



Photo: Emma Varley

Introduction

This is the Draft Transport Strategy for South East England, prepared by Transport for the South East (TfSE), the region's Sub-national Transport Body.

The South East of England is Britain's gateway to the world. Its dynamic economy, scenic landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and proximity to London and mainland Europe make it one of the most prosperous and desirable regions for living, working, and visiting in Britain.

This Strategy outlines a Vision for the South East to be recognised globally for achieving sustainable prosperity and the highest quality of life. It builds on the previous Strategy that was published in 2020 and is underpinned by over seven years' extensive technical work.

Its missions-driven approach sets a Route Map for achieving this Vision through improving strategic connectivity, strengthening resilience, enhancing integration, decarbonising the transport system, and unlocking sustainable growth.

This Strategy focuses on areas needing urgent action, where TfSE is uniquely positioned to drive change. Recognising financial constraints, TfSE's approach emphasises practical, achievable solutions, aiming to maximise the impact of available resources.

Developed through **rigorous evidence gathering and stakeholder engagement**, this Strategy presents a framework for action to meet the region's most pressing transport challenges.

In addition to the Strategy, an **Integrated Sustainability Appraisal** has been conducted to assess the Strategy's impact on sustainability objectives, including biodiversity, habitats, carbon, health, access, and equity.

This Draft Strategy will be open **for public consultation** to incorporate feedback and publish a final version in 2025.

Our Role

Established in 2017, TfSE's mission is to grow the South East's economy by delivering a safe, sustainable, and integrated transport system.

TfSE brings together 16 local transport authorities, as well as representatives from district and borough councils, national agencies, and protected landscapes, harnessing a wide range of local and regional expertise.

TfSE and its partners aim to boost productivity and competitiveness, enhance the quality of life for residents, and protect the region's natural and built environment.






TfSE aspires to transform the quality of door-to-door journeys for residents, businesses, and visitors across the South East. As a strategic body, TfSE plays a crucial role in adding value by ensuring that funding and strategic decisions about transport in the South East are informed by local knowledge and priorities.

Its comprehensive governance structure – combining political leadership, technical expertise, and stakeholder engagement – ensures that **TfSE is well-placed to deliver for the region.** This structure enables it to speak with one voice on behalf of the region, making a compelling case for investment in the region.

TfSE members and partners



Our Region

-  **7.8m**
Residents (2022)
-  **3.8m**
Jobs (2022)
-  **£230bn**
GVA per annum
-  **2** National Parks
-  **7** National Landscapes



 **18%**

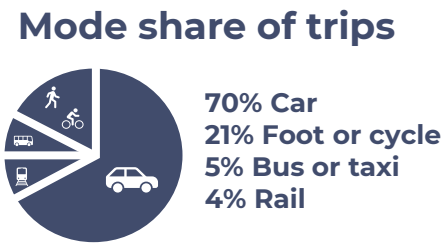
UK freight tonnage served by South East ports, excluding London (2023)

 **13m**
Ferry passengers (2023)

 **18m**
Channel tunnel passengers (2023)

Key to map

- 1. Reading
- 2. Wokingham
- 3. Windsor and Maidenhead
- 4. Bracknell Forest
- 5. Southampton
- 6. Portsmouth
-  Key port
-  International rail stations
-  Key airport



 **381**
Rail stations

 **327**
Miles of motorway

 **40m**

Gatwick Airport passengers (2023)

Case for Action

Since TfSE published its first **Transport Strategy in 2020, the context has evolved significantly.** National and local policy changes, intensified decarbonisation efforts, post-Brexit trade dynamics, and shifts in travel behaviour due to the pandemic all present new challenges.

Additionally, **TfSE's expanded evidence base has provided critical insights into the region's transport needs,** informing this Strategy's updated priorities.

This research has identified several key challenges that need to be tackled if the region is to succeed.

Productivity

UK productivity has flatlined – Productivity per hour worked grew just 5% between 2010-20 – half the rate seen in Germany and the USA.

Decarbonisation

Transport accounts for 40% of carbon emissions in the South East (2022) – by far the largest contributor across all industries.

Housing affordability

The **house price to earnings ratio is over 10:1** in the South East – higher than any other region outside London, and higher than California.

East-West connectivity

The average speed of passenger rail services on most East-West corridors is under **40mph** – compared to **60mph** on most London corridors.

International trade

Trade volumes through Dover are down around 20% since the UK left the EU, and **Eurostar no longer serves** Ebbsfleet and Ashford.

Climate resilience

There were more than **4 times** as many delays to rail services in the South due to extreme heat in 2018 than in the 2000s.

Equitable prosperity

The **Gross Value Added per capita** of less well-connected areas is **less than half** that of well-connected areas and many residents are at risk of **Transport Related Social Exclusion.**

Congestion

The M25 carries over 220,000 vehicles a day – making it the busiest and one of the most congested roads in Europe.

Vision and Goals

Our Vision is for the South East to offer the highest quality of life for all and be a global leader in achieving sustainable, net zero carbon growth.

To achieve this, we will develop a resilient, reliable, and inclusive transport network that enables seamless journeys and empowers residents, businesses, and visitors to make sustainable choices.

We will deliver this Vision by driving strategic investment and forging partnerships that deliver sustainable transport, integrated services, digital connectivity, clean energy, and environmental enhancement.

Our Vision is supported by three Goals that reflect the three pillars of sustainable development.

Economic Goal

Improve productivity and attract investment to grow our economy and better compete in the global marketplace.

Social Goal

Improve health, safety, wellbeing, quality of life, and access to opportunities for everyone.

Environmental Goal

Protect and enhance the South East's unique natural and historic environment.

Our Strategy is built on **six Principles** that guide us toward our Vision and Goals. These Principles have been applied across many aspects of this Strategy and help us stay focused on delivering the best possible outcomes for the South East. These Principles are outlined on the following page.

Vision and Validate

Instead of planning based on current travel trends, this approach envisions a desired future and creates the transport system to achieve it, focusing on long-term sustainability and resilience.



Triple Access Planning

This Principle expands accessibility by considering not only physical transport but also digital and social factors, ensuring a more inclusive and connected transport system.



Movement and Place

Roads and streets are designed not only for efficient transport but also to enhance the surrounding areas, balancing the needs of movement with creating vibrant, liveable spaces.



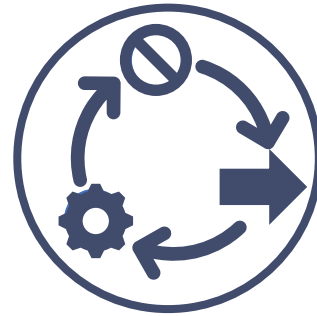
User Hierarchy

By prioritising pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport over cars, this Principle promotes safer, more sustainable urban environments by designing infrastructure to reflect these priorities.



Avoid – Shift – Improve

A Strategy to reduce transport carbon emissions by avoiding unnecessary travel, shifting to lower-carbon transport modes, and improving the efficiency of remaining high-carbon modes.



Environmental Net Gain

New transport developments should leave the environment better off than before by enhancing biodiversity, using sustainable design, and integrating green solutions into infrastructure projects.



Missions

TfSE has prioritised five Missions to drive progress toward its Vision. Each Mission serves as a clear call to action, emphasising tangible outcomes, setting direction, and aligning with national and local priorities.

The Missions have been carefully chosen to address key areas where the South East risks lagging behind without decisive action, focusing on issues where TfSE can play a strategic, impactful role.

Each Mission follows a structured Route Map that clarifies the path forward, including a Mission Statement, desired Outcomes, and Priorities for the short and longer term.

This approach ensures that **each Mission is robust and adaptable** to different scenarios, enabling TfSE and its partners to respond effectively to emerging needs while driving meaningful progress across the region's most pressing transport challenges.

The five Missions are:



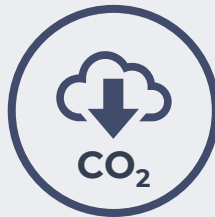
**Strategic
Connectivity**



Resilience



**Inclusion and
Integration**



Decarbonisation



**Sustainable
Growth**

Strategic Connectivity Mission



We will boost connectivity in the South East by enhancing strategic regional corridors and ensure all communities can access high-quality transport links and key services.

We will have succeeded when:

- ▶ The connectivity of all the South East's strategic corridors – in terms of journey times and reliability – is comparable to those corridors that serve London.
- ▶ Key towns, cities, and international gateways are as accessible by public transport as they are by car, and rail freight is as competitive as long-distance road freight.

Short Term Priorities

We will improve the existing network to better serve passengers and freight by:

- ▶ Enhancing incentives for long-distance public transport through optimised fares, flexible ticketing, and improved amenities.
- ▶ Refining timetables to cater to leisure travel demand and minimising disruption from maintenance schedules.
- ▶ Advancing key connectivity projects to improve regional transport links.
- ▶ Restoring international rail services from Ebbsfleet and Ashford to ease pressure at St Pancras.
- ▶ Expanding rail capacity to support growth at Gatwick and Southampton airports.
- ▶ Safeguarding critical areas and aligning policies to enable long-term transport improvements.

Long Term Priorities

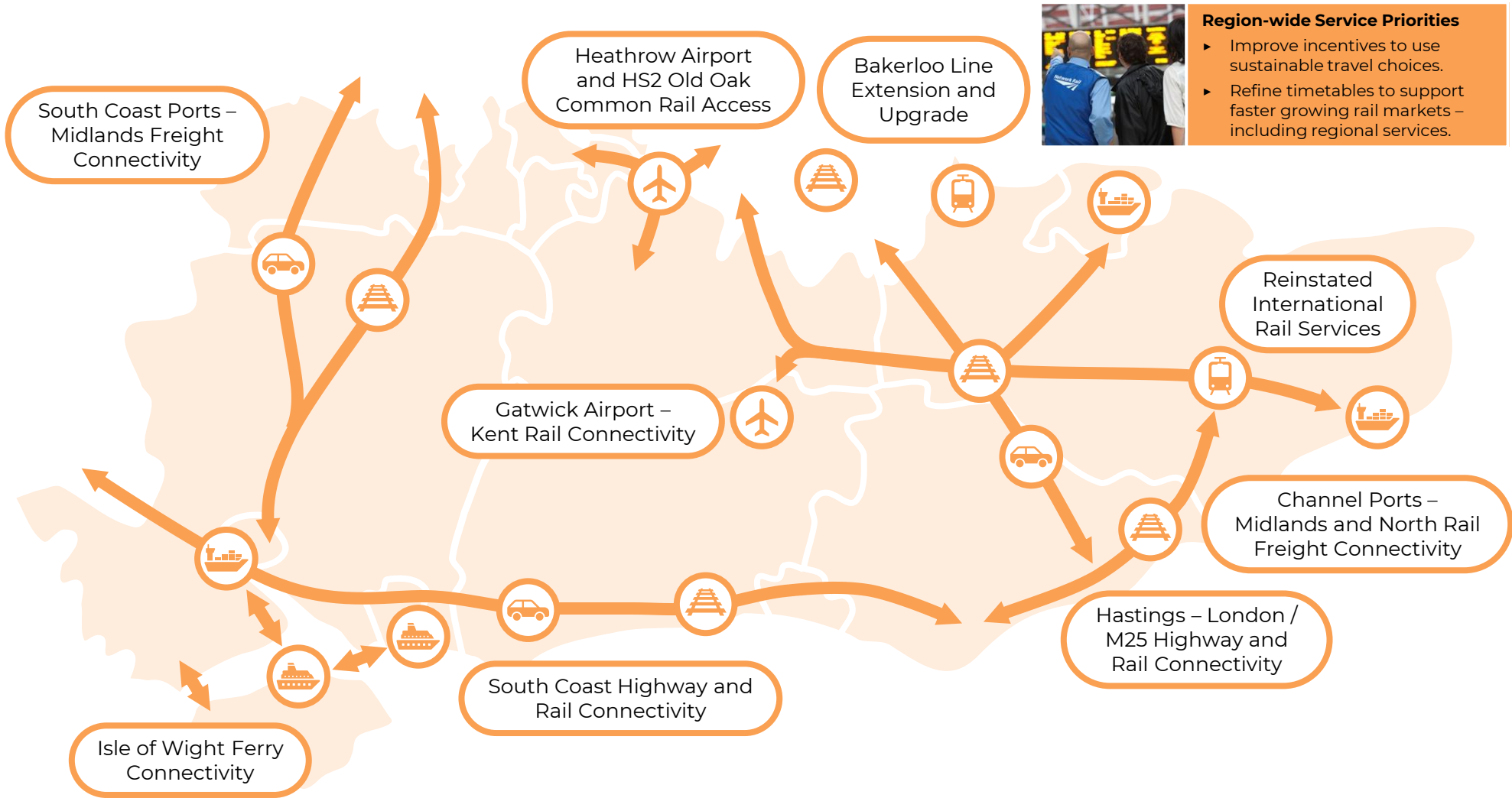
We will focus on major upgrades and expansions to improve connectivity by:

- ▶ Upgrading the roads and railways serving the Brighton–Southampton coastal corridor to strengthen economic ties between the regions two largest built-up areas.
- ▶ Cutting journey times between London and less well-connected coastal communities.
- ▶ Improving ferry services to islands, including the Isle of Wight.
- ▶ Strengthening freight links from Southampton and the Channel Ports to the Midlands and North.
- ▶ Expanding rail connections to international gateways, including Heathrow and Gatwick.
- ▶ Reviewing the configuration of regional rail services to leverage opportunities at Old Oak Common.



Photo: Network Rail

Key Priorities



Region-wide Service Priorities

- ▶ Improve incentives to use sustainable travel choices.
- ▶ Refine timetables to support faster growing rail markets – including regional services.

Highway 
 Railway 
 Train service 
 Ferry 
 Airport 
 Port 



We will safeguard the South East's connectivity and enhance the reliability and resilience of our transport systems for future generations.

We will have succeeded when:

- ▶ The transport network delivers comfortable, reliable journeys between key towns, cities, and international gateways.
- ▶ The transport network has the capacity and agility to manage, absorb, and recover from major disruptions quickly, and when the risk of major failures occurring is reduced.

Short Term Priorities

We will strengthen the current network's resilience by:

- ▶ Assessing road disruption impacts and securing sustainable funding for maintenance.
- ▶ Establishing long-term funding pipelines for infrastructure renewals.
- ▶ Strategically planning for future risks to enhance network adaptability.
- ▶ Advocating for consistent funding for maintenance and prevention projects.
- ▶ Coordinating with utility providers to minimise disruption from roadworks.

Long Term Priorities

We will focus on major upgrades and expansions to strengthen resilience by:

- ▶ Tackling rail bottlenecks in areas like Croydon and Woking to boost reliability on key corridors.
- ▶ Creating alternative routes, such as the Uckfield-Lewes line, to maintain connectivity during disruptions.
- ▶ Implementing the Kent Bifurcation Strategy to ease pressure on the Thames crossings and strengthen links between Channel and M25 – including improving Operation Brock and Stack.
- ▶ Resolving highway pinch points to improve flow for all users, including buses, boosting resilience to future risks.



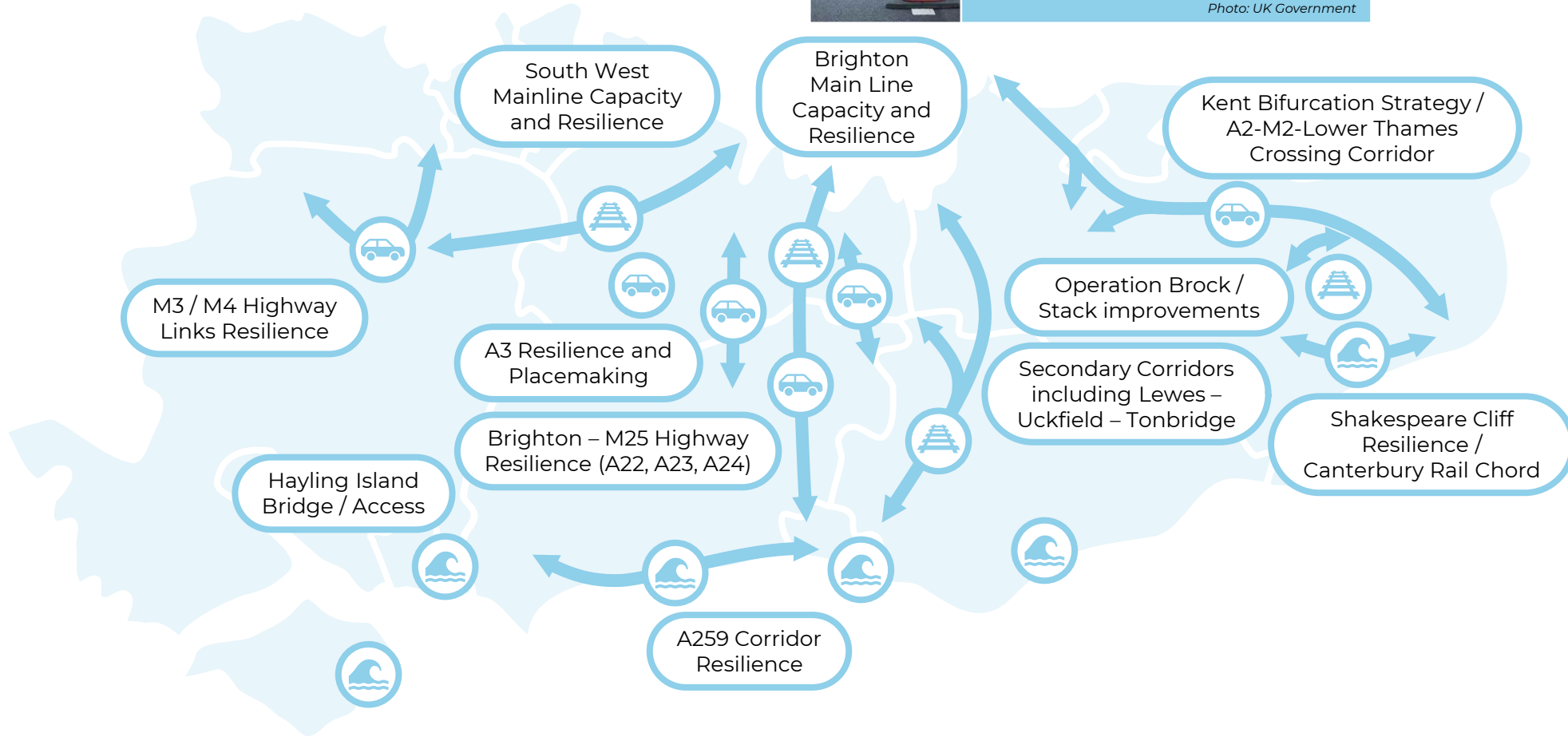
Resilience Priorities




Region-wide Maintenance Priorities

- ▶ Reduce the maintenance backlog and improve roadworks management.
- ▶ Secure long-term funding to identify, understand, and address resilience risks.

Photo: UK Government



Highway 

Railway 

Coastal erosion/flooding risk 

Inclusion & Integration Mission



We will create an inclusive, affordable, and integrated transport network across the South East, providing safe and seamless door-to-door connectivity for everyone.

We will have succeeded when:

- ▶ Everyone can affordably travel where they need to go when they need to go.
- ▶ Customer satisfaction with all aspects of the transport network is high across all sections of society.

Infrastructure Priorities

We will target infrastructure upgrades by:

- ▶ Designing inclusive infrastructure to improve accessibility for socially excluded groups.
- ▶ Enhancing connectivity in North and East Kent and East Sussex coastal areas to reduce social exclusion.
- ▶ Upgrading interchanges and providing step-free access at transport hubs for seamless connections.

Service Priorities

We will improve affordability and accessibility by:

- ▶ Offering affordable fares and concessions for vulnerable groups to improve accessibility.
- ▶ Simplifying fares with unified ticketing to lower costs and streamline journeys.
- ▶ Providing socially necessary transport to connect isolated communities with essential services.
- ▶ Implementing Bus Service Improvement Plans and exploring franchising models to better serve communities.
- ▶ Enhancing connectivity to islands and peninsulas, focusing on the Solent and Medway.



Key Priorities



Region-wide Fares/Ticketing Priorities

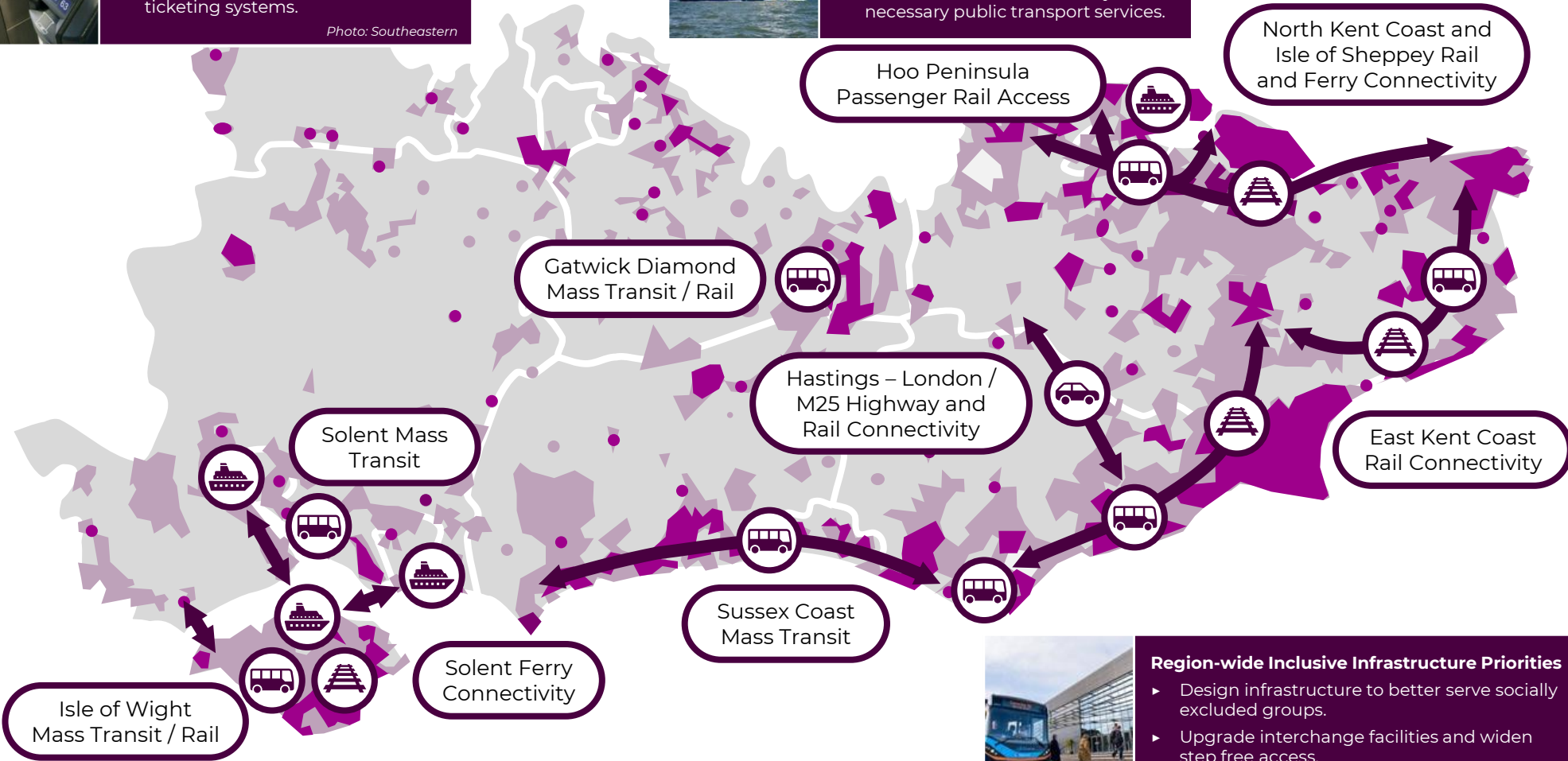
- ▶ Offer affordable fares and concessions.
- ▶ Implement integrated fares and ticketing systems.

Photo: Southeastern



Region-wide Service Priorities

- ▶ Deliver BSIPs and leverage new bus service delivery models.
- ▶ Provide and enhance socially necessary public transport services.



Medium risk of TRSE



Higher risk of TRSE



Railway



Highway



Mass transit



Ferry



Region-wide Inclusive Infrastructure Priorities

- ▶ Design infrastructure to better serve socially excluded groups.
- ▶ Upgrade interchange facilities and widen step free access.





We will lead the South East to a net zero future by 2050 by accelerating the shift to zero-emission travel, incentivising sustainable travel choices, and embracing new technologies to reduce emissions and combat climate change.

We will have succeeded when:

- ▶ All surface transport trips made across the South East are net zero emission by 2050 (at the latest).
- ▶ We have not exceeded our carbon budgets for surface transport by 2050.
- ▶ The South East is seen as a world leader in decarbonising transport.

Short Term Priorities

We will accelerate the transition to low-carbon transport by:

- ▶ Expanding electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure for private and freight vehicles.
- ▶ Increasing the availability of electric and hydrogen vehicles through collaborating with industry.
- ▶ Supporting EV and battery recycling to reduce the environmental impact of EVs.
- ▶ Improving public transport and active travel infrastructure to provide attractive sustainable travel options.
- ▶ Transitioning bus, freight, and ferry fleets to zero-emission vehicles.
- ▶ Promoting integrated land use and transport planning to minimise unnecessary car travel.

Long Term Priorities

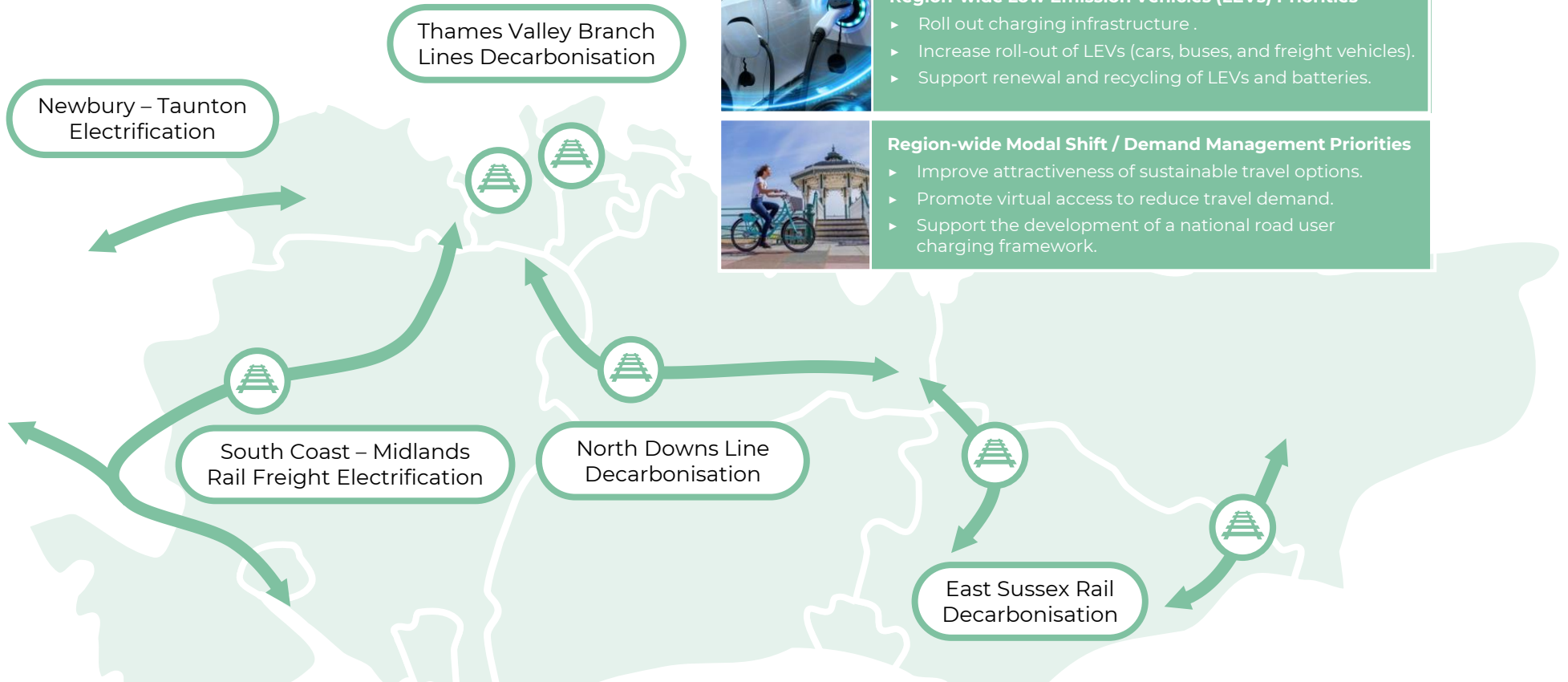
We will solidify the transition to a zero-emission system by:

- ▶ Decarbonising rail through delivering electrification, battery, and alternative fuel trains.
- ▶ Promoting low-carbon infrastructure with sustainable materials and practices.
- ▶ Supporting the government in the development and delivery of any national road user charging proposals, providing a financial incentive for more sustainable choices while reducing congestion.
- ▶ Working with industry to deliver a decarbonised, resilient power networks for rail and electric vehicles.
- ▶ Advancing alternative fuels for aviation and long-haul freight.



Photo: Fastway

Decarbonisation Priorities



Region-wide Low Emission Vehicles (LEVs) Priorities

- ▶ Roll out charging infrastructure .
- ▶ Increase roll-out of LEVs (cars, buses, and freight vehicles).
- ▶ Support renewal and recycling of LEVs and batteries.



Region-wide Modal Shift / Demand Management Priorities

- ▶ Improve attractiveness of sustainable travel options.
- ▶ Promote virtual access to reduce travel demand.
- ▶ Support the development of a national road user charging framework.



Region-wide Ferry Decarbonisation

- ▶ Support the transition of ferry operations from fossil fuels to low carbon fuels, including inland waterways.



Region-wide Power Priorities

- ▶ Ensure the region's power networks are decarbonised and have the capacity and resilience to support the rail network, roll-out of electric vehicles, and development.

Photo: Mervyn Rands, Creative Commons



Region-wide Beyond Transport

- ▶ Support decarbonised energy.
- ▶ Support initiatives to tackle embodied carbon.

Photo: Rampion Offshore Wind



Rail decarbonisation interventions are shown in this map – other rail and public transport interventions that promote modal shift are highlighted in Strategic Connectivity and Sustainable Growth missions



We will champion transport interventions that unlock investment opportunities, enable sustainable growth, and create healthy, vibrant, and well-connected communities.

We will have succeeded when:

- ▶ Population growth and economic development in the South East is underpinned by sustainable transport and infrastructure.
- ▶ The South East has created well-connected communities with easy access to key services and employment opportunities.

Policy Enablers

We will promote integrated land use and transport planning and enablers by:

- ▶ Concentrating development in areas with strong transport infrastructure.
- ▶ Coordinating housing and transport planning across authorities.
- ▶ Leveraging value capture and other mechanisms to forward-fund transport.
- ▶ Using demand management measures to improve air quality and fund services.
- ▶ Strengthening local planning capacity.

Transport Intervention Priorities

We will prioritise essential transport projects to support sustainable growth by:

- ▶ Expanding concessionary fare schemes to make sustainable travel affordable.
- ▶ Developing mass transit systems in high-density areas, alongside delivering Bus Service Improvement Plans more widely.
- ▶ Enhancing Sussex Coast and Solent suburban rail services.
- ▶ Delivering Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans and embedding active travel in all new developments.



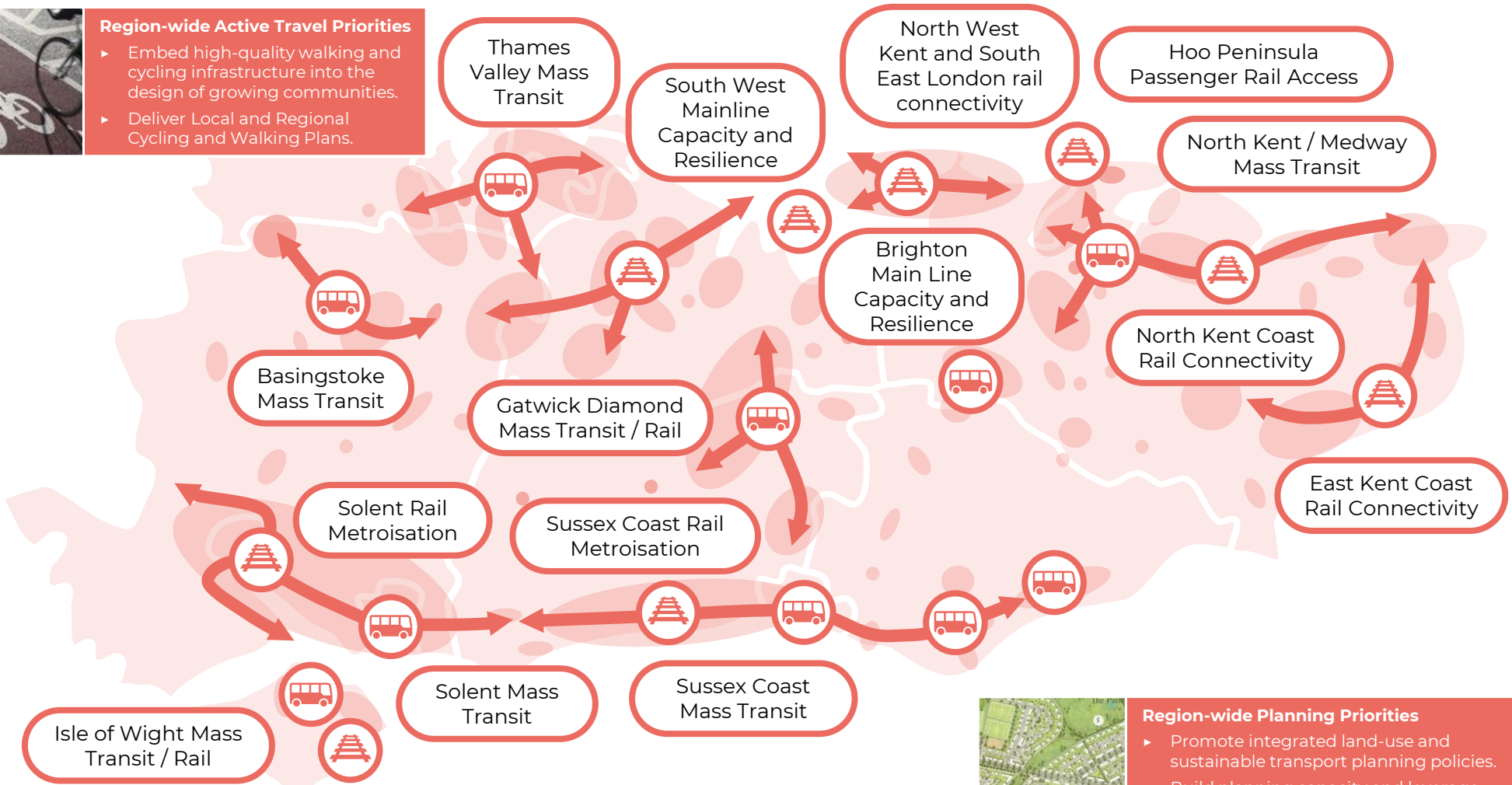
Photo: John Collins

Key Priorities



Region-wide Active Travel Priorities

- ▶ Embed high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure into the design of growing communities.
- ▶ Deliver Local and Regional Cycling and Walking Plans.



Region-wide Planning Priorities

- ▶ Promote integrated land-use and sustainable transport planning policies.
- ▶ Build planning capacity and leverage local funding measures.



Photo: South East Faversham



Delivery

TfSE is committed to turning its ambitious Vision for the South East into action, building on the foundation provided by its Strategic Investment Plan and Delivery Action Plan.

TfSE is committed to keeping its Strategy relevant and effective. Following this refreshed Strategy, the Strategic Investment Plan will be updated to align with the new Missions. TfSE also plans to refresh the Transport Strategy every five years, ensuring its approach remains adaptable to evolving challenges and opportunities.

TfSE recognises the successful delivery of this Strategy relies on collaboration across various stakeholders.

TfSE will therefore drive policy prioritisation, stakeholder engagement, scheme development, and advocacy. Local Transport Authorities will also play a crucial role, especially in delivering highway and public transport projects, while national infrastructure managers (Network Rail and National Highways) will lead major interventions on the railway and strategic road network. Private sector entities, including bus and rail operators, are also essential partners in delivering services and innovations.

Delivering meaningful change requires overcoming significant challenges,

including financial constraints, fragmented resources, and increasing demand for public services. TfSE and its partners must embrace innovative solutions such as "beneficiary pays" models, greater devolution, and rail reform to secure sustainable funding. Collaboration across all levels of government, transport operators, and the private sector is essential to achieve TfSE's Vision and Goals.

TfSE will support its partners with tools such as scheme development funding, an advanced analytical framework, and the Centre of Excellence,

which enhances regional planning capacity and capability. Regular updates to the Delivery Action Plan and the biennial State of the Region Report will ensure its strategies remain adaptable and focused on delivering tangible benefits.

TfSE's Role

These are the key actions that TfSE and its partners will take to deliver this Strategy.

Strategic Connectivity

- ▶ Develop business cases for schemes.
- ▶ Implement freight transfer initiatives.
- ▶ Build a coherent infrastructure pipeline for transport and utilities.
- ▶ Collaborate with National Highways and Network Rail / Great British Railways to set road and rail priorities.
- ▶ Secure funding for first / last-mile connections to transport hubs.
- ▶ Improve connectivity to international gateways like ports and airports.

Resilience

- ▶ Identify TfSE's role in strengthening transport resilience.
- ▶ Build an evidence base on key resilience risks (e.g. extreme weather).
- ▶ Advocate for consistent maintenance funding.
- ▶ Target investments in operational resilience across road and rail networks.
- ▶ Explore nature-based solutions to mitigate risks like flooding.

Inclusion and Integration

- ▶ Ensure social exclusion impacts are embedded in scheme design.
- ▶ Promote best practices through the Bus Forum and Wider South East Rail Partnership.
- ▶ Expand evidence on interventions addressing social exclusion.
- ▶ Champion integrated ticketing and accessible transport hubs.

Decarbonisation

- ▶ Embed the Carbon Assessment Playbook in scheme evaluation.
- ▶ Accelerate freight decarbonisation and roll out EV infrastructure.
- ▶ Support the electrification of commercial vehicle fleets.
- ▶ Develop combined transport-energy investment opportunities.
- ▶ Work with Network Rail on rail decarbonisation solutions.

Sustainable Growth

- ▶ Align housing growth with sustainable transport investment.
- ▶ Expand the 'Healthy Streets' approach across the region.
- ▶ Provide case studies on land-use and transport integration.
- ▶ Identify forward funding opportunities for sustainable growth.

Delivery and Enablers

- ▶ **Funding:** Develop a "beneficiary-pays" funding playbook.
- ▶ **Advocacy:** Secure increased, consistent funding from government.
- ▶ **Capacity Building:** Strengthen local planning through the Centre of Excellence.

Next Steps

TfSE is committed to keeping its Strategy relevant and effective.

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TfSE will incorporate feedback and publish a final version of the Transport Strategy later in 2025.



Photo: Alan Garwood



