

Emailed to: consultation@cars2.networkrail.co.uk

9 September 2020

Dear Sirs,

Transport for the South East response to the Unblocking the Croydon Bottleneck consultation.

I am writing to you as Lead Officer for Transport for the South East (TfSE) to provide a response to the Unblocking the Croydon Bottleneck 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 response to the previous consultation on the scheme which took place at the end of 2018, TfSE strongly supports Network Rail's plans for the scheme to improve services on the Brighton Main Line around Croydon. As identified within the TfSE transport strategy, the Brighton Mainline is one of the key transport corridors within the south east, and many coastal towns and conurbations along the length of the route depend on the efficient running of the mainline for their economic prosperity. Therefore we are supportive of plans to improve rail service reliability on the line which will have wider economic benefit to the TfSE area.

We are mindful of the impact that the current Coronavirus pandemic has had on the use of the railway during 2020, and the uncertainty around the length of time it will take for passenger numbers to return to pre-Covid levels. It is our view that the East Croydon scheme, and other railway enhancement schemes, must proceed to assist with the economic recovery of the south east. Many of the longer-term challenges, including reducing carbon emissions to net zero by 2050, and tackling congestion and encouraging modal shift, are dependent on the long-term planning of enhancements to the railway network. In the short term, we would encourage Network Rail to undertake analysis of reliability improvements to services, which have occurred during the pandemic, and embed these into timetables to improve the passenger experience and the overall reliability of the Brighton Mainline.



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Over the last 20 years, passenger numbers on the Brighton Mainline have more than doubled, with forecast growth by the early 2030's expected to reach 90 million journeys. TfSE encourages Network Rail to ensure that forecast growth is accommodated in the planning stages for the East Croydon remodelling programme, taking into account the potential for further enhancements which may arise from the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP) and from Third Party Rail Investments. TfSE encourages Network Rail to have due regard to enhancements which may include new lines (including Crossrail 2, and others) as well as other remodelling programmes such as Victoria Station improvements, that may enhance journey opportunities across the region over the next 30 years, which could help to create the basis for further economic growth across the South East.

TfSE would also encourage Network Rail to ensure that future opportunities to enhance rail freight capacity through East Croydon are considered during the planning process. This could facilitate a shift from road haulage to rail on some freight flows, with resulting positive economic and environmental impacts of modal shift by reducing road congestion.

East Croydon is the meeting point of rail routes that serve the wider south east area, therefore maintaining a level of service throughout the construction process is crucial. We would encourage Network Rail to ensure that every effort is made to avoid weekend and bank holiday closures of the mainline, particularly over the summer months, to ensure that the visitor economies of places that rely on seasonal trade are not unduly impacted.

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 Network Rail as the Croydon enhancement scheme moves from planning to implementation, to ensure that the resulting economic benefits are realised across the TfSE area.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rupert Clubb', written in a cursive style.

Rupert Clubb
Lead Officer, Transport for the South East