

Report to: **Partnership Board – Transport for the South East**

Date of meeting: **22 July 2021**

By: **Lead Officer, Transport for the South East**

Title of report: **Communications and Stakeholder Engagement update**

Purpose of report: **To update the board on communications and stakeholder engagement activity**

RECOMMENDATION:

The members of the Partnership Board are recommended to note the engagement and communication activity that has been undertaken since January 2021.

1. Introduction

1.1 Communications and engagement activity since the last board meeting has continued to be carried out in an entirely virtual format. Engagement has focused primarily on supporting the technical work programme and the preparation of the strategic investment plan (SIP) consultation process, as well as supporting our new board members. We have continued to build relationships with current and new stakeholders.

1.2 Interest in Transport for the South East continues to grow, with over 2,500 individuals from 900 organisations now registered on our database and receiving regular communication from us. Social media engagement continues, with a focus on events and news stories; press coverage has been limited owing to the media's focus on the pandemic and related issues as well as the pre-election period. We continue to receive increasing numbers of speaker invitations to both national and local events covering a vast array of transport related topics.

1.3 Following the local elections in May 2021 we have welcomed five new board members to TfSE, each of whom have attended an introductory meeting with the Chair. We have also had one change to our district and borough councillor representation, with Cllr Colin Kemp replacing Cllr Ayesha Azad as the representative for the Surrey authorities.

1.4 This paper provides an update on recent activity, as well as updating Partnership Board members on the communications and engagement that is planned for the next few months.

2. Recent communications and engagement activity

Supporting the transport strategy and technical programme

2.1 In the period since the last Partnership Board meeting in January 2021, numerous stakeholder meetings have taken place to support work on the area studies and future mobility strategy. With all the area studies now underway, we have five working groups and five area study forums meeting regularly as well as the continuation of the Transport Strategy Working Group which is overseeing the work.

2.2 The meeting schedule for the remainder of 2021 has been carefully planned to minimise the risk of stakeholder fatigue and ensure that meetings are held at key points in the programme where the most value can be gained from attendance. However, it is recognised that there are a large number of meetings scheduled for 2021 and many stakeholders will attend multiple TfSE events. We are very grateful for the continued commitment of our key partners and stakeholders.

2.3 Work on the freight, logistics and international gateways strategy commenced in February, with two new stakeholder groups established to support the work. These groups bring together a diverse range of organisations, from central government to international gateway owners and operators, to haulage companies and first mile / last mile distributors. Engaging with these new stakeholders has enabled us to access valuable insight and experience within the sector and we hope to continue to facilitate a freight group or forum for the region post strategy publication. This will help us to effectively deliver the freight, logistics and international gateways strategy, which is due for presentation to the board in autumn/winter 2021.

2.4 We are currently working on the development of a stakeholder and communication plan for the SIP work programme and are working closely with colleagues to develop the specification to inform the engagement and consultation aspects of the work.

3. Broadening our engagement

3.1 We continue to facilitate discussions amongst a wide group of stakeholders who would not otherwise engage with one another. Our ability to bring people together from a variety of sectors and enable them to speak with one voice on a topic or agenda is positively received.

3.2 The universities stakeholder group met in February 2021, with a focus on shared work projects and opportunities for collaboration and again in May 2021 where the key topic was EV infrastructure and roll-out. Presentations were received from OLEV and BP Pulse. The next meeting of this group is scheduled for 15 July 2021 and will,

following a request made by attendees at the last meeting, include guest speakers from the DfT who will brief the group on the Bus Back Better and Great British Railways strategies. As always, board members are welcomed and encouraged to attend this interesting forum if they would like to.

3.3 The private sector stakeholder group met in March and May 2021 and continue to be actively engaged with and supportive of the work of TfSE. The group will meet again in the summer.

3.4 The communications & stakeholder engagement group is due to meet on 14 July 2021 to update partners on our technical programme, outline our early thinking on the SIP and discuss opportunities for partners to support communications and engagement, particularly around the SIP consultation taking place in summer 2022.

3.5 We have established a regional transport decarbonisation forum which met for the first time in June. This provides a forum for practitioners involved with the development of policy, strategy and action plans relating to the decarbonisation of surface transport. The group will:

- support the development of local policy strategy and action planning on transport decarbonisation,
- identify potential areas for joint working and collaboration,
- guide the work of Transport for the South East on transport decarbonisation and
- provide a mechanism for constructive engagement with the Department for Transport

3.6 We have also developed a transport decarbonisation data gathering survey on behalf of all 7 STBs. The data collection exercise is currently being completed by all of the local transport authorities in England and we will be coordinating the collective results for submission to the DfT over the summer.

3.7 TfSE officers have presented at several online events and seminars including:

- Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport (CILT) event
- Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE)
- Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation (CIHT)
- Consultation Institute annual conference
- Future Logistics Conference (ITT Hub)

3.8 A targeted engagement exercise with district and borough colleagues is planned for July, with each of the five county areas receiving geographically targeted briefing sessions. This will ensure that our colleagues are kept well informed on the progress of our technical work programme and will provide an opportunity to inform them of the SIP development process. The target audience is district and borough council leaders and

relevant portfolio holders, plus district and borough officers with an interest in planning, planning policy, economic development and public health. Sessions are scheduled as follows:

- Hampshire – 12 July – 11am
- West Sussex – 12 July – 1pm
- Surrey – 16 July – 11am
- East Sussex – 20 July – 1pm
- Kent – 23 July – 2.30pm

3.9 Board members have received invitations to speak at the event relevant to their area, as well as booking links to register should they wish to attend to observe.

4. Political engagement

4.1 A significant round of MP engagement took place in February and March to inform the development of our area studies programme. A questionnaire was sent to all MPs in the TfSE area, with responses received from around a quarter.

4.2 While we would have liked the number of responses to have been higher, it was a valuable further opportunity to engage with MPs and their offices on the work underway to develop our strategic investment plan, with many keen to remain involved in discussions and offering assistance re: convening regional groupings of MPs for briefings and updates on our work.

4.3 Hastings MP Sally Ann Hart has raised a couple of questions in the house recently and has specifically mentioned the good work of TfSE.

5. Events

5.1 **'Mobility 2050' (Mar 2021):** 130 attendees representing more than 100 different organisations joined us and our expert industry panel at our webinar on 18 March. It was an opportunity to share the key themes from our future mobility strategy with stakeholders ahead of its publication and to discuss how new and emerging technology can shape a better transport network in our region. You can watch the event, hosted by journalist and broadcaster Mike Pearse, on our [website](#).

5.2 **ITT Hub Future Transport Conference 2021 (Jul 2021):** Held at Farnborough International Conference Centre, this was one of the first major transport industry conferences and exhibitions to take place physically for almost 18 months. TfSE exhibited as part of an STB 'hub' featuring six of the seven STBs. Lead officer Rupert Clubb took part in a session on the future of passenger transport alongside leaders from the transport, logistics and energy sectors. The event was well attended and TfSE's presence was well received.

5.3 **Freight, logistics & international gateways strategy launch (Nov 2021):** We are intending to host a virtual event later this year to launch our strategy. It will operate on a similar basis to our 'Mobility 2050' event, with an expert panel joining us to discuss and debate the key elements of our strategy.

5.4 **Joint STB conference & exhibition (Mar 2022):** Plans are also under way, via the STB Liaison Group and STB Communications Group, for a national joint STB event in March 2022 at the NEC in Birmingham. This will be a multimodal conference focusing on long-term and strategic issues and attracting high-level speakers and delegates. A further update will be provided at the next board meeting.

6. Media, social media and digital communications

6.1 We have issued media responses to three major government announcements during the period: publication of the Government's 'Bus Back Better' strategy; publication of the Williams-Shapps Review and the creation of Great Britain's Railways; and most recently confirmation of Government funding for one of our priority MRN schemes, the A284 Lyminster bypass scheme in West Sussex. All three were covered in a mix of local and trade media.

6.2 Lead officer Rupert Clubb was interviewed by a journalist writing for Rail Review for a feature on rail devolution which is due to appear in the magazine's August issue.

6.3 Social media activity on TfSE channels remains lively, with content featuring our Covid-19 impacts work in particular continuing to fare extremely well in terms of engagement.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

7.1 We will continue to keep our communications and engagement activities under review in light of the Covid-19 situation. We continue to ensure our engagement is appropriate to the situation.

7.2 The Partnership Board are recommended to note and agree the engagement and communication activity that has been undertaken since January 2021.

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