

Rail Policy Position Statement

V7.0 October 23 2023



Context

Rail has an important role to play in delivering the vision and goals of our Transport Strategy. It has key advantages over other forms of travel through its ability to carry large volumes of people quickly, safely, efficiently, and in an environmentally sustainable way – often directly from the heart of one community to another.

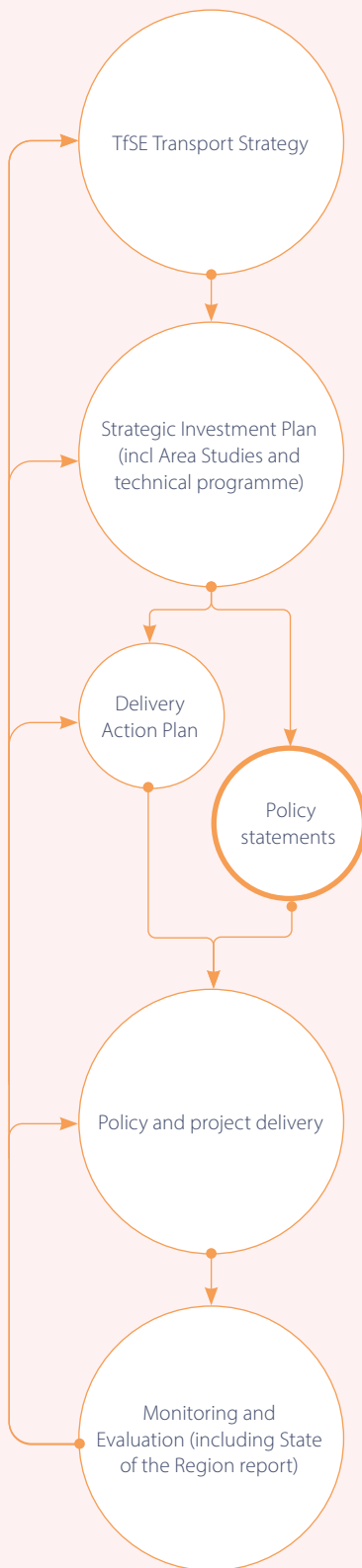
In most circumstances, passenger rail services are faster, cleaner (both in terms of carbon and air pollution), more space efficient, and safer than road transport. Rail is especially well suited for inter-urban and longer-distance journeys. This is also true for freight, where Network Rail estimates that 1 train load of aggregate removes up to 76 lorries.

Rail has a distinguished, long and complex history in the south east and wider UK, having seen considerable competition from expanding highway networks and the permanent closure of many lines and stations. The south east has a relatively unique rail context in that the largely radial network serves an extensive commuter market to Central London. Orbital connectivity in the south east, however, is poor in the large part, where it is often faster to travel via Central London moving between the south east's largest urban conurbations.

There are plentiful opportunities to make rail travel much more desirable than driving. With the right suite of policies and investments, the amount and proportion of people and goods travelling by rail can be improved towards levels seen in similar contexts across other parts of Western Europe.



Transport for the South East



In the south east we need a different approach if we are to address these challenges. This requires a more integrated approach to planning, designing, funding and delivering rail interventions across the region. The goals we seek require an integrated, multi-modal approach to support getting to and from stations and one that makes best use of the rail infrastructure we already have.

Our **Transport Strategy**, published in 2020, sets out how we will tackle these challenges and achieve our goals. In the Transport Strategy, we set out the following vision for 2050:

By 2050, the south east of England will be a leading global region for net zero carbon, sustainable economic growth where integrated transport, digital and energy networks have delivered a step change in connectivity and environmental quality. A high-quality, reliable, safe and accessible transport network will offer seamless door-to-door journeys enabling our businesses to compete and trade more effectively in the global marketplace and giving our residents and visitors the highest quality of life.

To support our vision, Transport for the South East submitted a **Strategic Investment Plan** to government in 2023. We have engaged widely with stakeholders to ensure the plan aligns with both their needs and their expectations in a sustainable and financially responsible manner. It is a plan developed by the south east, for the south east.

The Strategic Investment Plan is supported by thematic plans, including one about **Rail**. This document builds on the thematic plan and presents Transport for the South East's position on the continuing role of rail in realising our vision. It also sets out the actions Transport for the South East will lead on and deliver with our partners.

What we're going to do to deliver our 2050 vision



We will continue to work with central government and its agencies, rail operators and local transport authorities as well as planning authorities, other statutory bodies, and communities to deliver the interventions and infrastructure improvements across the rail network identified in the Strategic Investment Plan.

Our role will focus on advocacy and promotion, guidance and policy development, and supporting scheme development.

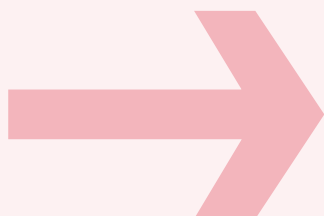
Guidance and policy development

To maximise the benefits of rail, both for passengers and for freight, there is a need to improve our rail network across the south east, making it more reliable, attractive, and wide-reaching.

To achieve this, the active and effective promotion of rail across all levels is needed. Furthermore, rail will need effective consideration within Local Transport Plans, to make the case for localised improvements to accessibility.

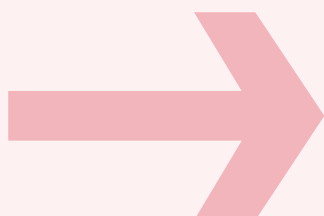
Action 1 – Actively promote and advocate for rail across the south east

Promote passenger and freight rail in the south east by working collaboratively with stakeholders. This will include the Department for Transport, Network Rail, Great British Rail, local authorities and rail groups/partnerships, and neighbouring Sub-national Transport Bodies (and our newly formed South East Rail Partnership with England's Economic Heartland and Transport East) and Transport for London.



Action 2 – Build local authority rail capabilities

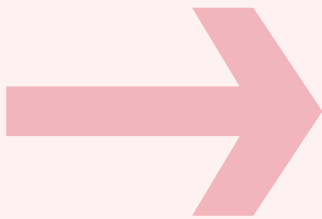
Through the Regional Centre of Excellence, build local transport authorities' capability with respect to rail plans as part of Local Transport Plans.



Supporting scheme development

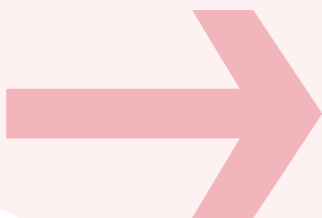
Some of the rail interventions identified are large and complex, and at the time of writing do not have a scheme promoter, such as Network Rail, to develop them. We do not believe that this should prevent the initial stages of development, such as a strategic feasibility study, from being considered, and the case made for future investment or involvement from our strategic partners.

Business cases will be instrumental in making the case for investment. The best way of securing funding is, therefore, to prioritise those schemes that offer the most compelling case for intervention.



Action 3 – Facilitate the delivery of the largest and most complex cross-boundary rail schemes

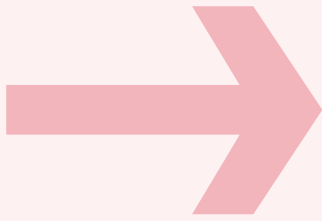
Develop strategic studies for the largest and most complex cross-boundary interventions that do not have a scheme promoter, providing the foundations to be built upon once funding opportunities or scheme delivery partners have been identified.



Action 4 – Undertake effective early-stage scheme and business case development

Secure and allocate resource funding for early-stage scheme and business case development for rail schemes, including support from both our analytical framework programme and our Regional Centre of Excellence.



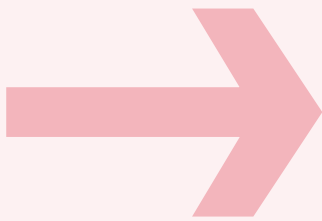


Action 5 – Develop effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks

Work with partners to develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks and scheme specific plans to measure delivery and performance and gather insights and lessons learnt.

Advocacy and promotion

Over the last two years, we have been working with key stakeholders and technical advisors to develop ‘packages of interventions’ that aim to deliver our vision and objectives for the south east’s rail network. Further information on these packages can be found on our website.



Action 6 – Provide effective policy and scheme and package advice

Engage with central government partners to provide advice on policy and the case for schemes and packages to be included in development and delivery programmes.



Next steps

Reflecting our status as the Sub-national Transport Body for the south east we will work with our delivery partners and other stakeholders to implement the actions included in this policy position statement. We will tailor our approach to the mode, scale, and level of development of each prioritised intervention.

We will use our Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to report our progress against these actions on an annual basis.

Contact us

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