

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

Date of meeting: **18 October 2021**

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

Title of report: **Lead Officer’s Report**

Purpose of report: **To update the Board on the recent activities of Transport for the South East**

RECOMMENDATION:

The members of the Partnership Board are recommended to note the activities of Transport for the South East between July - October 2021.

1. Introduction

1.1 In recent weeks, the Department for Transport have asked STBs to prepare non-competitive funding bids for additional in-year funding for four new areas of work. These are decarbonisation, buses, EV infrastructure strategy and local authority capability.

1.2 Further detail on the request and TfSE’s proposed bid can be found in agenda item 8.

1.3 This is a positive development from the DfT and will be another opportunity for TfSE to demonstrate how they can support local authorities and the department in achieving their priorities. As part of the process, there have been meetings between STBs and DfT including a roundtable discussion focussed on decarbonisation.

1.4 The team and I also met recently with the Great British Railways (GBR) transition team who we look forward to working with over the coming months. They have much work to do and it’s clear they see STBs as a vital stakeholder in the development of GBR. We will be establishing some technical meetings with them to consider the whole industry strategic plan (WISP).

1.5 TfSE has also recently signed a Joint Engagement and Action Plan with National Highways to ensure the two organisations work collaboratively to support respective work programmes, and seek to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes for transport users, regional economies, and the environment. There are five objectives, one of which is to take due consideration of each other’s current and emerging strategies and underpinning technical analysis, where possible.

1.6 With the recent ministerial reshuffle, Rachel Maclean MP has now departed from the DfT and Trudy Harrison MP is the new Parliamentary Under Secretary of State. At this moment, it is not clear if there are changes to the ministerial team’s responsibilities, or whether Trudy Harrison MP will continue with the future mobility agenda and Baroness Vere will continue with devolution responsibility.

1.7 The Transport Select Committee have also indicated they will be launching a road pricing inquiry in the Autumn which we will watch with interest.

2. National policy

Transport Decarbonisation Plan

2.1 The Transport Decarbonisation Plan (and related papers / plans / consultations) was published on the 14 July 2021.

2.2 Although the plan covers many elements of transport and the key messages are welcomed, there are some aspects that will need further consideration. The plan does rely heavily on technology to achieve the carbon reduction results. Technology that in some cases, does not exist yet. The plan will also need to evolve so it is clear on how its progress will be monitored and what targets have been set.

2.3 However, there are some signals that mark potential positive changes, for example the reform of the way local transport infrastructure is funded to drive decarbonisation at a local level.

2.4 It is positive that STBs have been identified as having a key role to play in the decarbonisation agenda facilitating cross regional work and providing a single voice on a pathway to net zero. Further detail on the role for local authorities and STBs will be given in the local authority toolkit expected later this year.

UK Hydrogen Strategy

2.5 The UK Hydrogen Strategy was published on 17 August 2021. Although quite a technical document focussed on hydrogen production and the hydrogen economy, the document recognises that hydrogen is likely to be fundamental to achieving net zero in transport and that this sector is a crucial early market for hydrogen.

2.6 This strategy is a helpful first step in building the hydrogen infrastructure networks that will be needed in the coming years.

Forthcoming national policy

2.7 As outlined in agenda item 8, TfSE will be submitting a multi-year funding bid to the DfT in advance of the Budget and Comprehensive Spending Review on 27 October 2021. This spending review will also be important in understanding how the Government plans investment to tackle decarbonisation and levelling up.

2.8 Another big event on the calendar is COP26 (01-13 November 2021) with Transport Day taking place on the 10 November. It has been confirmed that the Government's cross-departmental Net Zero Strategy and the Treasury's Net Zero Review will be published before COP26, and these will be critical documents in understanding the role of local authorities and regional bodies in tackling decarbonisation.

2.9 In addition, we are expecting the Local Authority Toolkit (following on from the Transport Decarbonisation Plan) to be published by the end of this year, and again, this

will be critically important in providing that guidance to local authorities and regional bodies.

2.10 The Levelling Up White Paper (includes devolution) is expected also before the end of the year subject to the recent ministerial reshuffle.

2.11 The DfT is expected to publish the Future of Transport: Rural Strategy. Although there is no publication date as yet, this will be an important policy document for the TfSE geography.

3. Work of Transport for the South East

Future roles and responsibilities

3.1 The work undertaken by Arup to provide recommendations for the future roles and responsibilities of TfSE has come to an end after extensive engagement with our key partners over the past few months, including a board workshop. Further information can be found in agenda item 6.

Strategic investment plan

3.2 The procurement process is currently underway for the strategic investment plan workstream and work will soon begin on this key piece of work for TfSE. Further information can be found in agenda item 11.

Joint STB work

3.3 The focus for joint STB working and discussions in recent weeks has been centred on the bids requested to be submitted for the four additional DfT workstreams as in some cases, joint bids will be appropriate.

3.4 In addition, conversations have taken place regarding the comprehensive spending review bids.

3.5 Work in the sub groups on rural mobility and freight are also still continuing.

Events

3.6 The only recent event of note took place on the 07 September. I attended Railtex's conference in Birmingham to speak as part of their growth and geography panel discussing devolution and levelling up.

TfSE Team

3.7 Further to Russell Spink's departure from the team, I am delighted to now welcome Hollie Farley as the new Communications Manager for TfSE. Hollie joins us via a secondment from East Sussex County Council.

3.8 Recruitment for a replacement for Rob Dickin's role is still being determined as it will be defined by the technical work TfSE will be able to undertake following confirmation of our spending settlement.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 In conclusion, autumn is expected to be a busy time for some key Government publications relevant to transport and decarbonisation for local government and regional bodies.

4.2 The Partnership Board is recommended to note the activities undertaken by TfSE.

RUPERT CLUBB
Lead Officer
Transport for the South East

Contact Officer: Jasmin Barnicoat
Tel. No. 07749 436080
Email: jasmin.barnicoat@eastsussex.gov.uk