

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

Date of meeting: **29 January 2024**

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

Title of report: **Responses to consultations**

Purpose of report: **To agree the draft responses submitted in response to various consultations**

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***RECOMMENDATIONS:***

The members of the Partnership Board are recommended to agree the draft responses to the following consultations:

- (1) Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) –  
Public engagement on potential changes to Southern’s West Coastway services**
  - (2) Reading Borough Council –  
Reading Transport Strategy 2040**
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**1. Introduction**

1.1 Transport for the South East (TfSE) has prepared responses to a number of recent consultations. This paper provides an overview of the responses to the following consultations:

- **Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) –  
Public engagement on potential changes to Southern’s West Coastway services**
- **Reading Borough Council –  
Reading Transport Strategy 2040**

**2. Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) – Public engagement on potential changes to Southern’s West Coastway services**

2.1 Govia Thameslink Railway held a period of engagement on proposals to change Southern services on the West Coastway from 2024, detailing scope and intentions of proposals and first phase of the engagement.

2.2 This consultation closed on 25 September 2023 and the officer level response that was submitted is contained in Appendix 1.

2.3 In our response we have pointed to the importance of the rail network in supporting delivery of the TfSE transport strategy and Strategic Investment Plan

(SIP), the network also providing travel solutions with much lower emissions than road-based alternatives; TfSE's technical modelling suggesting significant contribution to economic growth and decarbonisation by investment in rail network enhancements.

2.4 We have highlighted the value of existing positive and cooperative working relationships between TfSE and GTR's operating network in the south east, confirming broad support for improvements to the timetable on the West Coastway service that form part of the SIP Sussex Coast Rail package and referring to specific recommendations from the West Coastway Strategic Study.

2.5 Our response seeks assurances regarding the implementation of further phases for continued improved services on the West Coastway line and building on these initial changes, noting certain concerns in relation to proposed changes with suggested areas for consideration including in-station and to/from station access.

### **3. Reading Borough Council – Reading Transport Strategy 2040**

3.1 Reading Borough Council held a period of consultation on their new Local Transport Plan.

3.2 This consultation closed on 11 December 2023 and the officer level response that was submitted is contained in Appendix 2.

3.3 TfSE notes with interest the influence of the Reading 2040 Vision and the Reading Local Plan vision in developing the overall vision for transport in Reading; welcoming this in its provision of opportunity to ensure that the impacts of transport are seen from a place-based and user perspective, and not simply on transport's own terms.

3.4 Further comment recognises the Reading 2040 vision as exhibiting a good translation of TfSE's own vision for the south east to the local context in Reading; highlighted in our response are a number of areas with close alignment between these.

3.5 A number of suggestions are made by TfSE, including mention of strategic connectivity to nearby areas as well, highlighting TfSE's transport strategy reference to trips into and out of other areas and proposing additional text for inclusion at the end of the vision.

3.6 A review of alignment of Reading's transport strategy 2040 objectives and TfSE's transport strategy strategic priorities has been provided; in addition, TfSE has recommended a number of specific changes relating to listed Strategic Priorities in TfSE's own strategy (either through additional objectives or expanded sub-text that clarifies the meaning of specific objectives).

3.7 We recognise challenges and opportunities faced by Reading in the preparation of this transport strategy, referring in detail to these and policies and implementation and proposing the addition of certain detail; noting importance of alignment of this strategy with the SIP.

3.8 TfSE has confirmed its willingness to work with Reading Borough Council on detailed text in relation to strategic connectivity for proposed inclusion, summary text provided at this point.

3.9 Also proposed is inclusion of a package of schemes established in the SIP that will improve strategic infrastructure (summary table provided). Where such schemes are already mentioned in the strategy (notably Reading Mass Transit), it has been noted that TfSE would welcome supporting text within the document itself to highlight that such schemes are also contained within TfSE's SIP as a priority scheme for this area.

#### **4. Conclusion and recommendations**

4.1 The members of the Partnership Board are recommended to agree the draft responses to consultations that are detailed in this report.

**RUPERT CLUBB**

**Lead Officer**

**Transport for the South East**

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25 September 2023

Dear Martin,

**Public engagement on potential changes to Southern's West Coastway services**

I am writing to you as Lead Officer for Transport for the South East (TfSE) in response to the consultation you launched in June on Govia Thameslink Railway's (GTR) proposals to improve Southern services on the West Coastway from 2024.

TfSE is a sub-national transport body (STB) for the South East of England, bringing together leaders from across the local government, business and transport sectors to speak with one voice on our region's strategic transport needs. Since its inception in 2017, TfSE has quickly emerged as a powerful and effective partnership for our region. We have a [30-year transport strategy](#) in place which carries real weight and influence and will shape government decisions about where, when and how to invest in our region to 2050. The Secretary of State has confirmed that they will have regard to our strategy in developing new policy. We work closely with the Department for Transport (DfT) to provide advice to the Secretary of State and our ambition is to become a statutory body with devolved powers over key strategic transport issues.

Our principal decision-making body, the [Partnership Board](#), brings together representatives from our 16 constituent local transport authorities, five Local Enterprise Partnerships, district and borough authorities, protected landscapes, Highways England, Network Rail and Transport for London.

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Our [Strategic Investment Plan \(SIP\) for South East England](#) provides a framework for investment in strategic transport infrastructure, services, and regulatory interventions in the coming three decades. The plan provides a framework for delivering our Transport Strategy, which:

- Is a blueprint for investment in the South East.
- Shows how we will achieve our ambitions for the South East.
- Is owned and delivered in partnership.
- Is a regional plan with evidenced support, to which partners can link their own local strategies and plans – a golden thread that connects policy at all levels.
- Provides a sequenced plan of multi-modal investment packages that are place based and outcome focused.
- Examines carbon emissions impacts as well as funding and financing options.

The plan presents a compelling case for action for investors, including government departments – notably the Treasury and Department for Transport (DfT) – as well as private sector investors. It is written for and on behalf of the South East's residents, communities, businesses and political representatives.

The rail network has an important role to play in supporting delivery of the TfSE transport strategy and SIP. Rail can provide travel solutions with much lower emissions than road-based alternatives (whether passenger or freight). Our technical modelling suggests that investment in rail network enhancements can make significant contributions to both economic growth and decarbonisation.

The TfSE area contains GTR's operating network south of Greater London. TfSE values the positive and cooperative working relationships it has with different representatives from the rail sector, including GTR.

Specified in our SIP as part of our Sussex Coast Rail package we broadly support improvements to the timetable on the West Coastway service. We are keen to see delivery of recommendations from the West Coastway Strategic Study, including increased service frequencies and timetable optimisation for local and strategic movements between Southampton, Havant, Chichester and Brighton.

We understand this is phase one and would like assurance that further phases will be implemented in order to continue improving services on the West Coastway line and build on these initial changes.

We are concerned about the loss of direct services and some longer journey times in the proposal. If the service change goes ahead, a good quality interchange experience will be essential at the relevant stations in terms of accessibility, convenience (e.g., maximising same-or cross platform interchange), quality of waiting areas, interchange time and providing supporting information.

GTR should continue to look at improving in-station accessibility and at encouraging more access to/from stations by foot and by cycle by considering the first mile/last mile element of their passengers' journeys.

Yours sincerely

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Lead Officer

Transport for the South East

# Reading Transport Strategy 2040

## Response from Transport for the South East

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Transport for the South East (TfSE) welcomes the opportunity to respond to Reading Borough Council's Reading Transport Strategy 2040 – Draft for Consultation.

1.2 TfSE is a sub-national transport body (STB) for the South East of England, bringing together leaders from across the local government, business and transport sectors to speak with one voice on our region's strategic transport needs. Since its inception in 2017, TfSE has quickly emerged as a powerful and effective partnership for our region. We have a [30-year transport strategy](#) in place which carries real weight and influence and will shape government decisions about where, when and how to invest in our region to 2050. The Secretary of State has confirmed that they will have regard to our strategy in developing new policy. We work closely with the Department for Transport (DfT) DfT to provide advice to the Secretary of State and our ambition is to become a statutory body with devolved powers over key strategic transport issues.

1.3 Our principal decision-making body, the [Partnership Board](#), brings together representatives from our 16 constituent local transport authorities, five Local Enterprise Partnerships, district and borough authorities, protected landscapes, Highways England, Network Rail and Transport for London.

1.4 Our [Strategic Investment Plan \(SIP\) for South East England](#) provides a framework for investment in strategic transport infrastructure, services, and regulatory interventions in the coming three decades. The plan presents a compelling case for action for investors, including government departments – notably the Treasury and Department for Transport (DfT) – as well as private sector investors. It is written for and on behalf of the South East's residents, communities, businesses and political representatives. The plan provides a framework for delivering our Transport Strategy, which:

- is a blueprint for investment in the South East;
- shows how we will achieve our ambitions for the South East;
- is owned and delivered in partnership;
- is a regional plan with evidenced support, to which partners can link their own local strategies and plans – a golden thread that connects policy at all levels;
- provides a sequenced plan of multi-modal investment packages that are place based and outcome focused; and
- examines carbon emissions impacts as well as funding and financing options.

1.5 TfSE welcome this opportunity to respond to the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 – Draft for Consultation – June 2023. We trust that our response will provide value to the work of Reading Borough Council in this area, but also form the basis for further engagement, especially as TfSE is undertaking a refresh of its own transport strategy throughout 2024/5. Specifically, we are keen to establish a 'golden thread' in policy terms so that Reading – as well as other Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) – is able to achieve its own goals whilst playing a significant role in achieving a wider vision for the South East.

### 2. Vision and Objectives

2.1 TfSE notes with interest the influence of the Reading 2040 Vision and the Reading Local Plan vision in developing the overall vision for transport in Reading. We welcome this, in that it provides an opportunity to ensure that the impacts of transport are seen from a place-based and user perspective, and not simply on transport's own terms.

2.2 The Reading 2040 vision exhibits a good translation of TfSE's vision for the South East to the local context in Reading. We have highlighted some of the areas where there is close alignment between our own vision and that of Reading's in the below table.

Reading Transport Strategy 2040 Vision	TfSE Transport Strategy Vision
Our vision is to deliver a sustainable transport system in Reading that creates an <b>attractive, green</b> and <b>vibrant town</b> with neighbourhoods that promote <b>healthy choices and wellbeing</b> . Future mobility options will enable everyone in Reading to thrive, enjoy an <b>exceptional quality of life</b> and adapt to meet future challenges and opportunities.	By 2050, the South East of England will be a leading global region for net-zero carbon, <b>sustainable economic growth</b> where integrated transport, digital and energy networks have delivered a step-change in connectivity and <b>environmental quality</b> . 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 <b>the highest quality of life</b> .

2.3 An element that we consider would add a lot of value to this vision is a mention of strategic connectivity to nearby areas as well, reflecting the fact that as the transport strategy itself concedes there are many trips into and out of other areas. We would recommend the following additional text be inserted at the end of the vision:

*"Fast, convenient and sustainable strategic transport links will enhance the quality of life of Reading residents and visitors, as well as provide a welcome economic boost."*

2.4 Reviewing the objectives of the transport strategy, again, it is apparent that they broadly align with the Strategic Priorities in our own transport strategy, as shown in the below table.

Reading Transport Strategy 2040 Objectives	TfSE Transport Strategy Strategic Priorities
Creating a clean and green Reading	A reduction in carbon emissions to net zero by 2050, at the latest, and minimise the contribution of transport and travel to climate change.  A transport network that protects and enhances our natural, built and historic environments
Supporting Healthy Lifestyles	A network that promotes active travel and active lifestyles to improve our health and wellbeing
Enabling Sustainable and Inclusive Growth	Better connectivity between our major economic hubs, international gateways (ports, airports and rail terminals) and their markets
Connecting People and Places	A seamless, integrated transport network with passengers at its heart, making it simpler and



	easier to plan and pay for journeys and to interchange between different forms of transport
Embracing Smart Solutions	A 'smart' transport network that uses digital technology to manage transport demand, encourage shared transport and make more efficient use of our roads and railways

2.5 Not all of TfSE's Strategic Priorities are covered explicitly by the objectives in the Reading strategy. Specifically, we would recommend changes, either through additional objectives or expanded sub-text that clarifies the meaning of specific objectives, relating to the following Strategic Priorities in TfSE's own strategy:

- A transport network that is more resilient to incidents, extreme weather and the impacts of a changing climate;
- A safely planned, delivered and operated transport network with no fatalities or serious injuries among transport users, workforce or the wider public;
- Use of the principle of 'biodiversity net gain' (i.e. development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before) in all transport initiatives;
- Minimisation of transport's consumption of resources and energy;
- An affordable, accessible transport network for all that promotes social inclusion and reduces barriers to employment, learning, social, leisure, physical and cultural activity.

2.6 Such changes we feel would significantly enhance the alignment between our policy documents, and demonstrate further a solid strategic case for securing investment in the transport network of Reading.

## **2 Challenges and Opportunities**

3.1 The challenges and opportunities facing Reading and its transport network are well-founded, and are based on sound evidence and a clear understanding of local priorities. The main challenges within Reading accord generally with our own understanding of the situation locally, as identified from our own evidence base.

3.2 There are opportunities to align more closely with the TfSE Strategy through the inclusion of an additional challenge and opportunity relating to strategic connectivity. Whilst some of these matters are considered as part of the other challenges and opportunities (notably Reducing Congestion which mentions through-movements), a specific mention of this does not detract from those mentioned in the strategy, whilst closely aligning the strategy with that of TfSE's. We welcome the opportunity to work with you on detailed text for this purpose, but for now we propose the following by way of a summary:

*"Strategic Connectivity.*

*The residents of Reading significantly benefit from good access to a variety of strategic transport networks, such as the Great Western Mainline and M4. This provides good connectivity not only locally with nearby other major centres such as Slough and Basingstoke, but it provides residents with good national connectivity as well – with the associated economic opportunities. However, strategic connections running from West to East are of higher quality than those running from North to South, and these connections can frequently be congested. Furthermore, whenever there is disruption on these key routes, this has significant implications for Reading."*

### 3 Policies and Implementation

3.1 Similar to previous chapters, we haven't identified any fundamental issues with the policies and implementation plan provided. The policies as a whole accord with the priorities within our Strategy, and we realise that for some policies (e.g. Network Management) they are likely to be of greater relevance at a local level and consequently warrant further detail which, while of general interest to TfSE, do not warrant specific comment. .

3.2 What is of most interest to us, especially when it comes to implementation, is the alignment of this strategy with the Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP). Within this document, Reading is within the 'Wessex Thames' area, and the SIP has established a package of schemes that will improve strategic infrastructure worth £10.4 billion, adding £1.2 billion in economic value each year should they be delivered. These schemes are summarised in the table below.

3.3 We would welcome the inclusion of these schemes within the Transport Strategy . Where such schemes are already mentioned in the strategy (notably Reading Mass Transit), we would welcome supporting text within the document itself along the lines of "This scheme is also contained within the Strategic Investment Plan produced by Transport for the South East as a priority scheme for this area."

3.4 Additionally, the SIP refers to the need to deliver a number of 'global' policy interventions across the TfSE area. Namely:

- **Decarbonisation.** We aspire to deliver a faster trajectory towards net zero than current trends, including rapid adoption of zero emission technologies, to avoid the worst effects of human-induced climate change. This includes: working with partners at all scales of government and the private sector through the regional transport decarbonisation forum, to decarbonise energy production; and provide infrastructure for electric vehicles and green hydrogen refuelling.
- **Public Transport Fares.** We wish to reverse the increase in real terms of the cost of public transport compared to motoring and increase ticket integration to reduce barriers.
- **New Mobility.** We see great potential for new mobility technologies (e.g. electric bikes and scooters) and access opportunities (e.g. subscription models, car clubs and Mobility as a Service) to support decarbonisation of travel in the south east.
- **Road User Charging.** We encourage central government to develop a national road user charging system to provide an alternative source of funding to fuel duty and to help manage demand in parallel to integrated local measures. Local authorities also have the opportunity to investigate measures such as workplace parking levies and low emission zones in their areas where appropriate.
- **Virtual Access.** The past two decades, amplified by the global Covid pandemic, have shown how virtual working can help reduce demand for transport services, and we support this transition where appropriate.
- **Integration.** We wish to see improvements in integration across and between all modes of transport in terms of infrastructure, services, ticketing, and accessibility, as well as transport and land use integration, supporting seamless journeys and improved first and last mile connectivity.

Map Ref.	Intervention name	What is the scheme?	What will the scheme do?	Phasing
O1*	Western Rail Link to Heathrow	A new direct rail link from the Great Western Main Line (between Iwer and Langley) to Heathrow Airport.	Enable direct connectivity and reduce journey times to Heathrow Airport from key locations, including Bristol, Swindon, Oxford and Reading.	Medium term (2030s)
O2*	Southern Access to Heathrow	A new direct rail link from Berkshire (Bracknell, Ascot), Surrey (Woking, Guildford) and Hampshire (Blackwater Valley, North/Mid-Hampshire, the Solent) to Heathrow Airport.	Help to resolve the long-term problem of rail inaccessibility to Heathrow Airport from the south, particularly from Surrey and South West London.	Long term (2040s)
O3	Reading to Basingstoke Enhancements	Electrification of the Reading to Basingstoke Line.	Support the decarbonisation of the rail network and enable sustainable rail freight movements along the corridor.	Long term (2040s)
O4	North Downs Line - Decarbonisation	Electrification of the unelectrified sections of the North Downs line.	Support the decarbonisation of the rail network and enable sustainable rail freight movements along the corridor.	Long term (2040s)
O6	North Downs Line - Service Level and Capacity Enhancements	Station upgrades and level crossing removals to enable four trains per hour to run at peak times on the North Downs Line.	Increase rail service frequencies which will increase capacity, helping to attract more local residents onto the railway.	Short term (2020s)
O14	Cross Country Service Enhancements	Reinstatement of Cross Country services between Portsmouth and the Midlands and increased service frequencies and span between Southampton and the Midlands.	Reduce journey times between Portsmouth, Southampton and other national centres and support inbound tourism.	Short term (2020s)
O18	Theale Strategic Rail Freight Terminal	Development of a rail freight hub at Theale.	Support more efficient rail freight operations and contribute to business growth.	Short term (2020s)
O20	Reading to Waterloo Service Enhancements	Increased line speeds on the Reading to Waterloo Line.	Reduce journey times between London, Bracknell and Ascot and enhance onward connectivity from locations on the Ascot to Guildford Line, e.g. Camberley and Bagshot.	Medium term (2030s)
P3	Bracknell/Wokingham Bus Enhancements	Urban bus enhancements connecting centres within Bracknell, Wokingham and adjacent economic hubs, including bus priority infrastructure where appropriate.	Improve journey times and reliability for public transport by increasing service frequencies, extending operating hours and delivering timetable integration.	Short term (2020s)
P9	Reading Mass Rapid Transit	An integrated network of new bus-based rapid transit routes across Reading.	Connect major employment and population areas locally, building on the successful South Reading Mass Rapid Transit initiative.	Short term (2020s)

P13	A329/B3408 Reading - Bracknell/Wokingham Mass Rapid Transit	Inter-urban bus enhancements along the A329/B3408, including bus priority measures where appropriate.	Increase bus service frequencies, reduce journey times and improve reliability for residents between Reading, Bracknell, Wokingham and nearby centres.	Short term (2020s)
P18	Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey Inter-urban Bus Enhancements	Inter-urban bus enhancements, including bus priority measures.	Enable frequent, reliable, express services to run along roads connecting major economic hubs, e.g. Guildford to the Blackwater Valley via the A31.	Short term (2020s)
Q1	Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey Urban and Inter-urban Active Travel Infrastructure	Inter-urban walking and cycling enhancements, utilising and enhancing the National Cycle Network.	Connect points of interest and provide safer, faster and more accessible segregated cycle infrastructure to encourage cycling and help to diversify residents' travel options.	Short term (2020s)
R6	New Thames Crossing East of Reading (LLM)	A third bridge across the river Thames in Reading, including supporting infrastructure.	Relieve existing congestion in Reading town centre and provide additional capacity for access to new housing developments.	Long term (2040s)
R8	M4 Junction 10 Safety Enhancements	Changes to M4 Junction 10 with the A329(M).	Support the increased safety of all road users.	Short term (2020s)
R13	A322 and A329(M) Smart Corridor	Introduction of smart motorway interventions along the A322 and A329(M).	Support the more efficient use of existing capacity using real-time information.	Short term (2020s)
R15	M4 Junction 3 to Junction 12 Smart Motorway (SMP)	Smart motorway extension from M4 Junction 3 to M4 Junction 12.	Increase capacity and road safety and improve reliability along this section.	Short term (2020s)

3.5 In some instances the transport strategy contains schemes and initiatives that map directly against these overall policy interventions. A notable example being a desire to deliver a local Mobility as a Service solution mapping well against New Mobility. However, some others are notable by their absence.

3.6 We realise that much work needs to be done between Reading and TfSE on major projects and global policy interventions contained within the SIP. Consequently, whilst a direct reference to these within the Reading transport strategy would be desirable, we would recommend that as part of the implementation section of the strategy the following text be added:

*“Working with regional agencies*

*Other agencies such as Transport for the South East, National Highways, Network Rail, and the Department for Transport, are working on developing the case for a variety of strategic transport schemes and policies that will directly affect Reading. Some of these major schemes are included within this Transport Strategy, and within the relevant policy documents of those agencies.*

*The Council will act as a positive partner in the development of such schemes, where they align with the objectives of this transport strategy.”*