

Report to: Partnership Board –Transport for the South East

Date of meeting: 2 February 2026

By: Co-Chairs, Business Advisory Group

Title of report: Business Advisory Group

Purpose of report: To update the Partnership Board on the progress of TfSE's Business Advisory Group

RECOMMENDATION:

The members of the Partnership Board are recommended to note the progress of the Business Advisory Group.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Business Advisory Group (BAG) was formed in October 2024. It is co-chaired by Vince Lucas and Daniel Ruiz. The group provides a business voice to support, advise and contribute to the Partnership Board.

2. Business Advisory Group – Feedback for Partnership Board

2.1 The BAG met on Thursday 15 January virtually.

2.2 The BAG received an update on the status of TfSE's Transport Strategy. A number of organisations in the Group had responded to the consultation. Members were pleased to hear that the Transport Strategy had been adopted by TfSE's Partnership Board and submitted to the Transport Secretary as the region's advice.

2.3 BAG Members were briefed on the work delivered through TfSE's Centre of Excellence and Analytical Framework and the upcoming Transport Forum meeting. Members expressed an interest in contributing the business perspective on the day.

3. Business Opportunities and Challenges

3.1 The BAG had a wide-ranging discussion on the challenges and opportunities facing business, and progress that has been made since the last meeting:

- Western Rail Access to Heathrow remains a top priority for multiple stakeholders.
- Businesses face challenges due to inconsistent franchising approaches.
- Hydrogen storage and availability remain key obstacles to delivery.

- Poor road conditions persist; calls for transparent maintenance plans and investment in secondary roads. EV adoption is being hindered by high upfront costs and lack of joined-up charging infrastructure.
- Rural areas are struggling with frequency and reliability of services and rail ticketing inconsistencies. The high costs of rail services is impacting talent recruitment.
- Need for better ticketing/timetabling integration, with commercial arrangements, not technology, limiting progress. TfSE could facilitate partnership forums.
- Gatwick reports increased international routes and further sustainability initiatives, including higher drop-off charges.

4. Next Steps

4.1 Members of the BAG are reviewing TfSE's refreshed Strategic Investment Plan, to give their views on how well its schemes and policy interventions align with business needs. This will inform the final version of the Strategic Investment Plan, which the Board will review in March.

4.2 Members of the BAG are contributing to a report, which summarises the Group's solutions to top challenges that they worked on in 2025/26 (access to international connectivity, rural isolation, and energy availability). This will be submitted to the Partnership Board in March, ahead of submission to Government.

4.3 Members of the BAG asked TfSE to organise another Business Summit this Summer. This will be scoped ahead of the next meeting of the BAG in early March.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 The Partnership Board is recommended to note the progress of the Business Advisory Group.

Daniel Ruiz and Vince Lucas
Co-Chairs – Business Advisory Group
Transport for the South East

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