from the region's five Local Enterprise Partnerships, District and Borough authorities, the protected landscapes in the TfSE area, Highways England, Network Rail and Transport for London.

TfSE provides a single voice on the transport interventions needed to support sustainable economic growth across its geography. The South East is crucial to the UK economy and is the nation's major international gateway for people and business with some of the largest ports and airports in the country. High-quality transport infrastructure is critical to making the South East more competitive, contributing to national prosperity and improving the lives of our residents.

As stated in our responses both to the statutory consultation on the scheme which took place at the end of 2018, and the further consultation in March 2020, TfSE welcomes proposals for a new Lower Thames Crossing (LTC). Our Transport Strategy published in July 2020 identified the need for improvements to the strategic connectivity between the international gateways. The LTC will enhance connectivity between the port of Dover and key customers in the Midlands and the North as well as providing resilience for the Dartford Crossing.

The additional capacity and congestion relief to the Dartford crossing that the new LTC will provide is welcomed, however, with the creation of this new strategic route there will be increased pressure and wider traffic impacts on both the strategic and local road networks within the TfSE area. It is vital that the Strategic Road Network (SRN) is not looked at in isolation and that wider network improvements including those required on the local road network are delivered alongside the new LTC to maximise the benefits and ensure the success of the new crossing whilst also minimising the impacts on local communities.

Therefore, whilst we welcome the recent announcements within RIS2 that the Brenley Corner and A2 Access to Dover schemes are to be developed as pipeline schemes for RIS3, it is essential not only that these schemes are delivered in a timely manner alongside the LTC, but that the wider impacts across the local road network are also considered holistically. A number of schemes led by Kent County Council which will provide capacity enhancements on the local road network feature within TfSE's priority schemes for the Major Road Network (MRN) and Large Local Major (LLM) programmes. We would welcome the opportunity to work closely with both Highways England and Kent County Council to ensure that the right package of mitigation and complementary measures is brought forward alongside the LTC across the highway network as a whole.

In relation to this design refinement consultation, TfSE remain concerned by the omission of the previously proposed Tilbury junction. Local connections are vital to ensuring the forecast economic and regeneration benefits are achieved in Kent, Thurrock and Essex. A significant economic opportunity will be missed if these important local connections are not provided. For similar reasons, we also remain concerned that the proposed A13/A1089 junction is not an all movements junction.

The absence of any rest and service facilities within the design is a concern for TfSE. TfSE's recent Freight Logistics and International Gateways Study that was developed as part of our Transport Strategy, recognised that inappropriate lorry parking is already a significant issue in Kent and the complete omission of any rest and service facilities will only further exacerbate this issue.

Whilst TfSE considers that it is important to facilitate improved connectivity to our international gateways, this needs to be undertaken in ways that minimise impacts on the environment and communities. The TfSE Transport Strategy highlights the need for improving air quality and achieving net zero-carbon by the year 2050. Road transport is a leading source of carbon emissions and it is imperative that the completion of this scheme does not counteract the efforts of local authorities and central government in improving area quality and achieving net-zero carbon. TfSE would expect that in developing the scheme details, Highways England continue to have due regard for the environmental impacts of the scheme, particularly in relation to air quality, and the impacts on protected landscapes, and that appropriate mitigation is provided.

This is an officer response. The TfSE Shadow Partnership Board meets on 22 October 2020 and will consider the draft response and a further iteration of this response may therefore follow.

We look forward to working with the Highways England on the outcomes of the design refinement consultation.

Yours sincerely,

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Lead Officer, Transport for the South East