

Report to: Partnership Board –Transport for the South East

Date of meeting: 17 March 2025

By: Chief Officer, Transport for the South East

Title of report: Communications and Stakeholder Engagement update

Purpose of report: To update the Partnership Board on communications and stakeholder engagement activity

RECOMMENDATION:

The members of the Partnership Board are recommended to comment on the engagement and communication activity that has been undertaken since the last Partnership Board meeting.

1. Introduction

1.1 This paper provides an update on communications and engagement activity undertaken since the last Partnership Board meeting, including support provided to technical projects, stakeholder meetings, media activity and recent and upcoming events.

2. Recent communications and engagement activity

2.1 Transport for the South East (TfSE) continues to support the implementation of communication and engagement activity across our technical work programme and lead the communications work for the Wider South East Freight Forum, working with our Sub National Transport Body (STB) colleagues at Transport East (TE) and England's Economic Heartland (EEH).

2.2 Our plan to create and maintain a dialogue with the region's MPs continues. In January, we emailed all MPs about the Transport Strategy consultation and offered a face-to-face or virtual meeting with Chairman Councillor Glazier and Chief Officer Rupert Clubb. We have also requested meeting dates with MPs who have previously registered a desire to take up the meeting invitation.

2.3 We are delivering against the objectives set in the 2024/25 communications and engagement plan, with activity supported by web content, social media coverage, our monthly newsletter and podcast. Video content and infographics has helped to enhance our social media engagement, and we are also sharing content with our partners including National Highways as well as the Department for Transport (DfT).

3. **Transport Strategy Refresh stakeholder engagement**

3.1 Our support for the public consultation has continued over the New Year. In January we contacted all 16 constituent local authorities, districts and borough councils and sent them media packs to help promote the consultation, as well as the region's MPs as mentioned. The impact has been significant with over 100 new responses received in the week following the emails and a number of councils reposting our social media content on their own channels.

3.2 We have worked with the strategy team on a series of consultation public roadshows across the region. These have taken place in Southsea, Brighton, Southampton and Canterbury, with further events planned for Guildford, Wokingham, Ryde and Hastings. These events at libraries and council buildings have been promoted via press releases and social media activity. An indoor pop-up banner plus small business cards with a QR code directing people to the consultation online have been produced to support these events.

3.3 The public response has been fairly positive, with members of the public happy to engage with TfSE officers to discuss transport and the strategy proposals. The events have also given us the opportunity to meet a number of councillors including Cllr Candlish in Southsea and Cllr Muten in Brighton.

3.4 In addition to the public events, we have also had the opportunity to brief industry representatives about the strategy. Rupert Clubb and Mark Valleley met the Business Services Association and James Gleave presented an update about the consultation to CIHT members in January.

4. **Events and speaker slots**

4.1 Past events

- Members of the team attended the Future Transport Forum in Southampton, organised by Solent Transport. The event, themed around FTZs, provided us with the opportunity to promote the transport strategy consultation and engage with representatives from our constituent authorities, the DfT, universities, interest groups and consultants.
- We have supported the DfT with their programme of roadshows about the Integrated National Transport Strategy, sending out invites on their behalf and assisting with other arrangements. The event in Brighton on February 27th consists of a series of workshops with stakeholders on the DfT's strategy. This event provides the DfT with an opportunity to gain a regional perspective and hear views about transport from the region's representatives.
- James Gleave was interviewed by Portsmouth radio station Express FM in February, on their weekday evening 'Express This Week' show. James gave some background about the transport strategy and proposals, and explained how local people could take part in the consultation.

4.2 Future events/ speaker slots

- Interchange Conference 4 – 5 March 2025. Members of the team will staff a TfSE stand alongside representatives from the other STBs during the industry event in Manchester.

5. The TfSE Podcast

5.1 Recent podcast episodes have covered our neighbouring STB partner, Transport East, and the challenges and opportunities within their region; the accessibility of the transport sector; and scheme development. Future podcasts planned include devolution and local government reorganisation, Healthy Streets, and buses.

6. MP engagement and public affairs

6.1 We are looking to reschedule a small number of MP meetings which were cancelled or postponed at the end of last year. In February, Cllr Glazier and Rupert Clubb are due to meet Bracknell MP Peter Swallow and we have followed up on interest from a number of other MPs in the region.

7. Delivering against our Communications and Engagement Plan

7.1 We continue to keep our communications and engagement activities under review following the priorities and objectives outlined in the Communications and Engagement Plan for 2024/25.

7.2 We have exceeded our podcast listens target for 2024/25. We will continue to produce monthly podcasts and seek new and varied transport topics to cover that will be of interest to our audience in 2025. If board members have any ideas for topics, then please get in touch.

7.3 Further progress has been made towards increasing our reach on social media to 2000 followers. Since December, the number of followers has increased by 2% on Facebook and 9% on LinkedIn, while the number of page impressions on LinkedIn has grown by 357%.

7.4 The success of our 'Your Voices' campaign, including over 1,500 responses and promotion from MPs and local councils across the TfSE region, has inspired the communications plan for our draft Transport Strategy. This has resulted in over 600 responses with a fortnight of the consultation still to go.

8. Staff news

8.1 We are in the process of replacing our Public Relations and Communications Assistant, who leaves in March. We will be advertising for the role in the next few weeks, aiming to fill this post as soon as possible.

9. Recommendations

9.1 The Partnership Board are recommended to comment on the engagement and communication activity that has been undertaken since the last Partnership Board meeting.

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