

Introduction

Our responses to the consultation questions from the online form can be found in appendix 1. The appendix contains a response in the same format as the online form including the questions.

TfSE is a sub-national transport body (STB), which represents sixteen local transport authorities in the south east of England. These are Brighton and Hove, East Sussex, Hampshire, Kent, Medway, Surrey, West Sussex, the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton, and the six Berkshire unitary authorities. These authorities are represented on the Partnership Board, which is its decision-making body, along with representatives from the region's five Local Enterprise Partnerships, district and borough authorities, protected landscapes, National Highways, Network Rail and Transport for London.

TfSE provides a single voice on the transport interventions needed to support sustainable economic growth across its geography. The south east is crucial to the UK economy and is the nation's major international gateway for people and business with some of the largest ports and airports in the country. High-quality transport infrastructure is critical to making the south east more competitive, contributing to national prosperity and improving the lives of our residents.

In 2020 TfSE published a thirty-year Transport Strategy for the south east that sets out an ambitious 2050 vision for the area. We have undertaken a programme of area studies to identify multimodal packages of interventions that will be needed to deliver the Transport Strategy.

This led to the publication of our Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) to help both government and LTA's prioritise investment in our region. The packages detailed in the SIP address eight investment priorities aligned with the vision and strategic goals of the TfSE Transport Strategy and the wider regional and national policy context. It provides a framework for investment in strategic transport infrastructure, services, and regulatory interventions in the coming three decades.

The SIP represents the culmination of five years of technical work, stakeholder engagement, and institutional development. It is underpinned by a credible, evidence-based technical programme that has enabled TfSE and our partners to: understand the current and future challenges and opportunities in the south east:

- Identify stakeholder priorities for their respective areas of interest.
- Evaluate the impacts of a wide range of plausible scenarios on the south east's economy, society, and environment.
- Develop multi-modal, cross-boundary interventions.
- Assess the impact of proposed interventions on transport and socio-economic outcomes.

- Prioritise the interventions that best address the south east's most pressing challenges and unlock the south east's most promising opportunities.

National Highways are one of our key partners and are represented on our Partnership Board, as well as having been engaged as stakeholders throughout the development of our technical work programme. National Highways will be key in helping us to deliver the vision set out in our Transport Strategy and SIP. TfSE have been actively engaged with National Highways RIS3 development and the Route Strategies work.

TfSE welcome the opportunity to comment on the Connecting the country report. In general, we welcome the content and are happy to see the collaboration we have had with National Highways through this process has been positively received. The Connecting the country report contains a lot of good work and we look forward to continuing our develop our collaborative working relationship with National Highways.

We would be happy to discuss any of the feedback in our response, and the opportunities for further collaboration to ensure that our strategy and SIP, and National Highways planning for the long term and RIS3 are aligned.

This is an officer response. The TfSE Partnership Board next meets on 30 October 2023 when it will consider this response. A further iteration of it may follow that meeting.

Yours sincerely

Rupert Clubb
Lead Officer
Transport for the South East

Appendix 1

Do you feel that the Connecting the country: Our long-term strategic plan reflects your view of what the future of the Strategic Road Network should be?

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely
Somewhat

Please explain why you gave this rating.

The vision of National Highways is aligned with that of Transport for the South East (TfSE) as set out in our Transport Strategy regarding delivery of sustainable economic growth, improving the health and wellbeing for residents and protecting and improving the environment. However, we would welcome a more outcome led approach like that adopted by sub-national transport bodies (STB's) and local transport authorities alike.

It is not clear what outcomes National Highways wish to achieve or how these outcomes will be delivered. There is also a focus on providing more capacity to meet forecast numbers of car drivers. Contrary to this STB's (TfSE in particular) are endeavouring to provide people with travel choices and encourage modal shift away from the private car.

TfSE supports the intention to improve:

- Number of and quality of interchanges with walking, cycling, public and rail modes of transport for passengers and freight.
- Number of and quality of freight vehicle facilities on the SRN.
- Increasing the number, location and charge capacity of the EV points for both cars and freight vehicles.
- Net zero operations and improving asset resilience.
- Road safety.

National Highways is proposing to categorise the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and define the associated levels of services our customers can expect from them. Our current thinking, which requires further development, is that the categories would be national corridors, inter-regional routes and regional connections, depending on the role the SRN plays in each part of the country (see image and definitions on page 8). Do you feel that national corridors, inter-regional routes and regional connections are the correct categories for the Strategic Road Network?

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely
Somewhat



Do you have any further comments on how we have categorised our network?

TfSE appreciate idea behind the national, inter-regional and regional connections approach but have a number of concerns around its application.

It is not clear from the map provided where the specific routes would be located and what international gateways, cities and towns these routes would connect. Whilst we appreciate the map is indicative, there appear to be some significant gaps that have not been highlighted and therefore, we would like more consultation with STBs and local authorities to discuss this categorisation, particularly which types of connection are located to strategically important origins and destinations within STB areas e.g., Southampton and across the south coast.

We have concerns over creating a tiered system and what this would mean for development of routes not in the highest tier. As an example, the A27 corridor which is recognised in the South Coast Central Route Strategy to be “notable as the only element of the SRN running east – west to the south of the M25” but would not be prioritised in the highest tier. We would also want to establish how these categorisations could influence or be used to prioritise scheme delivery and network improvements.

A further example not in the TfSE area but also overlooked is Felixstowe, which appears not to have been recognised as an important international gateway.

Do the nine focus areas match your view of where we should focus the future of the Strategic Road Network?

- **How much our customers will travel**
 - **Growth & levelling up**
 - **Car travel**
 - **Freight & logistics**
- **How our customers will experience travel**
 - **Safety**
 - **Digital**
 - **Decarbonisation**
- **How we will manage our network**
 - **Customer experience**
 - **Sustainable network development**
 - **Asset resilience**

Options – yes, no, undecided

Yes

Which focus area would you like to engage with?

All

TfSE consultation response to National Highways Connecting the Country Growth & Levelling Up



Do you feel the trends outlined for 'Growth and Levelling up' reflect your view of the future? (Pages 17-20 of CTC)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Completely

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE agrees that the SRN plays a vital role in providing connectivity to support sustainable economic growth, productivity and levelling up for businesses, employees and those accessing employment opportunities, health, leisure and education facilities.

Do you feel the vision outlined for 'Growth and Levelling up' reflects your view of the future? (Page 52)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Completely

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE supports National Highways vision of equality of opportunity for all its users and its vision to support regional and sub-regional aspirations for sustainable and inclusive growth.

Do you feel our delivery plan outlined for 'Growth and Levelling up' reflects your view of the future? (Page 56)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Somewhat

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

The delivery plan supports TfSE's Transport Strategy and SIP, particularly in relation to:

- Lower Thames Crossing.
- Regional growth.
- Supporting businesses.
- Sustainable growth.

However, we would like to see a wider range of scenarios considered to ensure that the delivery plans are achievable. As an example, to consider the effect of a lower take up of CAVs. Or the availability of land and planning processes become constraining factors, particularly in relation to cities, towns, ports and airports becoming centres of regeneration and freight hubs.

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Car travel

Do you feel the trends outlined for 'Car travel' reflect your view of the future? (Pages 21-23)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Somewhat

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE is concerned that there remains an emphasis on population growth driving an increase in private car travel rather than on managing car usage or encouraging modal shift to active travel and/or public transport. ONS figures show that the UK population is aging, this could suggest that fewer people will drive, although this may be balanced by behavioural studies that suggest an increase in carbon zero vehicles can cause an increase in private car travel or that private car travel will be easier with the uptake of CAVs. The use of a range of scenarios based on different kinds of population expansion could be used to test different assumptions of increased private car travel demand.

Furthermore, we would advocate a more Vision led approach, such as that undertaken for our transport strategy, which would not just plan for a future based on predicted growth, but rather sets the vision for the future and plans to deliver that.

Do you feel the vision outlined for 'Car travel' reflects your view of the future? (Page 52)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Somewhat

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE support the targeted improvement to create a fully integrated network to deliver seamless multi-modal travel as an important lever to deliver carbon zero travel and encourage the movement of private car drivers to alternative forms of transport. However, this is reliant on the take up and use of digital technology and the provision of public information. Again, the use of scenarios may better inform how private car-based customers make behavioural changes in moving from car to active and/or public transport-based travel.

Do you feel our delivery plan outlined for 'Car travel' reflects your view of the future? (Page 57)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Somewhat

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

While TfSE supports the focus on network integration with active and public transport-based transport and modal shift, the use of population forecasts might be better supported by an outcome focussed delivery plan that concentrates

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more on behavioural change to increase the number of journeys shifting from private car to public transport or active travel modes.

We also support the improved visibility and monitoring of network performance to improve the resilience of the network. However, we would welcome the addition of some scenario-based plans that can account for variations in the way drivers, whether private or commercial, interpret such information to ensure the information to drivers is delivered in a way that is useful to them and results in the actions expected in the description provided.

Freight & Logistics

Do you feel the trends outlined for 'Freight & logistics' reflect your view of the future? (Pages 24-27)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Somewhat

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE supports the general direction set out in the freight and logistics trends section. However, we would like to see this updated to include the changes brought about because of the changing relationship with Europe and the proposed changes that GBRTT foresee in encouraging a higher use of rail in the movement of freight, particularly in the future years of 2040 and 2050. Again, the use of scenarios here would be beneficial.

Do you feel the vision outlined for 'Freight & logistics' reflects your view of the future? (Page 52)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Somewhat

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE supports the vision for freight and logistics. However, from our own work in this area, we would caution against too much emphasis on consolidation as a potential panacea, particularly for articulated loads. We would also question the assumption that there will be the land available and site allocations through the planning process approvals process to support the increase in interchange facilities required to facilitate the transfer of freight from road to other modes.

Do you feel our delivery plan outlined for 'Freight & logistics' reflects your view of the future? (Page 58)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Somewhat

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

While TfSE supports the aims of the delivery plan, we would again caution against the over-reliance on consolidation as a means to achieve your vision and the early

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adoption of autonomous freight vehicles. However, we particularly support the delivery of strategic freight corridors and the aim to deliver increased modal shift away from road-based freight transport.

Safety

Do you feel the trends outlined for 'Safety' reflect your view of the future? (Pages 29-31)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Completely

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE supports the trends set out in the Connecting the country report as this aligns with our view of the future set out in our Transport Strategy, which seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of residents in the TfSE area.

Do you feel the vision outlined for 'Safety' reflects your view of the future? (Page 53)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Completely

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE fully supports the vision which is aligned with our own.

Do you feel our delivery plan outlined for 'Safety' reflects your view of the future? (Page 59)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Somewhat

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE generally supports the delivery plan outline for Safety. However, we would be interested to see what effect a lower take up of CAVs has on the delivery of your vision. We also suggest using more public information messaging aimed at all road users, not just drivers, as a way to improve user and operational safety on the network.

Digital

Do you feel the trends outlined for 'Digital' reflect your view of the future? (Pages 32-35)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Somewhat

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Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE agrees with the trends set out on the digitisation of the road network section. Particularly in improving the construction and resilience of the network, and its use to maximise network assets. However, we would like to see more evidence regarding some of the issues relating to the uptake of autonomous vehicles and how the provision of digital information affects driver-related behaviour change are dealt with as outlined in your strategy. Issues include:

- The potential for personal and company driver and company insurance to cause delays to or accelerate uptake.
- The impact of cost of CAV technologies on uptake by the freight sector.
- The need for legislative changes could also delay the uptake of CAV's in both the private and commercial sectors.
- How the delivery of a digital real-time information to drivers affects changes in driver behaviour.

It would also be useful to see more information about how the digitalisation of the network could improve real-time traffic management, particularly to improve driver and operator safety and journey time reliability.

Do you feel the vision outlined for 'Digital' reflects your view of the future? (Page 53)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely
Completely

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE supports the vision outlined and how digitalisation can improve the use, design and resilience of the network by customers and network operators alike.

Do you feel our delivery plan outlined for 'Digital' reflects your view of the future? (Page 60)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely
Somewhat

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE supports the digitalisation of the network with the caveat that some of the issues with take up and behaviour change outlined in previous responses previously raised are addressed.

Decarbonisation

Do you feel the trends outlined for 'Decarbonisation' reflect your view of the future? (Pages 36-38)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely
Somewhat

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Please tell us why you gave this rating

TfSE's Transport Strategy and SIP aim to deliver a zero-carbon transport network in south east England by 2050 at the latest and we support the trends outlined in the Connecting the country report. However, as stated in response to a previous question, we would prefer to see a strategy based on the delivery of outcomes rather than the model which assumes a significant increase in car travel resulting from an increase in population.

Our own Transport Strategy seeks to achieve a relative decrease in car travel compared to a business-as-usual trajectory. Particularly to support the delivery of a zero-carbon network by encouraging modal shift to active travel or public transport. Increased active travel would also deliver health benefits. There should be a reference to addressing air quality issues although it is acknowledged that this issue is referred to in the section on sustainable network development.

Do you feel the vision outlined for 'Decarbonisation' reflects your view of the future? (Page 53)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Completely

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

The vision for Decarbonisation fully reflects the aspirations set out in TfSE's Transport Strategy and SIP.

Do you feel our delivery plan outlined for 'Decarbonisation' reflects your view of the future? (Page 61)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Somewhat

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

While TfSE supports National Highways in the delivery of its decarbonisation vision, it would be useful to include some scenarios where the capacity of the UK's power supply or supply of alternative fuels to support the complete decarbonisation of the network does not meet the ambition as set out here.

Customer Experience

Do you feel the trends outlined for 'Customer Experience' reflect your view of the future? (Pages 40-42)

not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Completely

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE agrees that the trends set out in this section may well be realised. In particular, the potential for increasing journey time reliability and reducing delays as this is equally important for freight and logistics customers as it is for private car drivers. The use of technology is supported as it will improve the efficiency and reliability for public transport and freight also ensuring they can keep their

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customers informed if and when delays occur. We would also welcome the improvements in freight and logistics driver parking, welfare, recharging and refuelling facilities. We would encourage, however, the inclusion of alternative fuels and HGVs in the section 'The SRN can help set the standard for customer-centric charging infrastructure' set out in the decarbonisation and 'Our Vision' sections. The SRN should also be the 'standard' for all types of alternative fuel given that most trailer HGVs use the SRN for their journeys and electric charging is unlikely to be appropriate for these kinds of vehicles in the future.

Do you feel the vision outlined for 'Customer Experience' reflects your view of the future? (Page 54)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Completely

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE fully supports the vision as set out, it will help support our own ambition for modal shift and improve the welfare of HGV drivers. This will contribute to the sustainability of the freight and logistics sector which is of particular interest to us in our role as the Gateway to the UK Economy'.

Do you feel our delivery plan outlined for 'Customer Experience' reflects your view of the future? (Page 62)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Completely

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE supports the customer experience delivery plan this will enable (providing some of the caveats previously raised are addressed). This will support the delivery of our own Transport Strategy and SIP, reflecting as it does our own preferred outcomes for the SRN. This is particularly the case in relation to the planned ability of the SRN to provide:

- Better connectivity between major areas of economic growth and employment as well as international gateways.
- Improve journey times and reliability.
- Improve HGV parking, refuelling and driver welfare facilities.

Sustainable network development

Do you feel the trends outlined for 'Sustainable network development' reflect your view of the future? (Pages 43-46)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Completely

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Please tell us why you gave this rating.

As part of TfSE's Transport Strategy we have committed to protecting and enhancing the environment and therefore we support this aspect of your Strategy. In particular, we support:

- The use of low-carbon construction materials.
- Working to ensure that there is no net loss of biodiversity, with a focus on increasing this going forward.
- Reducing exposure to fine particulate matter and improving air quality.

Do you feel the vision outlined for 'Sustainable network development' reflects your view of the future? (Page 54)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Completely

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

The vision set out here reflects our own in the TfSE Transport Strategy, TfSE welcomes this aspect of the National Highways Strategic Vision 2050 and believes that it will add value to our own outcomes as set out in our SIP.

Do you feel our delivery plan outlined for 'Sustainable network development' reflects your view of the future? (Page 63)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Completely

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE supports the delivery plan as set out in this part of the Strategy and we look forward to working together with National Highways to successfully deliver our shared objectives.

Asset Resilience**Do you feel the trends outlined for 'Asset Resilience' reflect your view of the future? (Pages 47-50)**

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely

Completely

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

TfSE supports the evidence set out in the trends section of the plan. We agree with your aspiration to renew much of the network's assets maximising the benefit of modelling and new technology to optimise the condition of the SRN assets and optimise the whole life value and National Highways cost efficiency. We also support your holistic approach considering many influencing factors such as climate change and the impact different aspects of this has on the increased deterioration of some assets, e.g., concrete roads and bridges.

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Do you feel the vision outlined for 'Asset Resilience' reflects your view of the future? (Page 54)

Not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely
Somewhat

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

As stated in our responses to other focus areas of the plan, TfSE is concerned that there may be an over-reliance on digital technology as the basis for decision-making. Again, we would suggest that some scenarios are included to demonstrate whether there are other solutions that could deliver the same outcome of maximising the life of SRN assets in the more cost-effective way.

Do you feel our delivery plan outlined for 'Asset Resilience' reflects your view of the future? (Page 64)

not at all, undecided, somewhat, completely
Somewhat

Please tell us why you gave this rating.

While TfSE is supportive of the delivery plan, we would prefer to see some options included that factor in different outcomes to those that you assume will come to fruition in later years e.g., the extent and reliance on digitisation. In maintaining and maximising SRN assets in the ways described here for connected assets, asset renewals and climate change resilience, National Highways demonstrates its commitment to operating a network that will support our own strategic priorities objectives.

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