

Enterprise M3 Board Meeting

28 May 2020

Transport for the South East

Final Transport Strategy and Proposal for Government - Item 14

Enterprise M3 Board are to:

NOTE: the production of the final Transport Strategy for TfSE and the intention to submit a formal Proposal to Government later this year.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Board has received regular updates on the work of Transport for the South East (TfSE), in promoting the case for investment in strategic transport infrastructure across the South-East. In addition, LEP Board Member, Ross McNally, sits on the TfSE Shadow Partnership Board, as one of two LEP representatives.
- 1.2 This report outlines progress, on TfSE becoming a fully constituted sub-national transport body and on the finalisation of the TfSE Transport Strategy, by July. It demonstrates how we have fed into the development of both the proposal and strategy, ensuring that the business voice continues to be strongly engaged in TfSE. It also briefly considers the impact of Covid-19 and how going forward TfSE might link to southern LEPs activity.

2. Context

- 2.1 TfSE was established in shadow form in June 2017, in order to develop an ambitious Transport Strategy for the South East region, it brings together 16 Local Transport Authorities, five Local Enterprise Partnerships, and other key stakeholders, including: environmental groups, transport operators, district and borough authorities, and national agencies.
- 2.2 TfSE seeks to support the growth of the South East's economy, ensuring the delivery of high quality sustainable and integrated transport systems. In brief, this
 - supports increased productivity to grow the South East and UK economy and compete in the global marketplace;
 - helps to improve safety, quality of life, and access to opportunities for all; and
 - protect and enhance the South East's unique natural and historic environment.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 In July 2019 the Board will recall receiving a paper on the draft proposal to Government to demonstrate the strategic case for the creation of a sub-national transport body and set out how TfSE would fulfil the statutory requirements for such a body.
- 3.2 The proposal sought a wide range of functions and responsibilities for the TfSE. The establishment of the TfSE with statutory status would create a regional organisation with the ability to make the case for investment in infrastructure. As a sub-national transport body for the South East the TfSE would be able to exercise greater influence over Government, attract more investment in the region and obtain powers over and above those held by specific authorities and LEPs. As such it was agreed that Enterprise M3 LEP should support the

establishment of TfSE as a statutory body and a formal response along these lines was submitted.

- 3.3 Since then in September 2019 TfSE approved a revised version of the Proposal to Government, which reflected the feedback received through the 12 week public consultation, where there was wider spread support for the proposal and a recognition from stakeholders that the creation of a sub-national transport body would benefit the south east area. It was then agreed in December 2019 that TfSE should seek to submit the proposal to Government upon completion of the Transport Strategy, which firmly sets out the ways in which TfSE and the Department for Transport can work in partnership to implement the bold and ambitious approach included in the Strategy.
- 3.4 TfSE then took further advice from the Department for Transport prior to making a formal submission and there were a number of discussions with George Freeman MP, the previous Minister of State, including his attendance at the 'Connecting the South East' event in Farnborough to launch the draft Transport Strategy. The Minister was complementary of the way in which TfSE has operated, recognising the importance that has been placed on partnership working and the role played in providing a collective single voice on priorities.
- 3.5 As a result of the ministerial reshuffle in February 2020, responsibility for STBs has transferred to Baroness Vere of Norbiton, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport. The Chair of TfSE wrote to Baroness Vere requesting a meeting to discuss TfSE's priorities, including its ambition to gain statutory status. Although this letter was acknowledged and welcomed, it will not be possible to progress a meeting with Baroness Vere until the current situation with Covid-19 has been addressed. Nevertheless, it remains the intention to submit the formal proposal alongside the final Transport Strategy in September.

4. Transport Strategy

- 4.1 The vision for the South-East contained in the TfSE Transport Strategy is that "By 2050, the South East of England will be a leading global region for net-zero carbon, sustainable economic growth where integrated transport, digital and energy networks have delivered a step change in connectivity and environmental quality." It is pleasing to see that there remains a strong emphasis on environmental issues and low carbon and that technological and digital solutions remain at the forefront of the approach. Indeed, all of these have been reaffirmed and strengthened in the post-consultation revisions that have been proposed.
- 4.2 In January 2020 the Board noted that we had submitted a full response to the consultation by TfSE on their draft Transport Strategy. The response focused on three key areas:
 - Ensuring that the strategy is predicated on the most up to date economic data available and in particular that there are strong and clear linkages between the TfSE Strategy and the Evidence Bases for the Local Industrial Strategy that have been developed by each of the 5 LEPs in the TfSE Area.
 - That the opportunity is taken to strongly differentiate the South East and this transport strategy relative to other area transport strategies by seizing, leading and being bold on innovation and the future changes in mobility. This was emphasised by the youth parliament speakers at the kick-off event. This is their future transport strategy and they expect to live in a very different world of mobility than we have now. To fail to strongly recognise this would be remiss in our view.
 - We must recognise the climate emergency and fully embrace clean growth and with it the overwhelming need to invest in sustainable and clean transport solutions for our future
- 4.3 TfSE considered the results of the consultation at their meeting in April 2020 and concluded that overall the public consultation exercise on the draft Transport Strategy had been very

successful with a good level of response to the consultation from a wide variety of different stakeholders. The results of the consultation showed that there is considerable support for key aspects of the draft Transport Strategy including the 2050 Vision, the 'decide and provide' approach that was used to develop it, the case it makes for continued investment in the South East and its role in enabling TfSE to achieve its overall mission.

- 4.4 They agreed the proposed drafting changes identified in response to the key themes raised by multiple respondents as well as the specific drafting requests be approved and that where constituent authorities would seek internal approval for the draft final version of the Transport Strategy. Subject to the ongoing impacts of the response to the current Covid -19 pandemic and the impact this will have on working arrangements, the final version of the Transport Strategy will be considered by TfSE in July 2020 and if approved submitted to Government, along with the formal proposal afterwards.

5. Covid-19

- 5.1 Whilst the impact of Covid-19 is devastating to business and the wider community across the TfSE area, there is also an opportunity for TfSE to strengthening the region's voice on strategic transport issues. The Covid-19 crisis is forcing a reassessment of lifestyles, change the ways we work, and even shift our values. This provides a unique opportunity to take the learnings from our current challenging situation, and isolation, and turn it into creative, positive, practical action – ready for when society can return to some sense of normality.
- 5.2 In particular it may be that the best possible 'new normal' will not be about making more-or-less the same trips but making them in different ways, that are better aligned with climate change emergency aspirations. This aligns well with the TfSE Strategy which will be kept under review as the implications of Covid-19 are considered. The decide and provide approach is flexible enough to adapt and create new approaches and partnerships.
- 5.3 The five area and thematic studies, which will follow on from the Transport Strategy and the feed into the final Strategic Investment Plan, will need to reflect on and take account of the potential impact of any changes to the economy and wider society. These changes may not be immediately apparent – and it may be some time before the 'new normal' establishes itself – but TfSE will need to remain committed to achieving its vision of a better, more productive and more sustainable South East and the Strategy should still provide the framework to get there, in a post Covid-19 society.
- 5.4 In partnership with our neighbouring LEPs we would also be seeking for the Transport Strategy together with the five area and thematic studies to be aligned alongside work being taken forward by the Southern group of LEPs on economic recovery

Kevin Travers
Head of Transport
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