

TfSE Transport Forum
22 June 2021
Minutes
1-4pm

Item
<p style="text-align: center;">1. Welcome and Apologies</p>
<p>Geoff French (chair) welcomed the Transport Forum and apologies were noted. This meeting was held virtually and Geoff explained how it would be managed.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">2. Minutes from Previous Meeting</p>
<p>The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">3. Bus Back Better</p>
<p>Geoff briefly introduced the Government's recently published Bus Back Better strategy. Andrew Wilson, Public Transport Manager at Hampshire County Council explained the two main features of the plan - bus service improvement plans and enhanced partnerships. Andrew also outlined how Hampshire are approaching the strategy.</p> <p>Andrew confirmed that Hampshire have mobilised rapidly and drafted in internal and external staff to take forward this work. There are many partners to co-ordinate and a large task is bringing them all together over the coming weeks.</p> <p>Andrew raised some key challenges including; how to define the asks of operators; how they ensure operators work together when there are issues of competition; and possible cross boundary issues.</p> <p>Andrew believes there is a place for the DfT and TfSE to share learning as widely as possible.</p> <p>Edward Hodgson (Managing Director, Stagecoach South) and Martin Harris (Managing Director, Brighton & Hove Buses & Metrobus) also gave a presentation from an operator's perspective. Edward explained the importance of enhanced partnerships between bus operators and local transport authorities and emphasised that an important aspect of the plan is road space reallocation / bus priority.</p> <p>They explained that clarity was needed on funding and there needed to be a consistency in policy across Government and local authorities.</p> <p>Rural mobility issues were raised including the need to identify and trial alternative bus solutions for rural communities. Examples of best practice can be drawn from across the country.</p> <p>Another crucial aspect in improving the bus experience for passengers is to continue to support and roll out smarter payment systems. There is a need and desire to overcome issues to integrate payments across modes.</p> <p>A key aspect that was identified by TfSE and the speakers, was that to succeed with this plan, ambition is required. Ambition is needed to attract and receive the funding.</p>

The Forum queried how the rural issue could be tackled - how DRT schemes could become commercially viable and how other, alternative operators (e.g. community transport) could help. However, there is no easy answer and local transport authorities are doing their best to trial schemes and think creatively.

The forum also discussed the need for a strategic view to ensure collaboration across boundaries. It is also important for the whole end to end journey to be understood so it can be made seamless.

It was felt that TfSE can assist with this strategic overview, particularly regarding the infrastructure that is required. It could help to speed up the process.

Comments were raised that TfSE is only focused on roads. Rupert clarified that this is absolutely not the case. TfSE were asked by the Department for Transport to co-ordinate the prioritisation and submission of MRN / LLM / RIS schemes for the South East, and there is a place for roads, especially when you consider it is used by freight and public transport. However, TfSE are strong advocates of public transport and this is clear in the transport strategy and other work currently underway. TfSE have fed back to the DfT the view that there should not be different funding streams for different travel modes, but that there should be just one for all transport investment. This would allow the right schemes to be put forward for the right amount of funding that would tackle the carbon emissions issue too.

4. Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail

Tiff Lynch introduced the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail and outlined some of the key details of the strategy. This included 3 key elements – franchises replaced by passenger service contracts / better fares and ticketing / creating Great British Railways (GBR). Tiff also outlined the practical details surrounding Great British Railways including the need for primary legislation and expected timescales.

Tiff emphasised that the plan has a strong focus on partnerships, however, it is unclear at the moment how this will look or how it will work.

Alex Hellier (Head of Strategic Planning - Kent & Sussex, Network Rail) explained some of the key issues identified by Keith Williams. Alex also confirmed that interim arrangements will be put in place and the plan is to get GBR up and running as quickly as possible.

Silke Elvery (Rail Strategy Planning Manager, Rail Delivery Group) shared her thoughts on the plan. Silke was pleased to see a strong commitment to the private sector and that passengers are central to the proposals. There is still a lot of detail to be defined however, especially around partnerships.

The forum questioned the requirements for culture change within the different organisations to ensure GBR does not just become a 'larger Network Rail'. In addition, how might the role of Rail Delivery Group change under these new plans.

Some positive aspects were identified by the forum as the new arrangements of franchising may bring in new participants from the private sector. There will also be more positive flexibility in the franchising agreements.

There were questions regarding pricing and fares. However, these are questions for the Government to answer and at the moment, their position remains unclear.

There are ongoing conversations between STBs and the DfT to ensure that whatever comes next, TfSE can help build.

5. Future Mobility Strategy

Mark Valleley updated the Forum on the future mobility strategy (further to the webinar held in March). Mark confirmed how the strategy was carried out and what the outcomes are. Mark also talked about next steps for this strategy (including presenting it to the board in July).

The main concerns raised by the forum were around freight and the potential negative impact of the possible introduction of consolidation centres in urban areas on freight operators.

6. Updates

Jasmin Barnicoat confirmed that the last 2 area studies have now commenced, and work is progressing well with the whole programme. Jasmin confirmed that, as outlined in the presentation at the previous forum meeting, specific to the context and objectives for each study, a wide variety of interventions are being assessed and developed.

The freight strategy is also progressing well and to date, there has been great engagement in the working group and freight forum.

Jasmin also outlined the TfSE submissions to the below recent consultations;

- ICE consultation and discussion paper: UK strategic infrastructure planning – a post-National Infrastructure Strategy review
- Spatial Framework for Hampshire’s Natural Environment and Infrastructure

Responses in progress;

- Transport for the North - Decarbonisation Strategy Public Consultation

The forum discussed the updates and there were requests for active travel to have a greater influence in the area studies. A query was raised regarding the Government’s active travel funding, however Mark confirmed it is for local transport authorities to bid for. TfSE have been clear that they believe there should be a move away from short term competitive bidding, as it is resource intensive for local authorities with no guarantees of a positive outcome. TfSE are clear that we support longer term investment.

7. Forum comments for the Shadow Partnership Board

Overall, the forum believe there is a role for TfSE to support local transport authorities with a strategic view of bus services and infrastructure. They are also supportive of TfSE (hopefully) working in partnership with DfT and GBR to improve the rail passenger experience in the South East.

The forum do have concerns with the implications of future mobility and net zero carbon emissions targets on freight – but the forum will be updated in a few months on the freight strategy once it has made more progress.

8. AOB

Geoff confirmed the next Transport Forum meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday 21 September 2021.**