TRANSPORT FOR THE South East

Business Plan 25/26

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LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

COUNCILLOR KEITH GLAZIER, CHAIR, TFSE

The next few years are likely to bring changes in how transport is delivered in the South East.

Whilst the South East begins 2025 with no directly elected mayors and no combined authorities, the English Devolution White Paper provides a framework for the future arrangements in our region. We do not yet know exactly when combined authorities will form, what their geographies will be, or the transport powers different authorities will seek. But we know that the government will encourage combined authorities to develop – and that every combined authority will have their own ambitious agenda for transport.

Transport was the first power listed in the English Devolution White Paper – and Centre for Cities research shows that it is transport powers that resonate most with members of the public. This chimes with our experience at Transport for the South East (TfSE). We're currently refreshing our Transport Strategy – and we've had significant interest from local authorities, stakeholders and members of the public, with over 1,500 responses to our initial call for evidence.

It is going to be difficult to deliver the kind of change that local areas want, in order for the government to achieve its missions. Public finances are stretched at every level of government. The demand on our transport networks is greater than ever – and is likely to continue to grow with increased housebuilding. Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of flooding and storms, meaning the resilience of our transport system is being tested.

All these challenges need urgent delivery: more transport infrastructure, that's more integrated, and better meets the needs of people. This is where TfSE are playing a critical role. We are helping move delivery forward.

Our Transport Strategy sets the basis for the region's future transport system – and our Strategic Investment Plan sets out the investment needed to achieve this. Working with partners, we have been progressing business cases and building a pipeline of schemes. Now is the time for the government to invest in those schemes – and TfSE stands ready to help, including by leveraging private funding and financing to bring down the cost to the taxpayer.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

COUNCILLOR KEITH GLAZIER, CHAIR, TFSE

Going forward, as combined authorities are formed, TfSE will provide them with the support they need to hit the ground running. TfSE's Analytical Framework, Centre of Excellence (CoE) and evidence base will be there on day one, meaning our authorities do not have to lose time before delivering improvements to transport they need in their local area.

Transport will not stop at local authority boundaries. TfSE can bring together local authorities at a regional level, supporting strategic transport that connects the whole of our region to London, the rest of the country and the world. The Wider South East Rail Partnership, bringing together TfSE, England's Economic Heartland, Transport East and Transport for London is an example of this. We're bringing the right people together to deliver tangible improvements to the rail network that cuts across all four geographies.

TfSE is here to help government and partners to deliver, providing the leadership and expertise needed to build a transport system that drives growth, supports communities, and meets the needs of the South East.

Councillor Keith Glazier

ABOUT US

As a Sub-national Transport Body (STB), TfSE forms a vital partnership dedicated to addressing the strategic transport needs of the South East. We work closely with our 16 constituent local transport authorities (LTAs), business groups, transport providers and stakeholders to identify transport solutions that meet the region's priorities.

Our mission is to grow the South East's economy through the delivery of a safe, sustainable and integrated transport system. We aim to improve the quality of life for residents, visitors and business while preserving the region's unique and diverse environment.

Our Role

TfSE remains focused on our role, which is set out in legislation.[1] We are here to develop a Transport Strategy for the South East and use that strategy to advise the government on the transport priorities for our region.

While local authorities retain responsibility for the delivery of transport in their area, TfSE has a role to support them, helping them to be more effective and efficient. We remain flexible. We will respond to our LTA's needs and support them on the areas they most need help with, as the government's policy agenda changes.

Our ongoing commitment to supporting LTAs is demonstrated through initiatives such as our Centre of Excellence, which provides access to industry-leading data, expertise, and resources. This enhances transport planning and design at the local level, empowering authorities to implement innovative and effective solutions.

TfSE's technical expertise and regional outlook enables us to bring together industry partners and key stakeholders. We champion the region's needs at the national level, aligning local and central government priorities wherever possible to create cohesive and effective transport strategies in collaboration with our LTA partners.

Working closely with our Audit and Governance Committee, we will ensure that everything we undertake delivers maximum value for money for government, constituent authorities and, most importantly, the taxpayer.

Our Region

We represent 16 local transport authorities: West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough, Kent, Medway, Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth, Isle of Wight, Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove.

[1] Section 5A of the Local Transport Act 2008, as amended by the Cities and Local Devolution Act 2016.

ABOUT US

Our Region cont...

The South East is a region of national and global significance, serving as a crucial hub for connectivity and commerce. It is home to the country's two biggest airports, Heathrow and Gatwick, which together handle millions of passengers and freight tonnage annually.

Our transport network includes some of the busiest motorways in the UK such as the M25, as well as vital railway connections linking London, the rest of Britain and mainland Europe. Additionally, the South East hosts several of the nation's busiest seaports, underscoring our role as the UK's primary international gateway for people and goods.

Beyond its economic success and global status, the South East is home to world-renowned universities and research institutes, vibrant and diverse towns and cities and stunning coasts and countryside. It is a great place to live, work, study, visit and do business. With a growing population of over 7.8 million residents and the base for around 350,000 businesses, the region continues to thrive and expand.

Our vision is that by 2050 the South East will be the world's leading region for sustainable economic growth. To achieve this, we aim to provide a clean, safe, seamless transport system that enhances connectivity for people and businesses, while safeguarding the environment. This will mean more jobs, more opportunities to trade in the global marketplace and a better quality of life for everyone.

Since our establishment in 2017, we have made significant strides in supporting the region's LTAs and partners on key transport issues.

THE DIFFERENCE WE MADE LAST YEAR

In last year's Business Plan, we set out our plans to deliver four core work areas, with a focus on making a difference for government and our local authorities.

We are pleased to report that we have delivered all our priority areas in last year's Business Plan.

April - June 2024

- Launch of the Regional Centre of Excellence Platform
- Start to implement data management plan to support updated evidence base
- Complete work on our Regional Active Travel Strategy
- Complete work on the Future Scenarios that will inform the vision for the Transport Strategy
- Complete work on the forecasting of the impact of the electrification of vehicle fleets on the demand for charging infrastructure
- Progress Common Analytical Framework work on common data standards
- Provide support to LA delivery partners for business cases for Strategic Investment Plan interventions

July - September 2024

- Complete work on the waterborne freight study and study of future warehousing requirements
- Provide enhanced modelling capability for the South East
- Support strategic cases for larger Strategic Investment Plan schemes

October - December 2024

- Commence work on the delivery on the action plan for the Regional Active Travel Strategy
- Complete the drafting of the draft Transport Strategy and the integrated sustainability appraisal for it and commence the public consultation on it
- Complete work on the study of opportunities for intermodal transfer of freight from road to rail
- Complete work on a mode propensity tool
- Deliver updated map-based data viewing platform for the presentation of TfSE datasets
- Commence evaluation of the Regional Centre of Excellence

January - March 2025

- Finalise the Transport Strategy following the public consultation
- Refresh the "State of the Region Report"
- Refresh the Delivery Action Plan
- Measure the impact of the Regional Centre of Excellence

DRAFT TRANSPORT STRATEGY

We developed a **draft Transport Strategy** for the South East, which successfully went out for public consultation. This sets out the strategic direction for transport and provides a policy framework for the South East. The strategy is based around five missions which TfSE and the local authorities will need to deliver against in the future.

The Transport Strategy is based upon a comprehensive evidence base. Its development included a Need for Intervention report and scenario development work, as well as extensive engagement with a variety of stakeholders through workshops, a task and finish group consisting of TfSE Partnership Board members, and specific work with socially excluded groups.

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

In June, we launched the Transport for the South East Centre of Excellence, which now boasts over 200 registered users. The site has become a critical resource for skills development, knowledge sharing, and practical support for LTAs and beyond.

Key achievements include:

- Delivering targeted training in business case development, modelling and transport planning.
- Providing access to advanced data sets and in-house tools.
- Publishing over 250 resources, including toolkits for reducing carbon emissions and improving sustainability.
- Establishing a collaborative chat forum for real-time problem solving and idea sharing amongst peers.

Centre of Excellence objectives:

- Focus on building expertise and maximising LTAs' capability and capacity in core work areas.
- Provide advice, support and practical help with shortfalls and on the ground delivery.
- Be a forum for better communication between LTAs. It can facilitate idea exchange and enable LTAs to work together to solve common problems.
- Support better strategic case-making to help obtain more investment from government and deliver funding for schemes.
- Bespoke guidance to reflect different and specific needs of LTAs across the TfSE area.
- Create economies of scale through sharing resources and best practices to create consistency and reduce duplication.

The CoE has also become a valuable resource for the Department for Transport (DfT), facilitating the collection of insights and enabling LTAs to navigate challenges more effectively. We have partnered with organisations such as Network Rail, Active Travel England, and National Highways, alongside universities and professional institutions, to share best practice, lessons learned, helpful processes, and to encourage innovation. This collaborative approach reduces reliance on consultants, increases productivity, and most importantly, helps saves money for the local authorities at a time when finances are constrained.

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PLAN

We have continued to support the implementation of our Strategic Investment Plan.

We provided funding to support our LTAs to develop eight schemes in the Strategic Investment Plan.

- £100,000 of support for West Sussex County Council to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case for A259 Chichester to Bognor Regis enhancements
- £75,000 of support for West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Slough to develop a feasibility study for A4 Berkshire - Quality Bus Corridor and active travel improvements.
- £50,000 of support for Surrey County Council to develop a feasibility study of London to Sussex Coast Highways (A22 N Corridor (Tandridge) South Godstone to East Grinstead.)
- £50,000 of support for Hampshire County Council to develop a feasibility study of active travel in South East Hampshire.
- £50,000 of support for East Sussex County Council to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case for the A22 North of Hailsham to Maresfield (MRN Pipeline) corridor.
- £50,000 of support for Brighton and Hove Council to develop a feasibility study for A27/A23 Patcham Interchange & Falmer Strategic Mobility Hub.
- £50,000 of support for Solent Authorities to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case for A2 Botley Line Double Tracking & A3 Netley Line signalling and rail service enhancements.
- £25,000 of support to Kent County Council to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case for Gatwick to Kent service enhancements.

Value Provided: £425,000 across our local authorities

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

We have continued to develop our Analytical Framework, to build our evidence base, and allow us to provide more support to help our local authorities deliver.

We have updated our roadmap, initially drawn in 2021, which sets out the plan for developing our Analytical Framework over the next three years. This updated roadmap was approved by the Partnership Board in May. Following the plan, we have successfully hosted three South East Transport Modelling and Appraisal Forums. These forums provide a platform for technical officers to share experiences, best practices, and discuss challenges related to technical projects, particularly those involving modelling and business case development.

During the forums, LTA officers identified several data gaps. To address one of these gaps, we commissioned a regional travel survey which will establish a robust database to better understand travel behaviour in the region, enabling more evidence-based decision-making.

Following last year's South East Modelling Capabilities and Capacities Review, we have begun developing the South East Regional Assignment Model. This model will serve as a critical tool to support the refresh of the Strategic Investment Plan and provide inputs for other analytical tools. Furthermore, we are in the process of procuring a Transport Planning Analytical Toolkit. This tool will enhance our analytical capabilities, particularly for public transport, and provide journey time data by transport mode—another data gap identified by our LTAs.

We continue to collaborate with other STBs in the development of the Common Analytical Framework (CAF). We have implemented a Development Data Collection Log (D-Log) for collecting local plan data, adopted Transport for the North's (TfN) Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) Visualiser Tool in the South East, and, in partnership with England's Economic Heartland and Transport East, rolled out the Carbon Assessment Playbook.

With the help of our host authority, we have identified a preferred solution for a central system database. This will enable us to better manage modelling outputs and integrate with our Geographic Information System(GIS) environment. We will progress with the build and migration next financial year, which will result in enhanced capability to share data with stakeholders.

TFSE WORKSTREAMS

In addition, we have also supported the government and local authorities on a number of other thematic workstreams:

Electric Vehicles

We rolled out TfSE's version of the STB Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Visualiser Tool to local authorities across the area, through the Centre of Excellence platform.

We continued to facilitate TfSE's Regional Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Forum, bringing together local authorities, fleet trade bodies, and distribution network operators to share best practice.

Value Provided: Over £30,000 per Local Authority

Active Travel

We developed a Regional Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan which, subject to the Partnership Board's final approval, supports the active travel work being undertaken by LTAs, by setting a regional framework for active travel, identifying opportunities for joint working and cross-border schemes and sharing best practice.

We continued to facilitate TfSE's Regional Active Travel Steering Group consisting of representatives from all 16 LTAs and national partners.

Freight

We completed work on our studies on the potential for modal shift from road to waterborne freight, the future requirements for warehousing and the development of Intermodal Rail Freight Interchanges (IRFI) to support increases in rail freight in our area.

We held three successful meetings of our Wider South East Freight Forum at which members discussed topics including infrastructure planning for lorry parking and driver facilities, and addressing the challenges of decarbonising the freight and logistics sector.

Decarbonisation

We rolled out the cross-STB developed Carbon Assessment Playbook, through the Centre of Excellence, which helps local authorities make decisions about which transport interventions to implement to reduce carbon emissions.

Future Mobility

We continued to facilitate the South East Future Mobility Forum with meetings on community transport and Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT), shared mobility, sustainable logistics, and procurement & funding.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO IN 2025/26

In a letter signing off our Business Plan, the Transport Secretary recognised the role TfSE plays supporting both local and national government priorities such as economic growth and housing. The Transport Secretary asked TfSE to focus on:

- Delivering a pan-regional approach through developing regional transport strategies.
- Focussing on pan-regional connectivity and integration.
- Supporting local authorities' capacity & capability through providing access to STB modelling and analysis tools and expertise

The Transport Secretary highlighted TfSE's work to enable the Government to achieve its missions, which we will continue in 2025/26:

- Kickstarting Economic Growth
- Building an NHS Fit for the Future
- Safer Streets
- Breaking Down Barriers to Opportunity
- Making Britain a Clean Energy Superpower

The transport system in the South East is central to delivering economic growth, breaking down barriers to opportunity, and delivering a transition to clean energy.

Kickstarting Economic Growth

The South East is home to 7.8m residents. There are 3.8m jobs in our region, and a number of our residents live in the South East and work in London. The South East adds £230bn in Gross Value Added (GVA) to the economy and is one of the only STB regions that is a net contributor to the taxpayer, helping to pay for vital public services across the country.

The South East is Britain's gateway to Europe and the rest of the world, with 18% of the UK's freight tonnage served by South East ports; 40m passengers travelling through Gatwick Airport; 18m Channel Tunnel passengers; and 13m ferry passengers. Kickstarting economic growth in the South East will kickstart it for the rest of the country too.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO IN 2025/26

Kickstarting Economic Growth cont...

The South East is a place that people want to trade with, invest in, and live in. But poor strategic connectivity holds the South East back. Whilst connections into London are mostly strong, many orbital and East-West corridors are poorly served. Often, it is faster to travel from one part of the South Coast to another via London than directly along the South Coast's highway or railway corridors.

These connectivity gaps prevent communities along the South Coast benefiting from agglomeration – the pooling and sharing of resources and talent that drives prosperity. This issue is particularly acute within the region's largest urban centres. For example, it takes longer to travel from Southampton to Portsmouth by train than from Southampton to Bournemouth, despite the latter being a greater distance.

Despite being relatively prosperous as a region, parts of the South East suffer from severe deprivation. There is a clear opportunity to make significant in-roads in kickstarting economic growth by connecting more deprived communities to economic opportunities. The GVA per capita of less well-connected areas is less than half that of other areas in the South East. People in coastal, rural, and island communities are particularly affected, with over 75% of Hastings' residents being in the top 2 highest risk groups of Transport Related Social Exclusion nationwide.

Joining up the South East's towns and cities with better transport would help to increase productivity, create more high-skilled jobs in the region, and attract more overseas investment. TfSE has a key role in identifying the investment needed, supporting the development of schemes' business cases, and working with government to unlock private sector funding and financing.

Making Britain a Clean Energy Superpower

To become a clean energy superpower, we need to decarbonise our transport system. The rapid decarbonisation of the UK's energy networks has been a critical success story, with a shift towards renewable sources like wind and solar power.

However, despite this momentum, the UK's transport system is still significantly behind many of its peers. For example, only 38% of Britain's railways are electrified, in stark contrast to countries like Sweden, where over 75% of the rail network runs on electricity. Furthermore, the UK currently trails many European countries in the provision of electric vehicle chargers – including Scandinavian countries, the Low Countries, and France.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO IN 2025/26

Making Britain a Clean Energy Superpower cont...

To make Britain a clean energy superpower, we need to improve rail connectivity between the South East's major cities, towns, ports and airports. Heathrow is currently not served by rail connections from the South, and Gatwick is poorly served by direct rail connections from Kent. Rail needs to be decarbonised, and the railway's assets need to facilitate clean energy generation where possible. Electric vehicles (EVs) will also play a critical role, particularly in places where public transport provision is poor. To make EVs work, charge point provision needs to improve in the South East, to better match current demand and facilitate the future uptake of EVs.

TfSE can play a key role in helping to advise the government on prioritising investment and supporting local authorities to deliver EVCI in the right places, in the right sequence. TfSE's Carbon Assessment Playbook is also supporting local authorities to decarbonise their transport network.

We also need to make sure that we continue to grow the supply of decarbonised energy to match the demand of the region's transport network. To that end, we work with OFGEM – and look forward to increasing engagement through OFGEM's Regional Energy Strategic Plans, which will mirror the STB geographies.

The government's other missions

Transport also plays a supporting role in delivering the government's other missions. A reliable, well-connected transport system is key to getting patients and staff to NHS appointments. TfSE work with the NHS as part of our Transport Forum, to ensure they can feed into our plans.

Safety on public transport is critical to delivering a safer country. As part of our Transport Strategy, TfSE is working with socially excluded groups, to ensure we capture their views about how to address and improve this important issue.

Transport is also a key part of the 'Breaking Down Barriers to Opportunity' mission. Students often depend on reliable public or home-to-school transport to get to school and college. These are challenges for LTAs' budgets. Whilst the answer to fix these is increased funding for local transport, TfSE can play a key supporting role through our Centre of Excellence.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO IN 2025/26

TfSE's Role in a Changing Landscape

Since we first came together to form a voluntary partnership in 2017, TfSE has had a clear role: helping to grow the South East's economy, by progressing strategic investment in transport across the region.

In doing so, we have always been cognisant that we're here to support delivery of the government's missions and our local authorities' objectives. We know that the recent English Devolution White Paper will mean changes to local government structures in our region. These changes will take effect at the same time as several other policy developments:

- The government is increasing housebuilding, with changes to the National Planning Policy Framework recently consulted on, in advance of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.
- Local authorities will be asked to drive forward buses, active travel and electric vehicle charge point provision in their area, with significant funding from government, and devolution of powers.
- The government is developing an Integrated National Transport Strategy, covering all of England.
- The government is taking the rail network back into public ownership, and is creating Great British Railways to bring together passenger rail operations with management of rail infrastructure.
- The government and local authorities are facing financial pressures, meaning funding for new infrastructure is limited.

Given the number of policy changes, we will continue to adapt to the needs of government and local authorities, so that all our work is focused on helping them to deliver.

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO IN 2025/26

We see ourselves as having three clear roles to support delivery:

1. Driving Strategic Investment Forward Now

While any changes resulting from the Devolution White Paper will take some time to take full effect, TfSE's core role is now more important than ever.

We will continue to make the case and provide advice to government for investment in strategic transport, through our Regional Transport Strategy, Strategic Investment Plan, and Analytical Framework. We will continue to drive investment forward by progressing business cases, supporting delivery organisations and identifying private sector funding.

Investment in strategic transport is essential to enable housebuilding and the government's broader growth agenda, and TfSE will play a vital role in making sure it continues to happen over the next few years.

2. Helping Combined Authorities hit the ground running

As combined authorities are formed, each will develop its own ambitious transport agenda. TfSE can play a key role in helping emerging combined authorities hit the ground running.

Instead of having to develop their own evidence base and analytical frameworks before delivering anything, which would take valuable time, combined authorities will be able to make use of TfSE's Analytical Framework, evidence base and tools on day one.

Combined authorities will also be able to benefit from TfSE's Centre of Excellence, which helps them with tools, training and case studies. This will help authorities to build better local transport plans, business cases, and a pipeline of schemes.

3. Convening stakeholders at a regional level

As the English Devolution White Paper sets out, there is power in combined authorities coming together to work at a wider, regional level, through organisations like STBs.

Many of the issues that affect one combined authority in the South East will affect all combined authorities across our region, and TfSE can continue to play a useful role in bringing together leaders and transport professionals to solve problems.

Most of the key strategic transport corridors in the South East cut across local authority geographies, and this is likely to continue to be the case after combined authorities are formed, with most of the South East's key corridors going East-West, or into London.

TfSE is already playing a key role in bringing together authorities through our Wider South East Rail Partnership, which brings together England's Economic Heartland, Transport East and Transport for London to work on rail issues that cut across our boundaries.

OUR VITAL WORK THAT SUPPORTS DELIVERY

Analytical Framework

In the coming year, the development of the Analytical Framework will prioritise collecting data to address the gaps identified by LTAs and alleviate financial burdens on our partners during their model developments. We will continue to enhance our analytical capability to provide as much support as possible to our LTAs.

- We will procure **mobile network data (MND)** at the regional level, and share insights with our LTA partners - a robust source for understanding travel demand and addressing one of the main data gaps in the region. This data will be used to rebase the South East Highway Assignment Model, and potentially other more local models, ensuring they are fit for its intended applications.

- We will also continue to explore opportunities to **collaborate** with the DfT and academia, focusing on areas where analytical methodologies are less established. For example, we are partnering with the Consumer Data Research Centre through their Masters dissertation scheme, inviting Masters' students to contribute to the Analytical Framework with research targeting transport resilience. We plan to trial DfT initiatives, such as the connectivity tool and population synthesiser, once they are developed.

- Our quarterly **Regional Modelling and Appraisal Forum** continues to enhance regional collaboration among LTAs. Nationally, we will maintain our work with other STBs to develop and contribute to the CAF. This initiative will eliminate duplication and provide common data, modelling, and analytical standards, ensuring a consistent approach across the region and among STBs.

- We will build the **data architecture** that has been identified through our requirements gathering. This is essential as it will be required to store the outputs from our enhanced modelling capabilities.

- Finally, **planning data** originally collected in 2023/4 will be refreshed. The timing of the original data collection was not optimum as many planning authorities were working on their updated local plans. A data collection exercise in 2025 will offer more accurate planning data to be used for SIP refresh, and for use as a modelling input in the future.

OUR VITAL WORK THAT SUPPORTS DELIVERY

Strategic Investment Plan Implementation

This year we will continue the work, outlined in our Delivery Action Plan, that commenced in 2023/24. We will continue to support our LTAs develop a pipeline of schemes and make the case for funding in alignment with the new government's objectives and our updated Transport Strategy.

We will also continue to support our LTA partners through the CoE, developing new content and providing a place for best practice to be shared.

Through collaboration with delivery partners and the DfT, we will continue to provide direct support to partners to fund the development of Feasibility Studies and Strategic Outline Business Cases for schemes named in the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) that would not otherwise be able to progress. The economic situation is still difficult and this work will help to ensure that LTAs in the South East have a strong pipeline of schemes, which allows them to access capital funding as soon as it is available. We will continue to bring together government and industry leaders through our Funding and Finance Working Group to explore how we can unlock greater private sector investment in transport infrastructure.

We stand ready to provide advice to Ministers on the priorities for investment in transport across the south east. Our strategic prioritisation framework and tool will allow us to tailor that advice to fit different criteria depending on the ask from government.

We will report on the progress on delivery and the benefits arising from both schemes and global interventions in the SIP through our Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and Annual Report.

OUR VITAL WORK THAT SUPPORTS DELIVERY

Transport Strategy

The work we began on the strategy refresh in 2023/24 will continue this year as we move from draft into a final version. A 3 month, public consultation on the strategy was launched in December 2024 to help provide feedback and insight from users, LTAs and stakeholders. Following this process, a consultation report will be published alongside the final version of the strategy. This is currently planned to be submitted to government by October 2025.

During 2025 we will review our technical work programme to ensure it is fully aligned with these missions and will also identify the scope of new work programme elements focussed on both the Resilience and the Inclusion and Integration missions.

Strategic Connectivity. 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.

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

Inclusion and Integration. We will create an inclusive and integrated transport network in the South East that offers affordable, safe, seamless, door-to-door connectivity for all users.

Decarbonisation. 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.

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

OUR VITAL WORK THAT SUPPORTS DELIVERY

Centre of Excellence - Looking Ahead

Future activities will include bespoke support, including one-to-one guidance on scheme development alongside the dissemination of analytical, research, data, strategic, and technical expertise.

The platform's reach continues to grow, attracting interest from district and borough councils, operators, and national agencies. This increased demand highlights the CoE's effectiveness and capacity to deliver scalable, value-added solutions.

By equipping LTAs to navigate complex challenges despite limited resources, the CoE plays an important role in strengthening local transport capabilities. With continued support, it can sustain and grow its contribution to local authorities and the broader transport sector, ensuring alignment with national priorities and driving continued progress.

What will the CoE offer for the technical work programme of TfSE?

Transport Strategy Refresh:
All data, webinars and relevant resources will be shared through the CoE. This includes the work underpinning scenario development, lessons learned from engagement, and work with socially excluded groups.

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure:
Data that is collected through this workstream will be provided to LTAs on the CoE. Any future iterations of the tool will be updated live on the site, to ensure that LTAs are using the most up to date version of the tool .

Active Travel:
This workstream will offer engagement opportunities to partners. It will go further than just local authority officers, and discussions can be facilitated between partners within the Chat Forum. Any relevant resources, webinars, events and case studies will be shared through the CoE to maximise reach and impact.

Future Mobility:
Development of a first and last mile strategy/toolkit will be hosted on the CoE for officers' use. Any relevant webinars or events that will be hosted relevant to future mobility will be advertised and recorded for future use. Best practice and lessons learned will be collated through this engagement and provided to officers via the CoE.

OUR VITAL WORK THAT SUPPORTS DELIVERY

Centre of Excellence cont...

Decarbonisation:
The Carbon Assessment Playbook tool is hosted on the Centre of Excellence, alongside the training webinars. Future support is being provided and facilitated through the CoE. Any software updates will be provided through the site, to further enhance the support provided. All data that is collected as part of this workstream will be hosted on the CoE Data Hub.

Freight:
Collected data will be stored on the CoE through the CoE Data Hub. The site can also host engagement activities, their outputs, developed tools, and case studies.

Rail:
This workstream will offer engagement to partners and will go further than just local authority officers, and discussions can be facilitated between partners within the Chat Forum.

SIP Implementation:
Through this workstream, we will be able to provide seminars and walk throughs to approaches in a classroom format for more technical officers, to supplement the business case training series that was offered in 2024. Additionally, case studies and full business cases will be published on the CoE, and revisited in twelve months to understand how the schemes are being monitored and evaluated, and hear more on the local impacts. Any data or evidence collected through these projects will be made available through the CoE.

SIP Refresh:
New data that is collected as part of this workstream's development will be published on the CoE.

Analytical Framework:
All the data and analysis (i.e. Regional Travel Survey, journey times, origin destination travel matrices, synthetic travel demand) and tools (South East Regional Highway Assignment Model, Travel Market Synthesiser) will be made available to LTAs via the CoE. With the continued development of our analytical toolkit and the expansion of in-house analytical capabilities, we will be well-positioned to offer more analytical advice and support to our partners. The CoE will serve as the primary platform for communicating with and addressing queries from LTAs.

OUR VITAL WORK THAT SUPPORTS DELIVERY

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

This year we will continue with the action plan developed as part of our **Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) Strategy and Action Plan** adopted in 2023. We will continue to host TfSE's Regional EVCI Forum on a quarterly basis to bring together key stakeholders from across the region to share best practice and discuss the challenges and issues that are being with regards to the rollout of EVCI.
We will complete phase 2 of TfSE's fleet electrification work, which will develop guidance for LTA's to support them with planning EVCI that will be accessible for commercial fleet vehicles.

Active Travel

Once the Partnership Board has considered and agreed the **Regional Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan** (RATSAP), we will:

- Continue to facilitate meetings of the Regional Active Travel Steering Group to ensure accountability and provide guidance on the implementation of the RATSAP.
- Encourage and support collaboration on cross-boundary active travel corridors and joint working across LTAs.
- Support progression of the Strategic Active Travel Network through scheme development funding to conduct feasibility studies and business cases.
- Hold discussions with transport operators (bus, rail, and micromobility/hire schemes) to identify ways to break down barriers and capitalise on opportunities to better integrate their use with active travel.
- Work with the NHS to support and identify ways to encourage shift to active travel and other sustainable modes for staff, patient, and business travel.
- Scope development of a First & Last Mile Strategy and Hubs Assessment Approach, both of which also complement tasks within the Future Mobility Action Plan.
- Continue to develop the repository of active travel data through coordination with partners on existing datasets and primary data collection through a regional survey.
- Develop knowledge sharing and learning opportunities through webinars, training, site visits, and case studies.

OUR VITAL WORK THAT SUPPORTS DELIVERY

Freight

This year will see the continuation of our programme of activity to increase freight awareness within the local transport authorities and local planning authorities. We will also be developing the work undertaken by Midlands Connect on the Alternative Freight Fuel Infrastructure tool to enable us to identify potential locations where multiple freight functions could be hosted such as public HGV recharging, parking, and modal interchange hubs. We will also be holding further meetings of our **Wider South East Freight Forum.**

Rail

We will develop a **Rail Strategy** to enable TfSE to provide advice to Secretary of State, Great British Railways and the Office for Road and Rail about our priorities for rail investment in the TfSE area. The strategy will identify rail priorities for our area's passengers and freight operators that improve connectivity and unlocking growth. The work will see the development of a focussed evidence base alongside extensive stakeholder engagement. We will continue to actively participate with England's Economic Heartland and Transport East in the **Wider South East Rail Partnership.** which aims to work with the newly created Great British Railways, DfT, Network Rail and Transport for London to secure the identification of shared priorities and better strategic planning that maximises the potential of our wider rail network, ensuring integration between our respective national and regional transport strategies and our constituent local authority's Local Transport Plans.

Future Mobility

We will continue to convene our **Future Mobility Forum** on a quarterly basis involving key stakeholders from across the region involved in this sector. The themes that will be explored include Mobility Hubs, Integrated Transport, Data, Mobility Credits/Incentives, Transport Resilience, and Public-Private Collaboration.
We will develop a First & Last Mile Strategy or Toolkit and Hubs Strategy both of which also complement actions identified with the Regional Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan.

Decarbonisation

During this year we will be undertaking further refinements and improvements to the **Carbon Assessment Playbook Tool** that we launched in August 2024. This work will include updating the base year data in the tool from 2019 to 2024 and enhancement to enable the impact of transport interventions on emissions from freight traffic to be assessed.

ENGAGING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Successful and mutually beneficial **partnerships** are imperative to the ongoing success of what we do. This has been previously demonstrated throughout the work we have done in developing our Transport Strategy and SIP and continues to be a vital aspect of our work as we continue the implementation of the interventions contained within our SIP.

Looking ahead, engagement will continue to be at the heart of our communications activity. We will continue to seek new and foster existing partnerships, particularly with regards to our Transport Strategy Refresh activity under the banner of **'Your Voices'.** Plans include attendance at a variety of events, online surveys, social media activity and dedicated podcasts as we support the consultation.

Naturally, we will continue to communicate regularly with all stakeholders regarding all aspects of our work in a variety of ways. This includes physical and virtual meetings, social media, and regular website updates, along with our monthly newsletter and monthly podcast.

Bespoke engagement sessions will remain the backbone of much of our activity to ensure stakeholders are always fully briefed on our work programme as it develops in a timely and relevant fashion.

The Website Revamp

In Autumn 2024, we undertook a refresh for the TfSE website to improve navigation and prepare for additional web traffic as a result of the Transport Strategy consultation.

A steering group including members of the TfSE team and website users, was convened to understand the key elements of the site and identify any new areas for inclusion. This was overseen by our communications team and the updated website was launched in October.

ENGAGING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

The TfSE Podcast

As part of our aim to engage a more diverse audience, the 'TfSE Podcast' was launched in September 2023. Since then, we have published monthly episodes on a variety of topics, including data, transport scheme development, accessibility in public transport, and healthy streets.

Looking ahead to 2025, planned topics include the 'Your Voices' survey, Active Travel, and highlights of the work carried out by TfSE teams, such as the Transport Strategy. The podcast is continuously reviewed to ensure it remains relevant and engaging, with a focus on identifying areas for improvement.

'Your Voices' Survey

The public consultation on our draft Transport Strategy invited input from residents, businesses, and interest groups across the South East, seeking their perspectives on our transport vision.

In addition to gathering feedback on the strategy itself, we asked for views on key transport priorities, including driving economic growth, connecting communities, and achieving net zero in the coming decades.

Planned engagement activities to support the consultation included TfSE roadshows, Transport Strategy surgeries, social media campaigns, press releases, and dedicated podcast episodes, ensuring a wide reach and meaningful input which will be evaluated after the March deadline.

Business Advisory Group

TfSE established a Business Advisory Group (BAG) in quarter 3 of 2024. The BAG provides the business voice to support, advise and contribute to the Partnership Board. It allows TfSE to stay up to-date with the top transport-related challenges and opportunities that businesses face in the South East.

ENGAGING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Public Affairs Activity

With 76 MPs across our region, an increase from 71 following a recent Boundary Commission review, it is vital we continue to create a dialogue with MPs about the work of TfSE, including projects in their own constituencies. This has become even more important since the 2024 general election which saw 50 new MPs across the region.

We have continued with the programme of MP engagement which began last year, meeting MPs to introduce TfSE and discuss relevant constituency transport issues. In 2024 we met 12 MPs, 8 of which took place after the general election.

Our constituency factsheets, detailing local work that features in our SIP, were refreshed in 2024 are sent to MPs following our TfSE meetings and available on the TfSE website.

We also attended the Liberal Democrat Conference in Brighton in September 2024. We met the majority of the 18 new regional Lib Dem MPs at this event. We represented all the STBs at this conference, and in turn, the other STBs represented us at the party conferences that were held in their regions.

Joint working with other STBs

Meeting regularly and working closely with the other 6 STBs across England ensures the sharing of best practice and delivers efficiencies in our collective work. We have already worked together on a variety of issues including decarbonisation, the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure roll out, the development of a Common Analytical Framework and our Centre of Excellence.

Notable collaborations include working jointly with England's Economic Heartland and Transport East on our Bus Back Better support programme; developing a Carbon Assessment Playbook; and our work programme to increase public sector freight awareness. We also continue our work with the Wider South East Freight Forum and the Wider South East Rail Partnership. Moving forward, we are keen to seek out further opportunities to work collaboratively with other STBs, so that we continue to ensure that we deliver best value for the taxpayer.

RESOURCES

TfSE operates a mixed funding model. Operational and staff costs are in part funded by contributions from LTAs, while our technical programme relies on grant funding from the DfT. This approach reflects our commitment to delivering best value for our partners and taxpayers.

This Business Plan is based on the Department for Transport's announcement that they will provide us with £2.16m of grant funding for 2025/26.

Funding from our 16 LTAs, which for 2025/26 amounts to just under £500,000, is used to support our staff costs. The approach for calculating contributions was developed with members and reflects the relative sizes of different member authorities. We are committed to maximising value for money – and have frozen the cost of local authority contributions for the last 7 years.

Our total income for the year will be £4.3 million. This is based on a carry forward of £1.237 million for technical work and a carry forward of £406,730 for TfSE's reserve for 2024/25. More details on where this Carry Forward has come from is set out in our Annual Report for 2024/25, which details our year end accounts.

Our full budget for 2025/26 is set out in Appendix 1 within this report.

OUR TEAM

We know that all our funding comes from the taxpayer, whether that is through grant funding from the DfT, or contributions from our local authorities.

Because of this, we maintain a laser-focus on maximising value for money. We keep a lean structure and start 2025/26 with just 17 full-time employees. In line with government guidance, our staff complement is to deliver our Business Plan, where it would be more expensive to use consultants.

It can be a real challenge to recruit skilled staff in many areas of the transport sector. The impact of this is far reaching and being unable to recruit the right talent to fill vacancies or skills gaps can affect the work capacity and growth of an organisation. To grow capacity both within TfSE and the wider industry, we have a staff member who is undertaking a Project Management Apprenticeship, and we are partnering with the Consumer Data Research Centre through their Masters dissertation scheme, inviting Masters' students to contribute to the Analytical Framework with research targeting transport resilience.

The team works closely with and draws additional support from officers from our constituent authorities and other stakeholder groups. This approach to partnership working ensures TfSE provides best value to our partners and taxpayers.

Our team is highly skilled, agile, and responsive to the changing needs of government and local authorities.

OUR TEAM

Rupert Clubb
Chief Officer
Rupert leads the development of Transport for the South East. He chairs the Senior Officer Group and supports the Chairman and Partnership Board.

Mark Valleley
Head of Strategy
Manages the technical work programme including the development and delivery of the Transport Strategy.

Sarah Valentine
Head of Analysis and Appraisal
Manages the development of our analytical framework including the data analysis, modelling and appraisal tools that support scheme business cases and the implementation of our Strategic Investment Plan.

Keir Wilkins
Head of Programme and Policy
Manages TfSE's finance, programme, governance, communications and engagement. Responsible for TfSE's policy and work on TfSE's future role. Manages TfSE's Centre of Excellence.

MOVING EVEN FURTHER FORWARD

RUPERT CLUBB, CHIEF OFFICER

The new government has outlined its priorities for a 'mission-driven' agenda, promoting a programme of national renewal across the nation's health, education and criminal justice systems, alongside ambitious goals transitioning to low-carbon electricity by 2030 and achieving the highest sustained economic growth in the G7.

Transport plays an important role in this vision. Five strategic priorities covering improved performance on the rail and bus networks, tackling regional inequality, promoting social mobility, delivering greener transport and improving integration across transport networks were announced by the government in the summer.

New legislation on transport delivery coupled with comprehensive devolution plans for local government, signals a period of significant change and opportunity. At TfSE we are ready to meet these challenges and opportunities head-on.

The government's transport priorities align closely with our own, reinforcing the strategic direction we have taken since our formation in 2017, and will continue in 2025.

We want transport to attract investment and drive sustainable economic growth throughout the South East. Furthermore, we need to improve connectivity for communities as well as prioritising a transition to net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Collaboration is at the core of our work. In December 2024, we launched a public consultation on our evidence-based draft Transport Strategy—a bold vision for the South East's transport infrastructure and services in the decades ahead.

This strategy outlines how transport can be a catalyst for economic growth, stronger communities, and a greener environment. Through the consultation, we will engage local users, businesses and stakeholders to inform and shape a strategy that reflects the diverse needs of the region, which we will publish by the end of 2025.

Empowering local leaders and fostering collaboration is central to the government's approach to transport provision. However, these are testing times. Rising costs and financial pressures demand value-for-money solutions that will benefit households and businesses alike.

MOVING EVEN FURTHER FORWARD

RUPERT CLUBB, CHIEF OFFICER

Supporting LTAs to meet these challenges is a cornerstone of TfSE's work. Our Centre of Excellence, which we launched in 2024, has been created to enhance the capabilities of local transport authorities, helping them to deliver innovative approaches to local transport.

The outcome — improved infrastructure, greater investment, and better outcomes for residents and businesses – will see benefits right across the region.

Our success is built on strong partnerships. From providing strategic advice on freight logistics and EVCI to ensuring the South East's transport priorities are heard at the national level, TfSE works hand-in-hand with regional leaders, MPs, and other key stakeholders.

Only by coming together with our local authority partners and stakeholders can we meet today's challenges and address the opportunities of tomorrow, as we strive to create a transport system fit for the decades ahead.

Rupert Clubb

APPENDIX 1

Full breakdown of TfSE funding by work area.

Income	£
DfT Grant	2,161,666
Local Contributions	498,000
Technical Programme Carry Forward 2024/25	1,237,656
Carry Forward for TfSE Reserve	406,730
Total Income Including Reserve	**4,304,052**

Expenditure	£
Staffing	1,339,857
Technical Programme for 2025/26	2,269,465
Governance	25,000
Operational Expenses	75,000
Communications and Engagement	98,000
TfSE Reserve	496,730
Total Expenditure Including Reserves	**4,304,052**

APPENDIX 1

Work Programme for 2025/26 and allocation of DfT grant for 2025/26

Budget Line	Expenditure	DfT Grant
Staffing	1,339,857	992,000
Transport Strategy	120,737	40,000
Future Mobility	40,000	40,000
Active Travel	45,000	45,000
Freight	185,758	115,000
Electric Vehicle Infrastructure	129,319	45,000
Rail	75,000	75,000
Decarbonisation	40,000	0
Strategic Investment Plan Implementation	482,472	150,000
Strategic Investment Plan Refresh	98,000	50,000
Analytical Framework	546,984	313,333
Centre of Excellence	251,759	98,333
Private Financing	104,435	0
Other costs and technical support	150,000	150,000

APPENDIX 1

Work Programme for 2025/26 and allocation of DfT grant to individual work areas cont...

Technical Programme	£2,269,465	£1,121,666
Events	40,000	15,000
Communications	12,000	5,000
Publications	5,000	0
Website	21,000	0
Stakeholder Database	18,000	0
Media Subscriptions	2,000	0
Communications/ Engagement	98,000	20,000
TfSE Governance	25,000	0
Operational Expenses	75,000	28,000
Total Expenditure	3,807,322	2,161,666
Held for TfSE reserve	496,730	
Total budget including reserve	4,304,052	