

Report to: Partnership Board –Transport for the South East

Date of meeting: 28 October 2024

By: Chief Officer, Transport for the South East

Title of report: Technical Programme Progress Update

Purpose of report: To provide a progress update on the ongoing work to deliver the technical work programme set out in the 2024/25 business plan

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The members of the Partnership Board are recommended to:

- (1) Comment on the progress with the ongoing implementation of the Centre of Excellence;**
- (2) Comment on the progress with the work to implement Transport for the South East’s electric vehicle charging infrastructure strategy;**
- (3) Comment on the progress with the delivery of Transport for the South East’s future mobility strategy;**
- (4) Comment on the progress with the delivery of Transport for the South East’s freight, logistics and gateways strategy;**
- (5) Comment on the work that has recently commenced on rail; and,**
- (6) Comment on the progress with the joint work on decarbonisation.**

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a progress update on the delivery of a number of elements of the Transport for the South East (TfSE) technical work programme.

2. Centre of Excellence

2.1 The TfSE Centre of Excellence was developed in response to the Levelling Up White Paper published in February 2022. Formally launched on 18 June 2024, the Centre of Excellence has already had over 180 individual user sign ups and 175 pieces of unique content uploaded to the platform. The platform is now moving into a ‘business as usual’ phase. This includes regular engagement with users via a monthly newsletter to keep them up to date on new content, creating new content, and monitoring and evaluating usage of the site.

2.2 Bespoke work has been developed in response to identified capability gaps in our constituent local authorities. Work published to date includes:

- seven training webinars on specific topics relating to business case development;
- guidance on how to 'prepare for climate change' with supplementary case studies;
- resources to support local authorities in securing development consent orders with supplementary case studies;
- training webinar on the Sub-national Transport Body (STB) Carbon Assessment Playbook; and
- training webinar on the STB Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Visualiser tool developed by Transport for the North.

2.3 A pipeline of content is being maintained and new requests that we receive will continue to be assessed through an 'ideas tracker' and if suitable, added and assigned to a subject matter expert to develop the required content.

2.4 We have developed 35 measures to monitor and evaluate the Centre of Excellence. This will help us ensure that the platform continues to deliver improvements to the region's capacity and capability and meet the objectives set by Department for Transport (DfT) for Regional Centres of Excellence. Key metrics will be reported on quarterly basis to the Partnership Board.

2.5 Between June and August 2024, there were 122 total local authority officer registrations (100% of all 16 TfSE's constituent authorities have registered), and 64 unique visitors. The most frequently visited components for this period was the 'Case Studies' area, and the most visited specific page was the carbon assessment playbook tool. Monitoring these elements allow us to improve bespoke content, ensuring it aligns with the capability gaps identified through an annual survey.

2.6 Since the Partnership Board in July 2024, funding for the Centre of Excellence has been reprofiled to ensure as much funding as possible goes towards developing bespoke content. All management and administrative tasks are now being performed in house, to guarantee best value for local authorities.

2.7 The growth in the number of sign-ups has been predominantly down to the communication between the officers in our constituent local transport authorities who have spread the word about the content that the platform has to offer. A newsletter for these officers to share amongst their colleagues will be circulated in due course to encourage registrations with an offer to attend any departmental meetings to raise awareness.

2.8 Further engagement with the DfT is underway to understand how we can host work that they are producing and provide them access to tools and resources to support them in turn.

2.9 Support from universities and professional institutions has been maintained, with assets already being shared and offers of training for officers incorporated into the pipeline.

2.10 A further update on the progress of the work on the Centre of Excellence will be given at the Partnership Board Meeting in January 2025.

3. Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy

3.1 In March 2023, the Partnership Board approved TfSE's regional electric vehicle charging infrastructure (EVCI) strategy. Following on from the publication of the strategy and accompanying action plan, work is now underway to implement the action plan.

3.2 A pioneering piece of study work has recently been completed to produce a series of forecasts that aim to understand the additional demand that the electrification of vehicle fleets will have on the south east's future publicly available charging network. The methodology and forecasting outputs for each local transport authority can be accessed via TfSE's regional centre of excellence platform. This work will need to be updated and on an annual basis as the national data sources it utilises to produce the forecasts are themselves updated. It is planned to develop this work further as part of TfSE's work programme for 2025/6 to identify the potential location for charging hubs that could be used by fleet vehicles subject to the availability of funding.

3.3 Transport for the North (TfN) are currently in the process of rolling out the EVCI Visualisation Tool that they have developed to other STBs. The tool provides users with localised information on projected electric vehicle uptake and charging infrastructure requirements. In September, TfSE formally launched a version of the tool covering the TfSE area to our local transport authorities. The training workshop provided attendees with an introduction to the tool and case studies on how the tool can be used most effectively. TfSE are also in the process of building a new module for this tool which will provide users with an update to the forecasting figures which focus on the future electrification of commercial vehicle fleets. This new module is expected to be completed in autumn 2024.

3.4 The latest meeting of TfSE's regional Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Forum was held in September. This forum has been a successful platform for bringing together different organisations from across the South East, providing members with the opportunity to develop strong working relationships between members and has allowed attendees to share best practice with one another on how potential issues regarding EVCI rollout can be mitigated. A series of presentations were delivered to attendees which provided regional and national insight regarding the rollout of EV charging infrastructure.

3.5 A further update on the progress of TfSE's work on EVCI will be given at the Partnership Board Meeting in January 2025.

4. Future Mobility Strategy

4.1 The latest meeting of TfSE's Future Mobility Forum was held in-person on 2 October 2024. The theme for the meeting was Logistics & Kerbside. There was a presentation from Daniel Bianco from Brighton & Hove City Council on their eCargo Bike Accelerator Project, as well as Rob Glyons from Solent Transport on freight consolidation and first and last mile movements in the Solent Future Transport Zone.

4.2 A review of the Action Plan for the TfSE Future Mobility Strategy has been undertaken to identify potential projects for inclusion in the 2025/6 TfSE Business Plan. Several streams of work have been outlined for future mobility in FY 24/25. This includes guidance/frameworks on monitoring & evaluation of future mobility projects and potential piloting/test bed projects, as well as the possible development of a first and last mile strategy. Outputs from this work will be fed into the Centre of Excellence to maximise reach and consistency across the TfSE region. A further update on the progress of the work on future mobility will be given at the Partnership Board Meeting in January 2025.

5. Freight, Logistics and Gateways Strategy

5.1 TfSE now has access to the mapping tool that has been developed jointly by a number of STBs to identify current and future refuelling locations offering both recharging and access to alternative fuels for HGV vehicles. Work is underway to develop this tool so that it can be used to identify potential multi-use sites on the periphery of towns that could also include some limited lorry parking and driver facilities, potential interchange sites for diesel to zero emission vehicles (including rail possibly) and freight consolidation facilities in the TfSE area.

5.2 The next Wider South East Freight Forum covering the TfSE, England's Economic Heartlands and Transport East areas will be held on 14 November 2024. The meeting will be focussed on the challenges associated with the decarbonisation of the freight and logistics sector as identified at the meeting in June 2024.

5.3 The final reports for the two studies investigating the potential for modal shift of freight from road to short sea shipping and the level of warehousing provision in the TfSE area have both been delayed as a result of delays needed to complete the work. These are now expected to be completed in time for the Partnership Board in January 2025.

5.4 Work on a freight awareness programme commenced in October 2024 covering the TfSE, England's Economic Heartland and Transport East areas. The purpose of this work is to increase the level of awareness of the needs of the freight sector in public sector organisations (especially those responsible for transport and spatial planning) at both regional and local levels. Linked to this is the need for an easy reference guide that can be used by the freight sector to navigate the variety of public sector bodies and understand their different roles and responsibilities. This programme of work aims to address this lack of understanding through a range of training packages. The work will be carried out in two phases, the first is a needs assessment followed by the development of activities and initial training events.

5.5 A further update on TfSE's work on freight and logistics will be given to the Partnership Board at their meeting in January 2025.

6. Rail

6.1 A new Intermodal Rail Freight Study project covering the TfSE area commenced in September 2024 and is due to be completed by January 2025. It will support the Government's 75% rail freight growth target by:

- developing a clearer understanding of the current and potential demand for increased intermodal transfer of freight between road and rail networks across the TfSE area.
- Identifying the potential to provide additional or enhanced Intermodal Rail Freight Interchanges (IRFI)

6.2 The Great British Railways Transition Team will be involved in the study work as they too have been exploring the potential for increasing the number of IRFIs in the TfSE area.

6.3 The Wider South East Rail Partnership brings together the three STBs Transport for the South East, England's Economic Heartland and Transport East with DfT and the Shadow Great British Railways, Network Rail and Transport for London (TfL). Its overarching purpose is to have oversight of strategic rail planning across the region. The Partnership members are interdependent on each other and share common factors in securing improvements to both passenger and freight journeys. The STBs, in comprising elected members and business leaders, who collectively represent the single voice for transport in our three respective regions, will ensure that the Partnership takes account of our transport strategies and the needs of our rail passengers across the Wider South East. Once the Shadow GBR is fully established, the Partnership will allow the STBs to highlight their investment priorities and operational issues.

6.4 As reported to the Partnership Board in the Chief Officer's report in July 2024, TfSE is a member of the Wider South East Rail Partnership alongside officers from England's Economic Heartland, Transport East and senior representatives from the DfT, Shadow Great British Railways, Network Rail and TfL. To date three meetings of the Partnership have taken place. The latest of these took place on 6 September 2024. Amongst the key items discussed were:

- an update on the setting up and priorities of the new Shadow GBR body;
- the interim measures for investment planning for which Network Rail will remain responsible;
- the development of a process to streamline the engagement between DfT, the Shadow GBR, mayoral and local authorities; and
- an update on the draft position paper outlining the wider South East priorities that the STBs are producing to inform future collaboration and discussion.

6.5 The TfSE Rail Strategy Scoping Study started in September 2024 to identify the content of a comprehensive rail strategy for the TfSE area. The scoping study is due to be completed by the end of October 2024. A Rail Strategy for the TfSE area would support the work we are undertaking through Wider South East Rail Partnership and

will enable us to Develop a stronger evidence base with which to advise the Secretary of State, Great British Railways and the Office for Road and Rail and its partner local authorities on our rail priorities for the TfSE area. Work on the Rail Strategy is due to commence in the final quarter of 2024/5 subject to the availability of funding

6.6 A further update on the progress of the work on rail will be given to the Partnership Board Meeting in January 2025.

7. Joint work on decarbonisation

7.1 As reported to the Board in May 2024, TfSE, Transport East and England's Economic Heartland have worked collaboratively to develop a Carbon Assessment Playbook. This identifies the baseline carbon emissions and trajectories to net zero in each of the LTAs in the three STB areas. Each LTA will then be able to assess the carbon reduction potential of the proposals to be included in their local transport plans.

7.2 Work on the development of the tool is now complete and the tool was launched on 23 August 2024. All the constituent authorities in the TfSE area will be invited to the launch. The feedback that was received following this event will be used to identify what further support those wishing to use the tool will need. Work will also commence on further refinements that are needed to the tool. A further update on the progress of the development of the Carbon Assessment Playbook will be given at the Partnership Board Meeting in January 2025.

8. Financial considerations

8.1 The decarbonisation work set out in this report has been funded from the additional in-year funding awarded to TfSE in January 2022. The future mobility strategy, freight strategy, electric vehicle strategy implementation work, regional active travel strategy development and rail work are being funded from the DfT grant funding for 2024/25.

9. Conclusions and recommendations

9.1 The Partnership Board is recommended to comment on the progress that has been made with the various elements of the TfSE technical programme set out in this report. A further progress update report will be presented to the Board at their meeting in January 2025.

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