

Western Gateway Strategic Investment plan Consultation Response from TfSE



Introduction

This document is the draft Transport for the South East (TfSE) response to the consultation on Western Gateways Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) Public Consultation. This is a draft officer response that will be presented to our Partnership Board on 17 March 2025 for their approval. A further iteration may therefore follow.

TfSE is a sub-national transport body (STB) for the South East of England. Our principal decision-making body, the Partnership Board, brings together representatives from our 16 constituent local transport authorities, district and borough authorities, protected landscapes, business representatives, Highways England, Network Rail and Transport for London.

We have a vision led Transport Strategy in place to influence government decisions about where, when and how to invest in our region to 2050. This strategy is currently in the process of being refreshed with a draft copy of the revised strategy out for consultation until 7 March 2025.

Our Strategic Investment Plan provides a framework for delivering our Transport Strategy setting out transport infrastructure and policy interventions needed in our region over the next three decades.

TfSE welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation. We trust that our response will provide value to the work of Western Gateway but also form the basis for further engagement, especially on the refresh of our transport strategy throughout 2025 and the refresh of our SIP which will follow.

Strategy

Do we feel any of the five aims of Western Gateway's adopted Strategic Transport Plan are more important than the others and should be given greater weight in your scoring?

The aims identified by Western Gateway are aligned with those outlined in our own Transport Strategy and Strategic Investment Plan.

The TfSE adopted Transport Strategy sets out our Vision which is broken down into 3 goals which are Economic, Social, Environmental

The revised TfSE draft Transport Strategy (currently also out for consultation) proposes the addition of five missions that also align with the aims Western Gateway have set out.

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These missions are:

- Strategic connectivity
- Resilience
- Inclusion & Integration
- Decarbonisation
- Sustainable Growth.

In answer to Western Gateways question TfSE do not consider any single aim, mission or objective to be more or less important than another. Different schemes will all contribute to each objective to a greater or lesser extent but all will be needed in order to achieve the strategic objectives overall.

Assessment and Methodology

Do we feel that the methodology described is appropriate for identification of proposals to meet Western Gateway's aims?

Yes, the methodology aligns with the 5 aims set out in the strategy as well as following a multi criteria framework assessment which is widely recognised as best practice and also aligns with the approach TfSE undertook when reviewing proposals in the south east.

Prioritised proposals

Do we generally agree with the outcomes of this assessment?

Unknown/No Opinion

Do we feel the prioritised proposals meet the needs of Western Gateways region?

Unknown/No Opinion

Do we feel there is anything significant missing from this proposed programme?

No

While we have no comment to make regarding anything that is missing we would like to take the opportunity to highlight schemes we have identified in our SIP for the neighbouring south east region that are the priorities for TfSE and may impact on the Western Gateway area. We would also like to ensure that Western Gateway will be engaged and potentially able to support TfSE with their delivery.

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Western Gateway may wish to consider any potential impact or benefits of these schemes to the western Gateway region which are:

O17: South West Main Line - Digital Signalling

Introduction of digital signalling on the South West Main Line. This will increase the capacity for (and safety of) rail passenger and freight movements.

Package	Wessex Thames Railway
Phasing	Medium (2030s)
Current programme	South West Mainline Strategic Study/ Main Line Phase 2 Strategic Study
Project stage completed	-
Project stage underway	-
Project stage next step	Feasibility Study
Next step leader	Network Rail

A10: West of England Service Enhancements

Service frequency enhancements between Salisbury and Yeovil Junction. This will support local trips between adjacent centres on the line to be made by rail and reduce the need to travel using private car.

Package	South Hampshire Rail (Core)
Phasing	Medium (2030s)
Current programme	Yeovil Junction to Salisbury Service Enhancement SOBC
Project stage completed	Feasibility Study
Project stage underway	Strategic Outline Business Case
Project stage next step	Outline Business Case
Next step leader	Network Rail

O14: Cross Country Service Enhancements

Reinstatement of Cross Country services between Portsmouth and the Midlands and increased service frequencies and span between Southampton and the Midlands. This will reduce journey times between Portsmouth, Southampton and other national centres and support inbound tourism.

Package	Wessex Thames Railway
Phasing	Short (2020s)
Current programme	Main Line Phase 2 Strategic Study
Project stage completed	Feasibility Study
Project stage underway	-
Project stage next step	Feasibility Study
Next step leader	Network Rail

All of the schemes identified in the TfSE SIP can be reviewed in GIS format using our online story map which can be found [here](#).

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Impacts and effects

Do we think the identified impacts are acceptable?

Yes, if mitigated where possible.

The impacts identified are comparable to those TfSE's assessed in our Integrated Sustainability Assessments (ISA'S) for both our adopted Transport Strategy and SIP (and also with those applied for the Draft Transport Strategy).

TfSE's ISA combines several sustainability appraisal processes, so that environmental and social impacts were identified and mitigated as part of our strategy development. The components of our ISA process were:

- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)
- Health Impact Assessment (HIA)
- Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Which are aligned to those undertaken by Western Gateway.

It is also important to understand that at the strategic planning stage a precautionary approach is required as any actual impacts will be mostly unknown until the schemes reach option selection and design, at which time it will likely not only be possible but likely a requirement to ensure mitigations are included to minimise or eradicate the impacts where possible.

Western Gateway's assessment of the priority proposals indicates that, in combination, the recommended schemes are likely to have a net beneficial effect on the level of other carbon and greenhouse gases emitted, particularly from active travel and public transport proposals.

Which of the following most closely aligns with our view on the assessment of climate change impacts?

- **Unknown/No opinion**
- **Carbon emissions are not significantly important, or other factors are more important**
- **Carbon emissions have same level of importance as other factors e.g. economic or social**
- **Carbon emissions should be treated as more important than other factors**
- **The whole programme of priority proposals should result in a net reduction in carbon emissions by 2050**
- **Every individual proposal in the recommended programme should reduce carbon emissions by 2050**
- **Other**

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The Whole programme of priority proposals should result in a net reduction in carbon emissions by 2050

It is important that STB SIP's support the transition to net zero by 2050. Carbon should always be assessed in whole life terms but This is not possible until schemes reach optioneering and design. It is likely to be similar in Western Gateway area as it is in TfSE where some schemes will support each objective to a varying degree. TfSE support sustainable economic growth which seeks to achieve a balance with social and environmental outcomes. This means economic growth must be viewed as a means to improving the long-term quality of life for residents. There are areas of our own transport strategy that focus explicitly on encouraging economic growth. However, where it does so, it also considers the potential social and environmental consequences this may bring.

Do we think there are any impacts that Western Gateway have overlooked, or have any other comments on the sustainability appraisal?

No, In TfSE's Integrated Sustainability Appraisal we state that we examined the potential impacts our strategy could have on a range of sustainability objectives, including economic, social, and environmental aspects. These include, but are not limited to biodiversity, the historic environment, habitats, carbon, health, and equality of access to opportunities. We feel that our appraisal and Western Gateways are broadly aligned with each other and government objectives.

Do we think the cost (approx. £4 billion) is broadly appropriate for a 10-year regional strategic investment plan?

No Opinion