

Report to: Partnership Board –Transport for the South East

Date of meeting: 27 October 2025

By: Chair of Transport Forum

Title of report: Advisory Panel and Transport Forum Update

Purpose of report: To update the Partnership Board on the Transport Forum and Advisory Panel.

RECOMMENDATION:

The members of the Partnership Board are recommended to note the recent work of the Transport Forum and Advisory Panel.

1. Introduction

1.1 This paper provides an update on plans for the next meeting of TfSE's Transport Forum, as well as an update on the activity of TfSE's Advisory Panel, which brings together representatives of TfSE's thematic groups.

2. Transport Forum

2.1 The Transport Forum is TfSE's wider stakeholder group. It meets in person approximately twice a year, as and when there is a need to capture the views of stakeholders to support the delivery of a piece of TfSE's work.

2.2 The Transport Forum last met earlier this year, to feed into the Transport Strategy Consultation. Officers are currently planning another meeting of the Transport Forum, focused on TfSE's SIP Refresh.

3. Advisory Panel

3.1 TfSE's Advisory Panel brings together representatives of TfSE's thematic groups, giving them the opportunity to update each other on their group's work, and feed into the business of the Partnership Board. TfSE is currently rationalising the scope and activities of its thematic groups, as its work programme evolves.

3.2 Alongside this review, the Chair of the Advisory Panel will review whether TfSE retains its Advisory Panel, and what form it takes, ahead of the next Partnership Board. In advance of the October Board, the Advisory Panel agreed not to meet. Instead, group representatives received a written update on the work of other groups.

3.2 TfSE's Funding and Finance Group met on 16 September. The group discussed the Transport Secretary's decision to TfSE's funding will be devolved to local transport

authorities via the Local Transport Grant, leaving it to local leaders to determine future contributions to TfSE. Group members discussed implications for regional collaboration, with consensus that continued coordination will be essential across strategic corridors such as the A27/M27, despite emerging mayoral authorities.

3.3 The Funding and Finance Group also discussed TfSE's planned work on private funding and financing. The group felt the work was still critical, emphasising the importance of attracting private finance into transport infrastructure amid reduced public funding and uncertainty over national financing models. TfSE's 2025/26 work will focus on developing a private funding and finance model for the A27/M27 corridor, including stakeholder engagement, legal and technical scoping, and stress testing financing options, with support from Members of the Funding and Finance Group, including UKIB and industry partners.

3.4 TfSE's Bus Forum met on 8 September, bringing together representatives from local transport authorities, bus operators, and other key stakeholders. Attendees received a presentation on the Impacts of Devolution on Governance for Buses report and were invited to provide feedback and comments to help shape the final published version. The forum also heard updates from Community Transport Association (CTA) and the Bus Centre of Excellence on their forthcoming programmes of work.

3.5 The TfSE universities group met on 9 October, with representatives from University of Southampton, University of Chichester, University of Kent, and University of Surrey. A progress update was provided on the Centre of Excellence, with a presentation on how universities could help shape the two upcoming support packages that are currently being developed. These are:

- Prioritisation of transport schemes
- Improving sustainability and lowering carbon

3.6 Universities shared ongoing and emerging research that could help address these skills needs, and there was a strong interest in exploring bespoke collaboration aligned to problem statements.

3.7 Recent and forthcoming collaboration between universities and TfSE was also highlighted:

- Active travel clinic: presentation from Rachel Aldred (University of Westminster) on best practice and application of the Propensity to Cycle tool developed for West Sussex.
- AI in Transport planning: University of Leeds will deliver a training day for officers on 1 December.
- Master's Student Scheme: Data analysis has now concluded.

3.8 TfSE will work internally to define problem statements across its workstreams, with a view to hosting a university workshop to match academic expertise with specific challenges and identify opportunities for future webinars and commissioned research.

3.9 It was agreed to hold a further universities meeting in early 2026, with potential for a wider stakeholder event bringing together academics, university planning teams, and LTA officers to share problems, opportunities, and potential solutions. Further updates will be provided to members as this collaboration develops

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 It is recommended that the Partnership Board note the work of the Transport Forum and Advisory Panel.

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