



By email

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EEH Business Unit
c/o Buckinghamshire Council
County Hall
Walton Street
Aylesbury
HP20 1UA

Date: 07/03/2025

Dear Sir/ Madam,

TfSE Draft Transport Strategy consultation response

England's Economic Heartland (EEH) welcomes the opportunity to respond to Transport for the South East's (TfSE) consultation on its refreshed Transport Strategy.

EEH and TfSE enjoy a strong working relationship, the continuation of which is crucial to allow us to respond strategically and operationally to challenges and opportunities that exist across the boundaries of the two sub-regions. EEH shares borders with TfSE at the boundaries of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Swindon with Berkshire and Slough.

We have many shared characteristics, including high volumes of freight on key routes and prevalence of radial routes into London on the strategic network. There are many opportunities for us to continue to share learning and adopt common approaches across these areas of interest.

We are already collaborating on pan STB projects of common interest, including the wider South East Rail Partnership to adopt a position statement for rail in the region and via the South East Freight Partnership to deliver support to Local Authorities. We will build on this cross border working to collaboratively progress key themes within our respective transport strategies.

Annex 1 of this letter outlines our responses to the specific consultation questions for the draft transport strategy but we would like to highlight the following key comments.

Vision

The vision outlined in the draft TfSE strategy is *"Our Vision is for the South East to offer the highest quality of life for all and be a global leader in achieving sustainable, net zero carbon growth."*

This aligns well with EEH's transport strategy ambition which similarly picks up the themes of sustainable growth, quality of life and decarbonisation. The EEH ambition also picks up wider links to the UK to provide a benefit for those (people or freight) travelling through the region. Long distance trips often cross multiple borders, including STB borders.



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Principles, missions and goals

Many of the outlined principles, missions and goals align with the ambitions of EEH as an STB. For example, improving strategic connectivity between places of strategic importance and gateways (especially by public transport), tackling integration and decarbonising the (surface) transport network.

The principles outlined in the draft transport strategy, including a vision led approach and implementing a user hierarchy also mirror approaches applied in EEH's transport strategy.

The strategy outlines the need for a targeted approach – this is important due to fiscal challenges, supporting net zero and making the most of the existing asset.

Strategic connectivity and priority interventions

We have previously responded to the consultation on TfSE's Strategic Investment Pipeline, with specific comments on interventions contained within the SIP. However, we would like to re-iterate the below as part of our draft transport strategy response as cross border schemes (or close to the border schemes) we are supportive of and would welcome inclusion of in TfSE's Transport Strategy.

- We would like to see improvements to the A404 included as an intervention within the draft strategy, with the movements between the Thames Valley and the EEH region highlighted. It is noted that the A404 Bisham Junction intervention is included in the list of interventions from the SIP but it would be beneficial to bring this through to the strategy as well, working as a corridor approach on the A404. The A404 provides a crucial link between the Thames Valley and Buckinghamshire, linking populations to employment. Improvements to the nearby Handy Cross roundabout (A404/ Junction 4 M40) is recognised as an area for targeted investment in our transport strategy, 'Thames Valley – Buckinghamshire – Milton Keynes – Northampton connectivity study and is a RIS pipeline scheme.
- We are pleased to see the 'South Coast to the Midlands' corridor highlighted as a strategic intervention in the draft strategy. Solent to the Midlands is a key freight movement and we would be keen to see a multi modal approach taken, in line with National Highways study 'Solent to the Midlands'. A key finding of the study was an opportunity for shift from road to rail, especially for journeys greater than 50 miles for bulky goods and 100 miles for consumer goods.
- The draft transport strategy also refers to the intervention of junction and safety improvements on the A34, which was included in TfSE's SIP. Our series of connectivity studies (multi modal studies considering how connectivity in the region can be improved) also outlines junction and safety improvements on the A34 within the EEH region – a corridor approach to considering improvements would be beneficial, working with local partners to ensure the views of the Local Authorities are captured.
- Improving surface access to London Heathrow - sitting within the TfSE region, but with close proximity to EEH, London Heathrow Airport is a major international gateway. We are supportive of improved surface access to Heathrow Airport – for the EEH region this includes improved bus access from locations such as from Buckinghamshire. Western Rail Link to Heathrow (WRLtH) would support better surface access to Heathrow.
- Heathrow and Old Oak Common Rail Access – the TfSE draft Transport Strategy outlines how regional rail connectivity via Old Oak Common could make it faster and more convenient to connect the Midlands and North to the South East via Old Oak Common. EEH supports the development of the Old Oak Common – High Wycombe – Aylesbury – Milton Keynes – Northampton rail corridor as outlined in our connectivity studies and [recently published brochure](#). Delivery of the link would enable economic growth, linking knowledge sectors, transform connectivity and unlock Aylesbury's potential for its communities, business and the wider region economy.
- Our Main Line Priorities Rail study identified the Rail Branch Lines including Maidenhead to Marlow as routes which would benefit from future battery train operation. Coupled



with infrastructure upgrades, recent work by the rail industry has indicated that this would enable increased frequency of trains on this route, providing improved public transport choice for residents on this corridor. We are therefore pleased to see the inclusion of 'decarbonisation of Thames Valley branch lines' outlined as an intervention in the decarbonisation mission section of the TfSE draft Transport Strategy.

In the development of cross border schemes we would like to stress the importance of collaboration between the STBs and Local Authorities on the borders of EEH and TfSE to ensure a joined up approach, but which also considers the variations in local conditions and impact.

Decarbonisation

EEH's Transport Strategy outlines a commitment to net zero by 2050, with an ambition to reach this by 2040. EEH led the project to develop a Carbon Assessment Playbook (CAP), which was developed in collaboration with other STBs. The CAP tool allows partners to make informed policy choices related to their place and type of transport interventions.

We are supporting of the decarbonisation of rail. Our transport strategy includes policy 3: We will support and plan for the decarbonisation of the rail network with priority given to securing: completion of the Midland Main Line electrification, delivery of East West Rail as an electrified route, Infill electrification schemes that enable electric haulage of rail freight services, in particular those to/from the international gateway port of Felixstowe and to/from national and regional distribution centres; and electrification of the Chiltern Main Line between Birmingham and London Marylebone.

We are also supportive of the decarbonisation of road fleet, in line with the EEH transport strategy policy framework.

Of the specific interventions outlined in relation to decarbonisation, the decarbonisation of the Thames Valley rail branch lines is of particular interest to EEH, working with Great Western Railway.

Sustainable growth

Integrating transport and land use planning, in a triple access planning is integral to planning long term sustainable travel – ensuring new (and exiting) communities have access to sustainable modes of travel from the outset in a way which is funded in an infrastructure first approach.

TfSE's draft transport strategy sets out thresholds for major developments and public transport service frequency. While we agree that major development must have sustainable travel integrated from the outset, we would defer setting standards to our Local Authority partners, who each individually have their own guidance for developers.

Inclusion and integration

Our transport strategy encompasses an inclusion and safety by design approach, meaning that all interventions and services should have inclusion at the heart of their approach. We are therefore supportive of TfSE's draft Transport Strategy mission to provide inclusive infrastructure that connect areas at risk of social exclusion.

We are supportive of our partners wishing to adopt a vision zero approach. Our EEH transport strategy aims for zero deaths on the Major Road Network by 2040.

Delivery

The TfSE draft strategy focuses on areas needing urgent action. Recognising financial constraints, TfSE's strategy outlines that it aims to maximise the impact of available resources. EEH agrees with a need for targeted interventions in networks, addressing current challenges and maximising the use of existing assets. However, there remain a need for intervention to address whole scale change including the way systems and funding are approached.



Summary

We look forward to continue working with Transport for the South East moving forward, to enable better connectivity across STB borders and in our collaborative working, in particular the Wider South East Rail Partnership and the South East Freight Partnership.

Once again, many thanks for the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the draft Transport Strategy.

Yours sincerely

XXXXX

XXXXXXX, England's Economic Heartland



Annex 1: Consultation response questions (please refer to our cover letter for specific comments)

Challenges

Do you agree that the challenges we have outlined above are the right ones that the Transport Strategy should be seeking to address?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Q Do you think there are any other challenges we should consider? Q Are there any other comments you would like to make on the challenges?

Please see cover response

Vision and Goals

Our vision is to create a region that not only leads the way in sustainable, net zero carbon growth but also offers its residents, businesses, and visitors the highest quality of life. This vision is supported by three goals, addressing the pillars of sustainable development: fostering a competitive economy, improving social outcomes, and safeguarding the region's natural and historic environment. Together, these goals ensure that growth in the South East is inclusive, resilient, and sustainable.

Q How strongly do you support the visions and goals in the draft Transport Strategy? Strongly support

Support

Neither support or do not support

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q Do you have any further comments on the vision or the goals?

Please see cover response – our EEH Transport Strategy also refers to connectivity beyond our borders, noting that transport (particularly long distance transport and freight movements) may take place over borders.

Strategic Connectivity Mission

Q How strongly do you support the strategic connectivity mission in the draft Transport Strategy?

Strongly support

Support

Neither support or do not support

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q How important are the key outcomes of the strategic connectivity mission to your organisation?

Journey time and reliability – **Very important**

Key towns and cities are accessible by public transport as they are by car – **Very important**

Rail freight is as competitive as road freight – **very important**

Q How strongly do you support the priorities which will enable us to improve strategic connectivity?



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Strongly support

Support

Neither support or do not support

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q Please tell us the one priority from the list at the top of the page you see as most important to achieving this mission?

Please see cover response for more detail. The cover response outlines the additional priorities (including interventions) we would like to be referred to in the draft Transport Strategy – this includes the A404 corridor in addition to a number of interventions already included such as connectivity to Old Oak Common, sustainable surface access to Heathrow airport and the Solent to Midlands freight route.

Resilience Mission

Q How strongly do you support the resilience mission in the draft Transport Strategy? Strongly support

Support

Neither support or do not support

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q How important are the key outcomes of the resilience mission to your organisation?

The transport network delivers comfortable and reliable journeys between key towns, cities and international gateways – **very important**

The transport network has the agility to manage and absorb disruptions quickly – **very important**

Q How strongly do you support the priorities which will enable us to improve resilience? Short-term and long-term priorities are shown at the top of this page.

Strongly support

Support

Neither support or do not support

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q Please tell us the one priority from the list at the top of the page you see as most important to achieving this mission?

Inclusion and Integration Mission

Creating an inclusive and integrated transport network should be a fundamental part of planning and decision-making. However, TfSE's engagement with socially excluded groups has revealed that many communities across the region still face barriers to access, putting them at risk of exclusion.

Q How strongly do you support the inclusion and integration mission in the draft Transport Strategy?

Strongly support

Support

Neither support or do not support

Oppose

Strongly oppose



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Don't know

Q How important are the key outcomes of the inclusion and integration mission to your organisation?

Everyone can affordably travel where they need to go and when - **very important**

Customer satisfaction with the transport network is high across all sections of society - **very important**

Q How strongly do you support the priorities which will enable us to improve inclusion and integration?

Strongly support

Support

Neither support or do not support

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q Please tell us the one priority from the list at the top of the page you see as most important to achieving this mission?

Decarbonisation Mission

The UK Government, TfSE, and all local authorities in the South East are committed to achieving net zero transport emissions by 2050.

Q How strongly do you support the decarbonisation mission in the draft Transport Strategy?

Strongly support

Support

Neither support or do not support

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q How important are the key outcomes of the decarbonisation mission to your organisation?

All surface transport trips are net zero emission by 2050 - **very important**

We have not exceeded our carbon budgets by 2025 - **very important**

The South East is seen as a world leader in decarbonising transport - **Don't know**

Commented [AN1]: Wasn't sure this one was our place to comment? It felt like it is for the TfSE region to comment

Q How strongly do you support the priorities which will enable us to improve decarbonisation?

Strongly support

Support

Neither support or do not support

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q Please tell us the one priority from the list at the top of the page you see as most important to achieving this

Please see cover letter for full response. As the STB for the EEH region, we are strongly supportive of decarbonisation of the Thames Valley branch lines.

Sustainable Growth Mission The sustainable growth mission aims to deliver prosperity without harming the welfare of future generations. It supports the UK Government's first mission, to "kick start economic growth".

Q How strongly do you support the sustainable growth mission in the draft Transport Strategy?

Strongly support

Support

Neither support or do not support

Oppose

Strongly oppose



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Don't know

Q How important are the key outcomes of the sustainable growth mission to your organisation?

Population growth and economic development is underpinned by sustainable transport and infrastructure - **very important**

The South East has well connected communities with easy access services and employment – **very important**

Q How strongly do you support the priorities which will enable us to improve sustainable growth?

Please see cover response

Transport Intervention priorities are shown at the top of this page.

Strongly support

Support

Neither support or do not support

Oppose

Strongly oppose

Don't know

Q Please tell us the one priority from the list at the top of the page you see as most important to achieving this

Please see cover response

Global Policy Interventions Q How strongly do you agree that the global policy interventions are needed?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Q Are there any other global policy interventions you think should feature in the Transport Strategy? **Agree that there is a need for policy interventions to enable overall shift of the transport system as well as individual interventions. We believe policy interventions for demand management should be locally or nationally decided. There are no freight specific global policy interventions listed – this could be an additional area for global policy interventions, such as sustainable first mile last mile freight solutions.**

Delivery

The following tables outline the key actions TfSE must take out until 2030 to achieve our missions, and tackle known, cross-cutting delivery challenges.

Q How strongly do you agree with the actions that TfSE has set in the Delivery Plan?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Q If you disagree or strongly disagree please tell us more about this?

Indicators There are a number of indicators we propose to use to measure the progress of the strategy.

Strategy document. Q Are the indicators that we have identified the right ones to measure?

Yes

No



Don't know

Q If you have answered 'no' above, please tell us more

We would welcome liaising with TfSE regarding the development of the indicators in the draft transport strategy – how they were decided and how they are planned to be measured. We would also be interested to understand the foreseen role in impacting the outcomes of the indicators.

Integrated Sustainability Appraisal Q To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal represents a through assessment of the draft Transport Strategy?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Q Do you have any specific comments regarding the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal?

Overall Views

Q To what extent do you agree that the draft Transport Strategy sets out an ambitious yet achievable strategy to improve transport across the South East?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Q Are there any additional comments you would like to make on the draft Transport Strategy?

Please refer to our cover letter for our full response to the draft transport strategy

