

Report to: Partnership Board –Transport for the South East

Date of meeting: 9 December 2024

By: Chief Officer, Transport for the South East

Title of report: Chief Officer's Report

Purpose of report: To update the Board on the recent activities of Transport for the South East

RECOMMENDATION:

The members of the Partnership Board are recommended to note the recent activities of Transport for the South East.

1. Introduction

1.1 The focus of work for Transport for the South East (TfSE) since the last Board meeting has been on the next steps consultation and refresh of the transport strategy.

2. Budget – October 2024

2.1 TfSE have reviewed the October 2024 Budget to analyse its potential impact on our forward work programme and work programmes of our local transport authorities.

2.2 The Department for Transport (DfT) have received a resource settlement of £8.2bn for 2025/26, equal in cash terms to their settlement in 2024/25, but a reduction in real terms. DfT received a capital settlement of £21.8bn, up from £20.6bn in 2023/24, a real-terms increase of 3.3%.

2.3 DfT's Budget settlement represents a mixed picture for the South East. Despite DfT's overall departmental settlement being relatively unchanged since 2024/25, the story underneath this headline figure is more nuanced.

2.4 A number of capital projects in the TfSE region have been cancelled, notably improvements along the A27/M27 corridor, which remains a priority in our SIP. TfSE seeks to work with government and local authority partners in resolving the long established issues associated with this particular corridor. In addition, TfSE continue to press for the improvements identified in the SIP and the use of our evidence in shaping rail and road investment programmes. We recognise the current fiscal constraints however it is important the region maintains its ambitions for growth and the dependency on good quality transport infrastructure and connectivity. We will continue

to work with government to make the case for the revenue funding required by partners to develop future programmes.

2.5 Increased funding for local roads maintenance will be welcomed by local highways authorities, although it is noted that the levels of reported backlog far exceed current road maintenance funding levels. Members of the Board have identified this issue through their task and finish work, with particular emphasis on network resilience.

2.6 Similarly, there were positive announcements of £650m in funding for local transport outside of City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements, £1bn for buses, £100m for active travel, and £200m for Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure. However, local authorities will want to see the detail about how this funding will be awarded, and how much the South East is eligible for. TfSE stands ready to support our local authorities in accessing and effectively utilising any funding through the Centre of Excellence.

2.7 The longer-term Spending Review, which will conclude in Spring 2025, will provide more clarity about the Government's longer-term approach to funding transport infrastructure in the South East, with key decisions expected, including the Lower Thames Crossing and Gatwick Airport expansion.

2.8 TfSE will continue to work closely with DfT, National Highways and Network Rail and other stakeholders, to make the case for investment in strategic connectivity across our region. TfSE has a vital role in encouraging Government to adopt a multi-modal, whole corridor approach to transport, and leverage private sector funding and financing where applicable.

3. Next steps for Transport for the South East

3.1 At the previous Board meeting, members agreed for TfSE to consult with Local Authorities and other key stakeholders on whether TfSE having powers would help them to achieve their objectives.

3.2 The consultation sets out powers TfSE could seek in future which have been split into four categories:

- General powers and powers to be a statutory consultee
- Railway powers
- Highways powers
- Funding and Finance powers

3.3 The consultation has been sent to Local Authority Leaders with an invite from the Chair (Councillor Keith Glazier) to meet and discuss the consultation. The consultation went live on Monday 4 November and will be open until Sunday 15 December 2024.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 The Partnership Board is recommended to note the recent work of Transport for the South East.

RUPERT CLUBB

Chief Officer

Transport for the South East

Contact Officer: Jessica Lelliott

Email: Jessica.Lelliott@transportforthesoutheast.org.uk