

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

Date of meeting: **24 January 2022**

By: **Chair of the Transport Forum**

Title of report: **Transport Forum Update**

Purpose of report: **To summarise the Transport Forum meeting of 14 December 2021 and inform the Board of the Transport Forum’s recommendations.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The members of the Partnership Board are recommended to:

- (1) Note the recent meeting of the Transport Forum; and**
 - (2) Note and consider the comments from the Forum.**
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1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Partnership Board on the most recent meeting of the Transport Forum.

1.2 The meeting took place virtually on Tuesday 14 December 2021 and was attended by more than 30 members of the Forum.

2. Feedback from the Transport Forum Meeting on 14 December 2021

Attendance options for future Forum meetings

2.1 Geoff French, Transport Forum Chair asked the forum for their views on how future forum meetings should be held (subject to Government guidance). The forum discussed the benefits of virtual (allows more people to attend as no travel time and also reduces carbon emissions) and in person meetings (improved interaction and focus between attendees).

2.2 The forum agreed that a combination of virtual and 1 or 2 meetings a year in-person could be considered. This will be kept under review and at a suitable point in time, where guidance allows, an in-person meeting could be arranged in 2022.

Great British Railway Transition Team Presentation

2.3 Anit Chandarana – Chief of Staff, Great British Railway (GBR) Transition Team (TT), gave a presentation on the Williams-Shapps plan for rail and what is now happening to make this plan a reality.

2.4 The forum heard the difficulties rail was experiencing (even before the pandemic) and what the Williams-Shapps plan for rail was hoping to achieve. However, with a timescale of mid-2023 to late 2024 for GBR to become a fully-fledged organisation, a body was needed to emerge now in order to create GBR. GBR TT’s clear purpose is “to create a simpler, better railway for everyone in Britain.” The forum were taken through the purpose and focus of GBR TT and the various workstreams associated with it, including an explanation of the boundaries of the work, for example GBR TT will not be managing current private sector franchises.

2.5 The Forum understood that the call for evidence for the Whole Industry Strategic Plan for Rail had just been published and encouraged anyone with an interest in rail to respond. TfSE will be submitting a response to this call for evidence.

Summary of Forum comments

2.6 In response to queries raised by the forum, it was confirmed that the GBR TT are aiming to develop the operating model and bring together the fragmented parts of the system to enable more seamless connection to other interrelated transport modes (for example active travel). In addition, how technology can be used to transform current processes (for example with regards to ticket barriers). It was also clarified the GBR TT are also identifying and developing the financial model of the business to ensure clear oversight and transparency and to deliver, by the end of year 5, the £1.5bn pa, targeted in the white paper.

2.7 It was confirmed the GBR TT are engaging with sub-national transport bodies and they are viewed as an important stakeholder in the development of GBR, especially as GBR will be a highly devolved organisation with decisions made as locally as they can.

Update on TfSE's freight strategy

2.8 Mark Valleley provided an update on the freight, logistics and gateways strategy which was nearing completion. The forum heard how the strategy was developed and the different work packages it contains.

2.9 It was explained how the action plan will be taken forward once the strategy is complete with a freight forum established to offer the oversight to move the work forward. The next steps were also outlined, including the final draft of the strategy being presented at the Partnership Board meeting on 24 January 2022 for approval. TfSE are also awaiting the outcome of the comprehensive spending review bid as this did include a request for resources to take forward the implementation of the strategy.

Summary of Forum comments

2.10 In response to some queries and comments raised by the forum, it was clarified that infrastructure consideration (for example hydrogen refuelling) is included in the document and TfSE is working with other STBs to identify suitable and key locations for this infrastructure.

2.11 The strategy does also include a freight on rail element and reflects Network Rail's long running and ongoing work in this area. Work package 3 looks at key points on the rail network that with some alterations, could open up more opportunity for this way of moving freight.

2.12 With regards to lorry parking there are some good practice examples and it is important to understand how these services can be rolled out further, but consideration also needs to be given as to how they are funded, either with public or private funding. Recent Transport Select Committee evidence was highlighted as links in with the work undertaken in this strategy on local authority advice from Government on lorry parking.

2.13 The role of last mile deliveries and consolidation centres was discussed and it was explained they are an important element for encouraging modal shift for the last mile. However, the concept (and trials) is there but more work is needed to make them commercially viable.

2.14 The forum asked why the planned Lower Thames Crossing scheme does not include a rail connection. It was offered that the scheme has been primarily designed as a relief scheme for the existing Thames crossing and given the majority of the freight

traffic using the existing link is HGV taking into account roll on roll movements at nearby ports which in itself would not justify the need for a new rail crossing to be introduced at the new Lower Thames Crossing.

Updates

2.15 Jasmin Barnicoat gave a brief update on the area studies and confirmed there will be a joint area studies forum meeting held on 03 March 2022. This will be an opportunity to hear about the packages and the scope and scale of the programme and outputs. The forum will be asked for feedback on the emerging strategic narratives and if they are being framed in the best way to make the case for Government.

2.16 The forum were also provided with the current status and proposed timeline of the SIP programme. In addition, TfSE's recent consultation submissions were outlined.

Review 2022 Transport Forum work plan

2.17 The Forum reviewed the proposed 2022 Transport Forum work plan. Additional items were suggested for inclusion in the plan including:

- Government planning reforms and how they link with transport planning
- The role of Hydrogen and how we co-ordinate the roll out of associated infrastructure
- Rail freight – where are the gaps in the South East network

3. Future Transport Forum Engagement

3.1 The next meeting of the Transport Forum will be held on Tuesday 08 March 2022. The agenda will focus on the emerging outputs from the area studies and the emerging strategic narratives. The forum will also be updated on the spending review outcome and the next steps for the DfT additional workstreams bids.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 It is recommended that the Board note the successful virtual meeting of the Transport Forum and the important communication link this provides TfSE with its key stakeholders.

4.2 It is recommended that the Board note and consider the comments raised by Forum members.

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