

Revised version of the Draft Transport Strategy approved by the TfSE Partnership Board - 21 July 2025.

Transport Strategy for the South East

Draft Final Transport Strategy

July 2025

21 July 2025

Foreword

Cllr Keith Glazier, Chair, TfSE and Leader, East Sussex County Council

We know that transport is integral to how we live, work, develop and enjoy the place we live in. It has never been more important to create a South East where transport enables and empowers local people. That's why I am proud to present this new Transport Strategy for the South East. .

This Strategy sets out our partnership's shared vision for the South East which sets out how a better integrated and more sustainable transport network across our region can deliver a higher quality of life for everyone who lives, works, has a business, or visits the South East.

The world has changed since we adopted the first Transport Strategy in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic legacy has shaped how we work and travel in ways we could have never foreseen. Businesses have had to adjust to new trading arrangements with international markets – especially through our major international ports and airports.

Government policy has changed significantly. A variety of national transport strategies and documents have been published on everything from railway to buses and active travel. There have also been announcements in other related policy areas such as planning, climate change, and economic development

The publication of UK Infrastructure: A 10 Year Strategy establishes a new framework for the delivery of nationally significant infrastructure projects, and commits to speeding up delivery Our strategy compliments this approach by providing identifying the priority outcomes we are seeking to achieve.

We welcome the development of the Integrated National Transport Strategy, which seeks to bring coherence across transport modes

and regions. Our own Strategy will support and complement this national framework by ensuring the South East's priorities are clearly articulated and grounded in strong evidence.

Transport for the South East (TfSE) itself has grown as an organisation during this time. We have developed a Strategic Investment Plan, setting out our priorities for transport infrastructure investment, as well as strategies on Future Mobility, Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure and Active Travel. We have developed our in-house analytical capability and launched our Centre of Excellence to build the capability of our local transport authorities.

Throughout all of this, one thing has remained constant – the need for continued, sustainable investment in the South East's transport infrastructure and services in order to improve people's lives, support businesses and tackle climate change through our 2050 Vision.

We have co-created this strategy with our partners based around the delivery of five Missions which will best address the key challenges the region faces and have the biggest impact.

These Missions are:

- Improving strategic connectivity between our major urban areas and with international gateways, especially by public transport, which is crucial for economic growth.
- Improving the resilience of the transport network, so that it offers reliable journeys and can respond to current and future risks to its operation.
- Tackling the inclusion and integration challenges facing our communities, such as transport-related social exclusion and providing a joined-up transport network to enhance connectivity and improve people's lives.

- Decarbonising our surface transport network, which is essential if we are to meet our climate change goals.
- Achieving sustainable growth through planned housing and employment growth which has sustainable transport at its heart.

We are under no illusions as to the scale of the change that is needed to achieve these Missions. We need to think big and deliver at pace. This requires new thinking, the identification of new funding sources and the sharing of best practice to unlock the delivery challenges ahead.

The English Devolution White Paper poses both challenges and opportunities to the delivery of this strategy. Especially considering that two areas in the South East: Sussex and Brighton and Hampshire and the Solent, are part of the Devolution Priority Programme. This Strategy provides a basis on which TfSE can work together with partners, including new Strategic Authorities and Councils to deliver on shared priorities. We will work with national and local government and our key partners to deliver our Missions as we strive towards achieving the economic, social and environmental goals embodied in our 2050 Vision.

This Strategy has been shaped through extensive consultation, including engagement with socially excluded groups, over 1,500 public survey responses, and detailed input from our Transport Forum, expert working groups, and local leaders. We are grateful to everyone who contributed their time and insights. Your feedback has been invaluable in helping us refine our approach and ensure this Strategy meets the region's needs.

If we get this right, the prize is huge – emitting less carbon, creating more sustainable and healthy communities, growing businesses, and increased prosperity across the region.

Executive Summary

Introduction

This Transport Strategy for South East England, developed by Transport for the South East (TfSE), presents an ambitious Vision for the region as a global leader in sustainable prosperity and quality of life.

With its vital economy, rich heritage, and proximity to London and mainland Europe, the South East plays a key role in connecting Britain to the world. This Strategy seeks to enhance the region's strategic connectivity, resilience, integration, decarbonisation, and sustainable growth.

TfSE, as the Sub-national Transport Body for the South East, unites 16 local transport authorities and partners to deliver a cohesive, evidence-based approach to transport.

Established in 2017, TfSE's Mission is to grow the South East's economy through a safe, sustainable, and integrated transport system that enhances residents' quality of life and protects the environment. TfSE's governance and regional expertise allow it to advocate effectively for the South East, aligning transport initiatives with local and national priorities.

Since the first Transport Strategy in 2020, the context has evolved significantly. National and local policy changes, intensified decarbonisation efforts, post-Brexit trade dynamics, and shifts in travel behaviour due to the pandemic all present new challenges. Additionally, TfSE's expanded evidence base has provided critical insights into the region's transport needs, informing this Strategy's updated priorities.

Key regional challenges underscore the case for action. Rising congestion, carbon emissions, transport-related social exclusion, and housing affordability issues demand a targeted, mission-driven approach. This refreshed Strategy outlines coherent "Missions" that

provide a Route Map to achieve the region's Vision, delivering significant value to the South East's economy and quality of life.

This Strategy focuses on areas needing urgent action, where TfSE is uniquely positioned to drive change. Recognising financial constraints, TfSE's approach emphasises practical, achievable solutions, aiming to maximise the impact of available resources. Developed through rigorous evidence gathering and stakeholder engagement, this Strategy presents a framework for action to meet the region's most pressing transport challenges.

In addition to the Strategy, an Integrated Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Statement have been prepared to assess the Strategy's impact on Sustainability Goals, including biodiversity, health, and access equity.

Vision and Goals

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.

To achieve this, we will develop a resilient, reliable, and inclusive transport network that enables seamless journeys and empowers residents, businesses, and visitors to make sustainable choices.

We will deliver this Vision by driving strategic investment and forging partnerships that deliver sustainable transport, integrated services, digital connectivity, clean energy, and environmental enhancement.

Our Vision is supported by three Goals that reflect the three pillars of sustainable development:

- **Economic Goal:** Improve productivity and attract investment to grow our economy in a way that is sustainable, inclusive, and resilient.

- **Social Goal:** Improve health, safety, wellbeing, quality of life, and access to opportunities for everyone.
- **Environmental Goal:** Protect and enhance the South East's unique natural and historic environment, while supporting a just transition to net zero.

Our Strategy is built on six Principles that guide us toward our Vision and Goals. These Principles have been applied across many aspects of this Strategy and help us stay focused on delivering the best possible outcomes for the South East. These Principles are outlined below:

- **Vision and Validate:** Instead of planning based on current travel trends, this approach envisions a desired future and creates the transport system to achieve it, focusing on long-term sustainability and resilience.
- **Triple Access Planning:** This Principle expands accessibility by considering not only physical transport but also digital and social factors, ensuring a more inclusive and connected transport system.
- **Movement and Place:** Roads and streets are designed not only for efficient transport but also to enhance the surrounding areas, balancing the needs of movement with creating vibrant, liveable spaces.
- **User Hierarchy:** By prioritising pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport over cars, this Principle promotes safer, more sustainable urban environments by designing infrastructure to reflect these priorities.
- **Avoid – Shift – Improve:** A Strategy to reduce transport carbon emissions by avoiding unnecessary travel, shifting to lower-carbon transport modes, and improving the efficiency of remaining high-carbon modes.

- **Environmental Net Gain:** New transport developments should leave the environment better off than before by enhancing biodiversity, using sustainable design, and integrating green solutions into infrastructure projects.

Missions

TfSE has prioritised five Missions to drive progress toward its Vision. Each Mission serves as a clear call to action, emphasising tangible outcomes, setting direction, and aligning with national and local priorities. The Missions are:

- Strategic Connectivity.
- Resilience.
- Inclusion and Integration.
- Decarbonisation.
- Sustainable Growth.

The Missions have been carefully chosen to address key areas where the South East risks lagging behind without decisive action, focusing on issues where TfSE can play a strategic, impactful role. Each Mission follows a structured Route Map that clarifies the path forward. These Route Maps contain:

- **Mission Statement:** Outlining the core aim and urgency for each Mission.
- **Desired Outputs and Outcomes:** Defining tangible targets to measure success.
- **Context:** Outlining why each Mission is important to the South East and has been selected for this Strategy.
- **Short and Long Term Priorities:** Highlighting key interventions to achieve the desired results, including schemes from the SIP.

- **Supporting Context:** Providing detailed challenges, theories of change, and cross-references to SIP indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

This approach ensures that each Mission is robust and adaptable to different scenarios, enabling TfSE and its partners to respond effectively to emerging needs while driving meaningful progress across the region's most pressing transport challenges.

Strategic Connectivity Mission

Mission Statement

This Mission aims to boost connectivity in the South East by enhancing strategic regional corridors to ensure all communities and businesses have access to high-quality, convenient and resilient transport links and key services, for people and goods.

Success will mean that key towns, cities, and international gateways are as accessible by public transport as they are by car, with rail freight becoming as competitive as long-distance road freight.

Outcomes

The core Goal is to increase the modal share of both passenger and freight journeys using sustainable travel options on strategic corridors connecting the South East's major economic centres and international gateways.

Achieving this modal shift will reduce congestion, improve air quality, enhance safety, and support economic growth, particularly in rural and coastal areas. Strengthened demand for public transport will place bus and rail services on a more sustainable financial footing, while making rail and bus travel as convenient and competitive as car journeys.

Short Term Priorities

The immediate focus is on improving the existing network to better serve both passengers and freight by:

- Enhancing incentives for long-distance public transport by optimising fares, ticketing, and on-board amenities.
- Refining timetables to support fast-growing markets like leisure travel and rescheduling maintenance to reduce disruption.
- Reinstating international rail services from Ebbsfleet and/or Ashford to relieve capacity at St Pancras.
- Providing adequate rail capacity and connectivity to support growth at Gatwick and Southampton airports.
- Safeguarding critical areas and aligning planning policies to enable future improvements.

Long Term Priorities

In the longer term, efforts will focus on major upgrades and expansions to address bottlenecks and improve connectivity by:

- Upgrading the South Coast's highway and rail corridors between Brighton and Southampton to strengthen economic ties between the region's two largest built-up areas.
- Reducing journey times between London and "left-behind" coastal communities
- Enhancing ferry access to islands, including the Isle of Wight.
- Strengthening freight corridors from Southampton and Channel Ports to the Midlands and North.
- Developing new rail connections to international gateways, including links to Heathrow and Gatwick.

- Reviewing regional rail connectivity to leverage opportunities presented by the opening of Old Oak Common and HS2.

Resilience Mission

Mission Statement

This Mission focuses on safeguarding and enhancing the resilience of the South East's transport network to ensure reliable and smooth journeys for all users.

Success will mean a transport system that has the capacity and agility to manage, absorb, and recover from major disruptions quickly – including disruption arising from associated power and digital networks.

Outcomes

The primary Goal is to reduce the effects of disruption across the strategic transport network – from extreme weather, planned works, or infrastructure failure – including on roads, railways, and critical assets such as bridges. Reliable and predictable journeys are essential for user confidence and economic productivity. A resilient network reduces the risk of failure, lowers long-term costs, and ensures essential services and goods keep flowing, even during periods of disruption.

A resilient network that is well-maintained reduces long-term costs for both users and the government. By focusing on resilience, resources can be reallocated to further network improvements, fostering economic growth and creating a cost-effective system for all stakeholders.

Short Term Priorities

Immediate efforts will strengthen the current network's resilience against both planned and unplanned disruptions by:

- Evaluating the economic impact of road disruptions and seeking sustainable funding to enhance maintenance.

- Establishing a long-term funding pipeline for infrastructure renewals.
- Strategically planning for future risks – including climate, land use, and technology – to ensure the network can anticipate and adapt to potential threats.
- Advocating for consistent funding for critical maintenance and preventative projects.
- Coordinating with utility providers on roadworks planning to complete essential maintenance with minimal disruption.

Long Term Priorities

In the longer term, efforts will focus on major upgrades and expansions to address bottlenecks and improve connectivity by:

- Reducing bottlenecks in key areas like Croydon and Woking to improve service reliability on major rail corridors.
- Developing secondary corridors, such as the Uckfield – Lewes line, to offer alternative routes and ensure continuous connectivity.
- Implementing the Kent Bifurcation Strategy and improving Enhancing Kent's to maintain traffic flow during cross-Channel disruptions. to alleviate pressure on the Thames crossings and improve resilience between Channel ports and the M25.
- Addressing pinch points on highways to improve flow for all users, including buses, and making key infrastructure more resilient to future risks.

Inclusion and Integration Mission

Mission Statement

This Mission aims to create an inclusive, affordable, and integrated transport network across the South East, providing safe, secure, and seamless door-to-door connectivity for everyone.

Success will mean that all residents can travel affordably, comfortably, and confidently, with high satisfaction across diverse user groups.

Outcomes

The Mission's core Goal is a transport system that is accessible, equitable, and responsive to the needs of all residents – particularly those most at risk of exclusion. Key outcomes include:

- Reduced Transport Related Social Exclusion, especially in rural and coastal areas.
- Higher satisfaction across all user groups, with a focus on accessibility and comfort.
- A network that is inclusive and safe for people with mobility and sensory needs.
- Improved safety and personal security, including progress toward "Vision Zero".
- Better public health, enabled by increased active travel and cleaner air.
- Reduced severance and improved public realm, supporting liveable neighbourhoods.
- A lower proportion of household income spent on housing and transport.

Infrastructure Priorities

Delivering these outcomes will require targeted infrastructure upgrades, with priorities including by:

- Designing infrastructure using inclusive design principles that cater to socially excluded groups, enhancing accessibility for those with disabilities and limited mobility through improved lighting, wayfinding, and public spaces.
- Improving connectivity in areas at risk of social exclusion, focusing on North and East Kent and coastal East Sussex to ensure that residents have reliable access to key services.
- Upgrading Interchanges and Step-Free Access at transport hubs, facilitating smooth connections and enhancing comfort with better signage, seating, and safe, comfortable waiting environments.

Fares, Ticketing, and Service Priorities

Interventions to improve affordability and accessibility include by:

- Delivering affordable fares and concessions for low-income residents, students, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups.
- Improving fares and ticketing by simplifying journeys and lowering costs with a unified ticketing structure across modal and institutional boundaries.
- Delivering Socially Necessary Transport Services (potentially demand responsive) to connect isolated communities with essential services.
- Delivering Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) and exploring models like franchising to meet community needs.
- Enhancing connectivity to Islands and Peninsulas, particularly the Solent and Medway areas.

Decarbonisation Mission

Mission Statement

This Mission supports the South East's transition to net zero by 2050 by enabling the shift to cleaner transport, promoting sustainable travel choices, and adopting new technologies that reduce emissions and improve quality of life — in a way that is affordable, fair, and accessible to all.

Outcomes

The Goal of this Mission is to help the South East make meaningful progress toward decarbonising transport, in line with national policy and public expectations. This includes ensuring the vast majority of surface transport trips made across the South East are net zero emission by 2050, while not exceeding our carbon budgets for surface transport by the same date.

Another key goal to ensure the transition to cleaner transport is affordable, fair, and accessible — ensuring no communities are left behind.

Key outcomes include:

- A complete shift to zero-emission vehicles, supported by national and local targets.
- Increased use of sustainable modes like walking, cycling, bus, and rail, especially for short and medium-length trips.
- Decarbonisation of freight, including mode shift to rail and adoption of clean fuels and logistics.
- Reduced reliance on fossil fuels, with transport emissions falling in line with the region's carbon budget.
- A fair and affordable transition that benefits all communities and supports green jobs and investment.

Short Term Priorities

We will accelerate the transition to low-carbon transport by:

- Rolling out EV charging infrastructure to support rapid EV adoption.
- Supporting uptake and recycling of cleaner vehicles and batteries.
- Making public transport more affordable and appealing, especially buses.
- Helping operators transition to zero-emission fleets.
- Expanding walking, wheeling, and cycling routes.
- Promoting liveable neighbourhoods that reduce car dependency.
- Addressing affordability barriers to low-emission transport.

Long Term Priorities

We will solidify the transition to a zero-emission system by:

- Decarbonising rail through electrification and clean fuel technologies.
- Developing new rail and mass transit schemes to support modal shift.
- Ensuring power networks are clean, resilient, and ready for transport electrification.
- Reducing embodied carbon in transport infrastructure.
- Exploring fair, future-ready approaches to road user charging.
- Supporting alternative fuels for sectors harder to electrify, such as aviation and freight.

Sustainable Growth Mission

Mission Statement

This Mission aims to champion transport interventions that unlock investment, enable sustainable growth, and create healthy, vibrant, well-connected communities in the South East.

Outcomes

The Mission's core objective is to support sustainable population and economic growth by ensuring that transport infrastructure aligns with major developments, particularly in public transport and active travel.

The desired outcomes include:

- Provision of high-quality public transport and active travel networks to support major developments.
- Improved access to key services and employment within a 30-minute journey by sustainable modes.
- Increased number of new homes located close to frequent, reliable public transport, reducing car dependence.
- Integration of urban design features that promote physical activity, public health, and inclusive access.
- Creation of vibrant, well-connected communities with maintained access for those who need to drive.

Integrated Land Use Priorities

Achieving sustainable growth requires integrated land use and transport planning, alongside effective funding mechanisms by:

- Focusing development in areas with planned or existing transport links, including new towns, urban extensions, regenerated brownfield sites, and mixed-use communities.
- Aligning housing and transport planning by coordinating efforts across authorities.

Transport Intervention Priorities

The Mission also prioritises essential transport projects to support sustainable growth by:

- Expand concessionary fare schemes to make public transport more affordable.
- Develop mass transit and Bus Rapid Transit systems in major centres.
- Upgrade suburban rail services, particularly in the Solent and Sussex Coast.
- Embed walking and cycling infrastructure into new developments and local plans.

Enablers

Achieving these Goals requires sustainable funding sources and regulatory support, including:

- Using funding tools like value capture and road user charging to forward-fund transport projects.
- Implementing fair demand management tools, such as workplace parking levies or clean air zones.
- Strengthening local planning capacity to ensure timely, effective decisions.
- Aligning with emerging planning reforms to support environmental net gain alongside growth.

Delivery

TfSE is committed to turning its ambitious Vision for the South East into action, building on the foundation provided by its Strategic Investment Plan and Delivery Action Plan.

TfSE is committed to keeping its Strategy relevant and effective. Following this refreshed Strategy, the SIP will be updated to align with the new Missions. TfSE also plans to refresh the Transport

Strategy every five years, ensuring its approach remains adaptable to evolving challenges and opportunities.

TfSE recognises the successful delivery of this Strategy relies on collaboration across various stakeholders. TfSE will therefore drive policy prioritisation, stakeholder engagement, scheme development, and advocacy, while supporting local partners to build capacity in preparation for evolving governance structures, including the formation of Strategic Authorities. Local Transport Authorities will also play a crucial role, especially in delivering highway and public transport projects, while national infrastructure managers (Network Rail and National Highways) will lead major interventions on the railway and strategic road network. Private sector entities, including bus and rail operators, are also essential partners in delivering services and innovations.

Delivering meaningful change requires overcoming significant challenges, including financial constraints, fragmented resources, and increasing demand for public services. TfSE and its partners must embrace innovative solutions such as "beneficiary pays" models, greater devolution, and rail reform to secure sustainable funding. Where demand management tools are proposed, TfSE will work with partners to ensure these are fair and proportionate. Collaboration across all levels of government, transport operators, and the private sector is essential to achieve the region's Goals.

TfSE will support its partners with tools such as scheme development funding, the Centre of Excellence, and its enhanced Analytical Framework, which underpins all major decisions from decarbonisation to freight planning. Regular updates to the Delivery Action Plan and the biennial State of the Region Report will ensure its strategies remain adaptable and focused on delivering tangible benefits.

Through this approach, TfSE is working to create a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable transport network – unlocking economic

growth, enhancing accessibility, and tackling climate change for the benefit of the South East and its communities.

Part 1 | Introduction

Introduction

This is the Transport Strategy for South East England, prepared by Transport for the South East (TfSE), the region's Sub-national Transport Body. This first Chapter of the Strategy outlines the context in which this Strategy has been developed.

The South East of England is Britain's gateway to the world. Its dynamic economy, scenic landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and proximity to London and mainland Europe make it one of the most prosperous and desirable regions for living, working, and visiting in Britain.

This Strategy outlines a Vision for the South East to be recognised globally for achieving sustainable prosperity and the highest quality of life. It builds on the previous Strategy that was published in 2020 and is underpinned by over seven years' extensive technical work.

Its mission-driven approach sets a Route Map for achieving this Vision through improving strategic connectivity, strengthening resilience, enhancing integration, decarbonising the transport system, and unlocking sustainable growth.

Our role

TfSE brings together 16 local transport authorities, as well as representatives from district and borough councils, protected landscapes, business representatives, National Highways, Network Rail and Transport for London, harnessing a wide range of local and regional expertise. Established in 2017, TfSE's Mission is to grow the South East's economy by delivering a safe, sustainable, and integrated transport system.

This system aims to boost productivity and competitiveness, enhance the quality of life for residents, and protect the region's

natural and built environment. TfSE aspires to transform the quality of door-to-door journeys for residents, businesses, and visitors across the South East.

As a strategic body, TfSE plays a crucial role in adding value by ensuring that funding and strategic decisions about transport in the South East are informed by local knowledge and priorities.

Its comprehensive governance structure – combining political leadership, technical expertise, and stakeholder engagement – ensures that TfSE is well-placed to deliver for the region. This structure enables it to speak with one voice on behalf of the region, making a compelling case for investment in the region.

Changing context of the South East

Since its adoption in 2020, TfSE's first Transport Strategy has provided an ambitious Vision for the region's future. However, since its publication, the context within which the Strategy operates has changed. These changes broadly fall into three groups.

The first group relates to changes in national and local policies.

There have been major shifts in national and local policies that affect transport. New policies such as the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, the Bus Back Better Strategy, and the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail have introduced new priorities and objectives that need to be integrated into the Strategy. More recently, the new government has outlined six Missions for the country, underpinned by five Strategic Priorities for the Secretary of State for Transport, which place significant emphasis on rail reform, sustainable economic growth, and transforming local transport. Significant reforms to the planning system and devolution are also expected.

The urgency of decarbonising the transport sector has intensified, with both national and local governments placing increased emphasis on reducing carbon emissions. While UK Greenhouse Gas emissions have halved since 1990, transport emissions have

only declined 15%. This Strategy therefore seeks to support the South East's transition to net zero.

The ongoing legacy of new trading arrangements between the UK and EU, particularly its effects on freight movements through the region's ports and airports, has introduced new challenges that were not fully anticipated in the 2020 Strategy. For example, in 2023 trade through the Port of Dover was around 20% lower compared to 2019 (UK wide, the comparable figure showed a 10% reduction). This Strategy addresses these economic shifts and ensures the region can adapt to new trade patterns.

At the local level, many authorities have adopted new Local Transport Plans and Local Plans, some of which introduce new Goals and infrastructure needs that should be reflected in this Strategy. The Strategy supports stronger alignment with these local policies, enhancing collaboration across the South East.

The second group relates to changes in travel behaviour, resulting from the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound and lasting impacts on travel behaviour and transport demand. Remote working, changes in commuting patterns, and shifts in the use of public transport versus private vehicles all demand a reassessment of the Strategy's assumptions and priorities. Despite some recovery, some train operators in the South East are carrying 30% fewer passengers today than they did before the pandemic. These post-pandemic realities must be fully considered to ensure the Strategy is future-proof.

The financial health of the bus and rail industries has deteriorated since 2020. In 2022/23, the UK rail industry collected 30% less revenue than in 2018/19, despite rising costs and inflation. Less money through fares, made worse by the pandemic and rising costs of running services, have led to cuts in services, leaving many communities with fewer public transport options.

Financial and capacity constraints in government funding have been made worse as inflation has put further pressure on public finances. With construction inflation reportedly exceeding 10% in 2022, it has become much harder for governments at all levels to invest in their priorities.

The structure of regional and local government is also changing, with a clear policy for increasing devolution across the South East. These changes present an opportunity to strengthen local leadership and align transport more closely with housing, energy, and growth priorities across the region.

The final group lies in the progress made since the publication of the first Strategy

TfSE has significantly strengthened its evidence base. TfSE has conducted extensive research, analysis, and engagement with key stakeholders across the region to develop area studies, thematic studies and a Strategic Investment Plan. This Strategy draws on insights from this technical programme of work that were not developed at the time of the original Strategy's publication, enabling us to take a more informed and targeted approach to addressing the region's transport challenges. The Strategy is also informed by the work of specialist working groups and studies, including an insightful commission into socially excluded groups, which highlighted important priorities that have been captured in the Transport Strategy.

The region has made progress in some areas, but in others, it has gone backwards. While we acknowledge that there has been significant progress in certain areas – for example, efforts to improve air quality by promoting clean air zones and rolling out cleaner vehicles have yielded positive results – new or intensified challenges have emerged. For example, the region's reliance on private cars has remained high. This continued reliance on cars makes it more challenging to reduce carbon emissions and congestion.

Case for action

The case for a refreshed Transport Strategy is clear.

While some aspects of our transport system have seen improvement since 2020, such as air quality in specific areas, many critical challenges have worsened, and new uncertainties have arisen. A proactive and flexible Strategy must tackle these challenges head-on.

To secure future funding and government support for transport services and infrastructure, we need to present a clear narrative for intervention.

This case must connect the region's current challenges, such as congestion and high carbon emissions, with the solutions we propose and the outcomes we aim to achieve. By addressing these problems, we can unlock the region's substantial potential in housing, employment, and economic growth.

In this Strategy, we present coherent "Missions" that provide route-maps for delivering the Vision.

They also show how TfSE's Vision and Goals are aligned with national objectives and ensure the South East delivers for the whole country – as a critical economic engine for the UK, a key player in international trade, and an area of substantial housing and job growth.

Ultimately, our case for change is grounded authoritative evidence – which is presented in our "Need for Intervention report" – along with in the belief that solving today's transport challenges will unlock tomorrow's opportunities.

By investing to deliver a modern and sustainable transport network, we can reduce emissions, ease congestion, and create a region that is economically resilient, environmentally sustainable, and a magnet for investment and innovation.

An overview of what TfSE considers to be the region's key transport challenges are presented below.

- **Productivity:** UK productivity has flatlined – Productivity per hour worked grew just 5% between 2010-20 – half the rate seen in Germany and the USA
- **International trade:** Trade volumes through Dover are down around 20% since the UK left the EU, and Eurostar no longer serves Ebbsfleet and Ashford.
- **Climate resilience:** There were more than 4 times as many delays to rail services in the South due to extreme heat in 2018 than in the 2000s.
- **Decarbonisation:** Transport accounts for 40% of carbon emissions in the South East (2022) – by far the largest contributor across all industries.
- **Housing affordability:** The house price to earnings ratio is over 10:1 in the South East – higher than any other region outside London.
- **Equitable prosperity:** The Gross Value Added per capita of less well-connected areas is less than half that of other areas and over 80% of Hastings' residents are at risk of Transport Related Social Exclusion.
- **East-West connectivity:** The average speed of passenger rail services on most East-West corridors is under 40mph – compared to 60mph on most London corridors.
- **Highway congestion:** The M25 carries over 220,000 vehicles a day – making it the busiest and one of the most congested roads in Europe.
- **Funding and delivery:** Construction inflation exceeded 10% in 2022, and local authorities have severe financial constraints making it hard to deliver capital projects.

- **Technology:** We do not have the luxury of time to rely on less mature technologies to solve these problems – some behaviour change is needed.

Focus of this Strategy

This Strategy focuses on areas where urgent action is most needed and where TfSE can make a difference. While the 2020 Strategy laid the groundwork, this updated Strategy focuses on specific priorities that have emerged from the region's changing context and where TfSE is well placed to help the region achieve its Vision and Goals.

We have structured this Strategy around a set of Missions, which are carefully designed to target the areas where we believe the most urgent action is required. Whether it's improving public transport, addressing the environmental impact of road traffic, or supporting the decarbonisation of our transport network, these Missions focus on delivering real, measurable change where it matters most.

These Missions also recognise the importance of fairness and affordability, ensuring that the benefits of transport investment are shared equitably

Furthermore, this Strategy places a stronger emphasis on delivery. While we recognise that the financial and operational capacity of the public sector is constrained, and additional government funding is uncertain, we are committed to driving bold action to achieve our Vision.

This Strategy provides a high-level framework for shaping the future of transport in the South East. It sets out the long-term vision, priorities and principles that will guide investment and policy decisions over the coming decades. While it does not list specific schemes for delivery, these are developed through our Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) and a suite of supporting strategies, such as the Rail Strategy and thematic studies on freight, decarbonisation,

and rural mobility. Together, these documents form a cohesive programme of evidence-based planning. This Strategy informs those more detailed plans, and in turn is kept relevant through updates to them. As we move forward, we will refresh the SIP to align with the new Missions and priorities set out here. In doing so, we will remain focused on identifying practical, achievable solutions that deliver real-world benefits, even within a constrained financial environment.

How this Strategy was prepared

This Transport Strategy was developed through a structured process of evidence gathering, scenario planning, and stakeholder engagement, including input from socially excluded groups. The evidence base informed a clear Vision, Goals, and defined Missions, resulting in a Strategy that addresses the region's key challenges.

The Evidence Base Reports will be published alongside this Strategy and can be accessed at www.transportforthesoutheast.org.uk.

Integrated Sustainability Appraisal

An Integrated Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening Statement were prepared alongside the 2020 Transport Strategy and have also been prepared for this Transport Strategy.

The appraisal examines the potential impacts this Strategy could have on a range of sustainability objectives, including economic, social, and environmental aspects. These include, but are not limited to biodiversity, habitats, carbon, the historic environment, health, and equality of access to opportunities.

Integrated Sustainability Appraisal was also undertaken for each of the five Area Studies and covers the schemes that contributed to a

Strategic Investment Plan (SIP). A summary of the appraisal was published alongside the SIP and is accessible [here](#).

All the interventions outlined in this Strategy will undergo thorough the appropriate level of assessment (including environmental, equalities, and habitats regulations assessment) as and when schemes come forward. The same applies to Local Transport Plans in the South East as and when these are prepared.

Relationship to other strategies and plans

This Strategy has been designed to complement and build on national, regional, and local policies and strategies.

A diagram showing the relationship between TfSE and policies and strategies that will affect how each Mission is delivered.

- **National:** Integrated National Transport Strategy (expected later in 2025) Future of Freight: a long term plan (2022); Transport Decarbonisation Plan (2021); Great British Railways: Williams Plan for Rail (2021); Road Investment Strategy 3 (2021); Bus Back Better (2021); Gear Change (2020).
- **Regional:** Transport Strategy (this document); SIP (2023 and to be refreshed by 2027); Delivery Action Plan (2023); Strategy and SIP Evidence Base (2023).
- **Local:** Local Transport Plans; Local Cycling and Walking Plans; Local Bus Service Improvement Plans; Local Plans, Regional Energy Strategic Plans.

At the same time, this Strategy seeks to influence the direction of these national, regional and local strategies as many of them will be critical in ensuring the Vision set out in this Strategy will be achieved.

Part 2 | Vision

Introduction

This Chapter outlines our ambitious Vision for 2050 and the Goals that underpin it, setting the foundation for a thriving South East that balances economic growth, social wellbeing, and environmental stewardship.

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.

To guide us in delivering this Vision and achieving these Goals, we have adopted six core Cross-Cutting Principles that reflect our commitment to forward-looking, evidence-based, and inclusive planning. These Principles are rooted in best practice and have been tailored to the needs of the South East to ensure every initiative we pursue contributes meaningfully to a prosperous and sustainable future.

2050 Vision and Goals

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.

To achieve this, we will develop a resilient, reliable, and inclusive transport network that enables seamless journeys and empowers residents, businesses, and visitors to make sustainable choices.

We will deliver this Vision by driving strategic investment and forging partnerships that deliver sustainable transport, integrated services, digital connectivity, clean energy, and environmental enhancement.

Our Vision supported by three Goals that reflect the three pillars of sustainable development.

- **Economic Goal:** Improve productivity and attract investment to grow our economy in a way that is sustainable, inclusive, and resilient.
- **Social Goal:** Improve health, safety, wellbeing, quality of life, and access to opportunities for everyone.
- **Environmental Goal:** Protect and enhance the South East's unique natural and historic environment, while supporting a just transition to net zero.

Cross-cutting Principles

Our Strategy is built on six core Principles that guide us toward our Vision and Goals. These Principles have been applied across many aspects of this Strategy and help us stay focused on delivering the best possible outcomes for the South East.

1. By adopting a **Vision and Validate** mindset, we have taken a forward-looking approach to our Strategy, setting a clear Vision for the future and validating all initiatives against our Goals. This ensures that our actions drive meaningful progress toward our ambitions.
2. Through **Triple Access Planning**, we have expanded our understanding of accessibility by considering not only physical transport but also digital and social factors, making the transport network more inclusive and connected.
3. By applying the **User Hierarchy** set out in the Manual for Streets, in most environments we have prioritised the most vulnerable road users – i.e. pedestrians and cyclists – as well as more sustainable modes of transport – i.e. public transport – over private cars, and, in doing so, we promote safer, more sustainable outcomes.
4. The **Avoid-Shift-Improve** framework has guided our decarbonisation Strategy by encouraging us to focus on reducing emissions by avoiding unnecessary trips, shifting

to lower-carbon transport options, and enhancing the efficiency of remaining modes of transport.

5. In our first Strategy we introduced the **Movement and Place framework**, which states that roads and streets should serve more than just transport needs. Our approach balances efficient movement with creating vibrant, liveable spaces that enhance the quality of life.
6. Last but not least, and guided by our Integrated Sustainability Appraisal, we have embedded **Environmental Net Gain** into our thinking. We aim for every new transport project to leave the environment better off, enhancing biodiversity, using sustainable design, and integrating green solutions throughout.

Description of the Principles cited above:

- **Vision and Validate:** Instead of planning based on current travel trends, this approach envisions a desired future and creates the transport system to achieve it, focusing on long-term sustainability and resilience.
- **Triple Access Planning:** This Principle expands accessibility by considering not only physical transport but also digital and social factors, ensuring a more inclusive and connected transport system.
- **Movement and Place:** Roads and streets are designed not only for efficient transport but also to enhance the surrounding areas, balancing the needs of movement with creating vibrant, liveable spaces.
- **User Hierarchy:** By prioritising pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport over cars, this Principle promotes safer, more sustainable urban environments by designing infrastructure to reflect these priorities.

- **Avoid – Shift – Improve:** A Strategy to reduce transport carbon emissions by avoiding unnecessary travel, shifting to lower-carbon transport modes, and improving the efficiency of remaining high-carbon modes.
- **Environmental Net Gain:** New transport developments should leave the environment better off than before by enhancing biodiversity, using sustainable design, and integrating green solutions into infrastructure projects.

Part 3 | Missions

Introduction

This chapter outlines the five key Missions that TfSE will prioritise to achieve its Vision.

Each Mission presents a clear call to action, focusing on delivering tangible outcomes while providing direction and a sense of urgency.

They were chosen because they represent the key challenges identified in the Need for Intervention Report where we believe concerted action is needed to get the region “back on track” and realise its full potential. They also focus on topics where we believe a regional authority such as TfSE is well placed to make a material contribution in delivering them at a strategic level.

They are carefully aligned with both national and local priorities, ensuring a cohesive approach that resonates across all levels of government. Additionally, they are designed to inspire and encourage collaboration among partners, fostering a shared commitment to delivering meaningful progress.

Further details about the context of each Mission and the proposed interventions included in each Mission are outlined in **Appendix A**.

The Missions are:

- Strategic Connectivity

- Resilience
- Inclusion and Integration
- Decarbonisation
- Sustainable Growth

Further details about the context of each Mission and the proposed interventions included in each Mission are outlined in Appendix A.

Route Maps

The five Missions have been developed and presented using a Route Map approach. The key components of these are presented in the Strategy as follows:

- **Mission Statement:** which sets out a clear call to action, focusing on delivering tangible outcomes while providing direction and a sense of urgency.
- **Desired outputs and outcomes:** which define a set of tangible outputs required to achieve key outcomes.
- **Shorter-term and longer-term priorities:** which identify the key interventions (schemes and policies) required to deliver desired outputs and outcomes, referencing schemes in the SIP. These are also presented on a map.

Supporting this, **Appendix A** presents further detail:

- **Context:** Which provides further detail and evidence articulating the challenge and need for intervention.
- **Theory of change:** Which on a page summarise how the context and challenges have informed the intervention priorities, outputs, outcomes and impacts.
- **Interventions:** A cross-reference for how the schemes and policies in the SIP align to achieving our five Missions

- **Indicators:** A cross-reference for how indicators identified in the SIP and State of Region Report have informed the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of achieving the five Missions.

Route Map components:

- Context and challenges.
- Theory of change.
- Desired Outputs and Outcomes that define the success of the Mission.
- Priorities that outline how the Mission will be delivered.
- SIP Interventions.
- Monitoring and Evaluation.

Appendix B presents TfSE's assessment of the impact of each Mission's Route Map against a set of Scenarios.

Strategic Connectivity

Mission Statement

We will boost connectivity in the South East by enhancing strategic regional corridors to ensure all communities and businesses have access to high-quality, convenient and resilient transport links and key services, for people and goods.

We will know we have succeeded when:

- The connectivity of all the South East's strategic corridors – in terms of journey times and reliability – is comparable to those corridors that serve London.
- Our key towns, cities, and international gateways are as accessible by public transport as they are by car, and rail freight is as competitive as long-distance road freight.

Content

Connectivity refers to the speed, frequency, and ease by which people and goods move between places. TfSE's focus is on strategic and regional connectivity, as local connectivity is led by our local authority partners.

TfSE has undertaken extensive research – including an Economic Connectivity Review and Strategic Corridor Evidence Base. This research has shown that many parts of the South East boast excellent rail connectivity to London, particularly towns and cities served by High Speed 1 and mainline railways. However, while radial connectivity to London is generally good, most orbital and East-West corridors – such as the A27/A259 corridor in Sussex and Kent – are poorly served. Often, it is faster to travel from one part of the South Coast to another via London or the M25 than directly along the South Coast's highway or railway corridors.

These connectivity gaps prevent communities along the South Coast from 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.

Furthermore, communities that are comparatively less well-connected are less attractive to investors, visitors, and potential residents. This is particularly the case for coastal, island, and peninsula communities, which need to work harder to achieve the same socioeconomic outcomes as better connected places.

The region's international gateways also have connectivity gaps. Heathrow Airport has high public transport mode share for London journeys but very low beyond the capital. Some key ports are vulnerable to delays due to the current configuration of the highway network at multiple locations on the coast.

Similarly, some freight corridors (e.g. Southampton – Midlands/North, Kent Coast – Midlands/North) have capacity, gauge, and gradient constraints that will need to be addressed to

support growth and modal shift from highways to rail. Similar constraints exist on sections of the Strategic Road Network that serve nationally important freight corridors.

Addressing these connectivity challenges will require significant capital investment, and it is recognised this will take time to deliver and may need to come from a wide range of sources – including direct beneficiaries.

Outcomes

The key outcome of this Mission is to increase the modal share of both passenger and freight journeys using sustainable travel options on strategic corridors between the South East's major economic centres and international gateways. This will enable the South East's population and economy to grow while minimising the adverse impacts of transport on society and the environment.

Achieving this modal shift will help reduce congestion, improve air quality, reduce severance, improve safety, and contribute to the overall satisfaction of transport users. In turn, it should strengthen public transport demand and revenues, placing the bus and rail industries on a more sustainable financial footing.

This Mission also seeks to improve inclusive access to employment and services – especially in rural and coastal communities – by ensuring strategic corridors enable flexible, affordable, and frequent services that match the needs of today's travel patterns.

To achieve these outcomes, sustainable travel options – particularly railways at a pan-regional level – need to deliver journeys that are comparable in speed, convenience, affordability and comfort to car journeys. Additionally, the economics of rail freight need to become more attractive to industry compared to highway freight.

Short Term Priorities

TfSE's SIP outlines the schemes that we have prioritised for the South East. In this Strategy we highlight those schemes that have

the potential to make the greatest contribution to achieving the Strategic Connectivity Mission. Our immediate focus will be on improving the existing network to better serve passengers and freight and supporting public transport's recovery from the pandemic.

Key initiatives include:

1. Enhancing incentives for long-distance public transport use by better optimising fares, offering more flexible ticketing options, and enhancing the on-board experience (e.g. luggage space, catering, personal safety, information).
2. Refining timetables to better serve faster-growing markets, such as leisure travel. This could involve re-evaluating the timing of planned road and rail works to take advantage of quieter periods during the working week.
3. Delivering or initiating well-developed schemes that enhance road and rail connectivity. Notable examples include improving junctions on strategic highways corridors and known rail bottlenecks, such as at Croydon, which should release capacity for longer-distance rail services servicing the TfSE area.
4. Reinstating international rail services from Ebbsfleet and/or Ashford, recognising the challenges posed by changes in the UK-EU relationship but also noting capacity constraints at St Pancras, which could make Ebbsfleet a more attractive option for current and future operators.
5. Providing adequate rail capacity and connectivity to support growth at Gatwick and Southampton airports, both of which generally have the necessary infrastructure to accommodate service enhancements.
6. Planning for longer-term initiatives by safeguarding critical areas and aligning planning policies across all levels of government.

Long Term Priorities

In the medium to longer term, the focus shifts to more substantial upgrades and network expansions to address major bottlenecks and connectivity issues. Again, details of each intervention are documented in the SIP.

Key initiatives include:

1. Upgrading the region's key coastal corridor to match the standards of other strategic corridors, particularly between Brighton and Southampton. This includes faster regional rail services and longer-term improvements to the A27 and A259 corridors in Sussex (e.g. at Chichester, Worthing, Lancing and Lewes), bringing them closer to the standard of the A34 and speed of the current Cross Country rail route. These upgrades should be implemented in stages, possibly involving tunnelled solutions, while also enhancing the natural and built environment along the route.
2. Improving journey times between London/M25 and coastal communities like Hastings and North Kent, which face significantly longer travel times to London compared to nearby areas like Brighton and Ashford. This puts them at a structural disadvantage in terms of accessibility and opportunities.
3. Improving access to islands and peninsulas, notably through boosting Isle of Wight ferry services.
4. Strengthening strategic freight corridors, such as the Southampton–Midlands/North and Channel Ports–Midlands/North routes, as well as the highways serving these areas. Expanding the use of HS1 and the Channel Tunnel for rail freight may be an option, depending on how technology, logistics, and cross-Channel trade evolve.
5. Developing new rail connections to international gateways, including direct rail access to Heathrow Airport from the

South and West, and rail infrastructure investment near Redhill to enable direct Gatwick-Kent services.

6. Reviewing regional rail connectivity when Old Oak Common and HS2 open, potentially making it faster and more convenient to connect the Midlands and North to the South East via Old Oak Common or Heathrow Airport. This may offer opportunities to rethink the regional passenger rail map.

Case Study: Opportunities to enhance cross-regional connectivity through Heathrow and London

Strategic connectivity goes beyond the boundaries of the TfSE area, playing a crucial role in linking the South East to the rest of the UK and the world. Often, it's the connections at these boundary points that offer the greatest potential.

This is particularly evident at Heathrow and Old Oak Common. By the mid-2030s, Old Oak Common is set to become one of the most connected hubs in the country, with high-speed, high-frequency rail links reaching the North via HS2, the West via the Great Western Mainline (and potentially the Chiltern Main Line), London via the Elizabeth Line (with potential London Overground extensions), and direct links to the UK's busiest airport—Heathrow.

The proposed Heathrow Southern Rail scheme, which would connect the South West Main Line to Heathrow, presents a range of exciting possibilities for enhancing strategic rail connectivity.

These include:

- Direct Heathrow rail connections to Woking, Basingstoke, Guildford, and potentially towards Southampton, Portsmouth, Gatwick, and Brighton.

- Long-distance rail connections from Paddington and Old Oak Common to the Solent area and the West.
- A reimagined regional rail network, allowing many in the South East to use Old Oak Common as a high-speed gateway to the Midlands and the North.
- Opportunities for modal shift, potentially reducing reliance on the M25 for journeys between Surrey, West London, the Inner Thames Valley, and potentially the Chilterns and North West London.

Realising these opportunities would require alignment across multiple agencies, but the benefits would significantly strengthen the case for investing in improved infrastructure between London and the South East, as well as the longer-term development of Heathrow Airport.

Resilience

Mission Statement

We will safeguard the South East's connectivity and work to maintain and enhance the reliability and resilience of our transport systems for future generations. We will do this by anticipating risks, taking preventative measures, enhancing recovery and adapting in the face of uncertain future risks.

We will know we have succeeded when:

- The transport network delivers comfortable, reliable journeys between key towns, cities, and international gateways.
- The transport network has the capacity and agility to manage, absorb, and recover from major disruptions quickly – including disruption arising from associated power and digital networks.
- The risk of major failures occurring on the transport network is reduced.

Context

The resilience of the South East's transport network is vital to the region's economic, social, and environmental well-being.

The closure of key infrastructure – such as a road, railway, or bridge – can have far-reaching consequences, disrupting access to jobs, education, and services, while severely impacting freight and trade. For example, the failure of a coastal route or bridge due to extreme weather or erosion could isolate communities, increase congestion on alternative routes, and escalate economic losses. Such disruptions also erode public confidence in the system and may shift users away from sustainable travel options.

The South East's transport network faces mounting risks from climate change, severe weather, congestion, and high levels of use. Critical corridors, like the London-Brighton route, rely heavily on single highways and railways, making them particularly vulnerable to disruption. Ports like Dover and the Channel Tunnel compound this pressure, as congestion and trade frictions often spill onto regional road networks, affecting local communities and key routes.

A significant portion of the network, built in the 19th and 20th centuries, requires urgent maintenance and renewal. However, funding constraints have led to growing backlogs, leaving the network increasingly exposed. For instance, weather-related delays on the railways have doubled in the past decade, according to Network Rail. Addressing these vulnerabilities demands integrating resilience into infrastructure planning, ensuring it can adapt to future risks like rising sea levels, extreme weather, technological advancements, and socio-economic changes.

Building resilience will also require a collaborative approach. Strong partnerships with local authorities, national agencies, digital network providers, and utility providers are essential to managing immediate operational challenges and developing long-term strategies for water, power, and digital infrastructure. TfSE can play a key role in

advocating for resilient infrastructure investment and supporting partners in planning for diverse future risks.

Outcomes

The key outcome of this Mission is to reduce the effects of disruption on the strategic transport network from a variety of current and future risks, including extreme weather, deteriorating infrastructure, and planned maintenance..

In particular, we aim to avoid the loss or prolonged closure of critical transport assets – such as roads, railways, and bridges – due to risks like flooding, coastal erosion, subsidence, or extreme temperatures. The closure or failure of such assets can have far-reaching consequences: isolating communities, damaging local economies, diverting freight onto unsuitable routes, and increasing congestion and emissions elsewhere. Some infrastructure in the South East is already operating at or near capacity, and its vulnerability risks being exacerbated by climate change, and a deteriorating condition of transport infrastructure.

Reliable and predictable journeys are critical to user confidence and business productivity, and reducing delays will enhance the overall performance of both passengers and freight customers. Ensuring more predictable and reliable journey times will also support economic productivity, as businesses and individuals rely on consistent travel and delivery schedules.

Another key outcome is to reduce disruption for all users of the transport network during planned engineering works and maintenance. While such activities are essential for safety and performance, they can cause avoidable disruption if not effectively planned and communicated. Providing suitable alternative routes and travel options – both during planned works and unexpected incidents – will play a vital role in achieving this outcome.

Ultimately, a well-maintained and resilient network is not just a transport benefit – it also protects public services, economic

performance, and community cohesion. Preventative works can reduce the risks associated with infrastructure failure, including disrupted journeys, costly emergency repairs, and damage to property and vehicles.

Short Term Priorities

The immediate priority is to strengthen the resilience of the existing transport network, ensuring it can better withstand both planned and unplanned disruptions. This includes addressing current maintenance backlogs, improving traffic management, and making the network more reliable.

Key initiatives include:

1. Assessing the economic, social, and environmental impact of major network disruptions, such as the closure of roads, railways, or key structures, and use this evidence to build the case for targeted investment in resilience.
2. Securing long-term and consistent funding for a pipeline of infrastructure renewals and upgrades, reducing the risk of asset failure and avoiding costly emergency repairs. This will also reduce the cost of emergency repairs and vehicle damage and include adjacent systems to transport such as drainage, power, and digital infrastructure.
3. Developing a strategic understanding of future risks, including climate change, changing land use, and technological dependencies, to ensure today's decisions are robust under a range of future scenarios. Taking a strategic approach to resilience will ensure that the transport network can anticipate and adapt to the risks to its resilience in the future.
4. Making the case for, and securing, more and consistent funding for maintenance and enhancements, such as infrastructure adaptation, coastal erosion, and delivering nature-based solutions. Securing funding for urgent repairs

and preventative maintenance will ensure the network remains safe and operational, reduce the risk of infrastructure failures, and minimise disruptions from unplanned events.

5. Encouraging more joined-up actions with utilities operators and satellite navigation providers on roadworks planning and general traffic management. We can learn from best practice approaches from across the region, such as lane rental schemes, and work with navigation companies to ensure vehicles are directed on appropriate routes, both during roadworks and normal operations. This will ensure essential maintenance works are completed efficiently and with minimal disruption to users. It will also ensure the right vehicles are directed to the right roads, minimising impact on roadside communities, ensuring rural roads are not adversely impacted.

Long Term Priorities

In the medium and long term, the focus shifts to making more substantial upgrades that will increase the overall resilience of the network and build strategic resilience capacity. This involves expanding capacity at critical points and implementing strategic projects that reduce the impact of disruption.

Key initiatives include:

1. Addressing major bottlenecks on the region's busiest corridors, including in the Croydon and Woking areas, to improve the reliability of services on the region's busiest railways.
2. Expanding and strengthening secondary and alternative corridors, such as the Uckfield – Lewes Railway Reinstatement, Canterbury Rail Chord, and A22 and A24 Corridor Packages, to provide potential diversionary options when primary routes are closed or constrained.

3. Improving Operation Brock and Operation Stack in Kent by implementing alternative solutions to maintain traffic flow during cross-Channel disruptions, reducing congestion and delays on key routes for both passengers and freight.
4. Delivering the Kent Bifurcation Strategy to relieve pressure on existing Thames crossings and strengthen strategic connectivity and resilience between the Channel ports and M25.
5. Tackling pinch points on highways for the benefit of all road users, including bus services. This can be achieved through upgrading junctions and providing additional lanes for bus services and other sustainable travel options. It will ensure critical points more resilient to future risks, such as climate change, while exploring placemaking opportunities
6. Coordinating with other infrastructure sectors (e.g. utilities, digital, energy) to ensure interdependencies are understood and resilience is built in across systems. This includes working with them to plan for future requirements and risks. For example, ensuring the region's power networks have sufficient capacity and resilience to support the roll-out of electric vehicles.

Case Study: Delivering Kent's Bifurcation Strategy

Kent's strategic position between London and continental Europe has always made it vital to the resilience of the UK. This position has seen Kent secure investment in major schemes, recognising the benefits to local growth and communities, and the national economy.

As the shortest crossing point across the English Channel, Dover is home to the world's busiest Roll-On Roll-Off port, placing it at the forefront of recent challenges such as Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. Even in more stable times, the county's transport networks face regular strain from adverse weather events,

industrial action, and major events – all of which have the potential to disrupt ferry crossings and lead to traffic management issues. Nearby, the UK's only fixed link to continental Europe, the Channel Tunnel, with its terminal at Cheriton (Folkestone) can also be affected by these issues.

To strengthen resilience, authorities in Kent and Medway have established the Kent Bifurcation Strategy. This long-term Vision aims to reduce the burden on the M20 between Dover, the Channel Tunnel, and the M25, by utilising an upgraded M2/A2 corridor linked to a new Thames crossing. This is supported by improved connections between the M2/A2 and M20 corridors, and improvements in protocols to manage high traffic volumes during disruptions, such as Dover Traffic Assessment Project, Operation Brock, and Operation Stack. In the long term, the aim is to reduce the need for these protocols and/or develop an off-highway solution.

Key enhancements are needed to fully realise Kent's potential as a resilient transport hub. These include:

- Upgrades to the M2/A2 corridor, with targeted junction improvements to enhance safety and ease congestion, including improved connecting links to the M20 corridor to enable traffic to switch between the two strategic routes.*
- Dynamic traffic management capabilities to better distribute traffic between the M2/A2 and M20.*
- A The recently-approved Lower Thames Crossing to provide a step change in capacity and a resilient alternative to the over-capacity Dartford Crossing.*
- Increased lorry holding capacity to handle incidents and adapt to evolving EU customs controls, including the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) and Entry-Exit Scheme.*

- Enhanced rail freight options on the HS1 and domestic rail network to utilise the substantial safeguarded capacity of the Channel Tunnel, diverting freight from the road network.*

TfSE's SIP includes these initiatives (and more) to build a resilient Kent, ensuring seamless UK-European connectivity into the future.

Inclusion and Integration

Mission Statement

We will create an inclusive and integrated transport network in the South East that enables affordable, safe, seamless, door-to-door connectivity for all users – including those currently underserved by the transport system.

We will know we have succeeded when:

- Everyone can affordably travel where they need to go when they need to go.
- Customer satisfaction with all aspects of the transport network is high across all sections of society.

Context

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.

Although some progress has been made, parts of the South East's transport system remain physically and socially inaccessible and lack integration between services. This results in varied customer experiences, particularly around fares, information, and ticketing systems – issues that impact all users but are felt more acutely by some groups. Young people, for example, have highlighted difficulties in accessing direct bus services between smaller towns

and rural areas, making it challenging for them to access opportunities. These issues are particularly problematic where services cross local and sub-national government boundaries.

Disabled people face additional challenges. Those with mobility needs encounter physical barriers in stations and on vehicles, while people with visibility or cognitive impairments often struggle with inadequate navigation and information systems. There is also a recognised need for better staff training to support diverse needs, and for safety measures that address personal safety concerns, particularly in the evening.

Affordability is another key issue, as the cost of transport can disproportionately affect those on lower incomes or with additional travel needs, such as frequent medical appointments.

While concessionary travel schemes provide some support, many are inconsistently applied across the region. Given the constraints on public finances and the commercial pressures facing operators, this Strategy advocates for planners and operators to explore ways to increase public transport patronage along existing corridors, creating favourable conditions for more affordable fares.

Communities with poor connectivity and accessibility are particularly at risk of what is known as “Transport Related Social Exclusion” – a concept studied in detail by Transport for the North, whose work has highlighted several areas in South East England that are at greater risk of TSRE than most of the North of England.

Additionally, the rapid advancement of transport technologies, such as vehicle electrification and digitisation, could exacerbate inequalities if their benefits are not distributed equitably. It is therefore essential that decision-makers consider equity and inclusion impacts when implementing interventions to achieve other Missions, ensuring that the transition to a modern transport network benefits all parts of society.

TfSE is also engaging with the Rural Mobility Centre of Excellence, led by Transport East, to better understand the unique needs of rural communities across the South East. Guidance from the Centre – including resources available at www.transporteast.gov.uk/rural-transport – is helping inform our approach to tackling transport-related social exclusion in less connected areas.

Outcomes

The key outcome of this mission is a transport system that is fair, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all residents – particularly those currently at greatest risk of exclusion. This includes people on low incomes, older residents, disabled users, young people, and rural communities.

Specific outcomes include:

- Reduced Transport Related Social Exclusion – which particularly affects coastal and rural areas – through improving the accessibility of transport services and the improving the connectivity they deliver, particularly to parts of the South East at risk of exclusion.
- Increased customer satisfaction across all user groups, ensuring that everyone can access and use the transport network confidently and comfortably.
- A transport network that is accessible and safe for people with specific mobility and sensory needs.
- Improved safety across the transport network, aiming for a “Vision Zero” for killed and seriously injured incidents, as well as improvements in personal safety. This will be achieved through better infrastructure design, enhanced safety measures, and targeted initiatives that prioritise the safety of all users, especially vulnerable road users.

- Improvements in public health and wellbeing by enabling more journeys by active travel, promoting liveable neighbourhoods, and delivering improvements to air quality.
- Reduced severance and improvements to the public realm, creating more cohesive communities where residents can move safely and comfortably through shared spaces. This includes addressing barriers like busy roads and railway lines that can divide communities and hinder access to services.
- Reduced real-term percentage of household income spent on housing and transport costs, ensuring that residents have affordable access to housing and mobility options, making the region more equitable.

Infrastructure Priorities

The outcomes will be achieved through a combination of physical infrastructure upgrades, enhanced safety measures, and the reduction of barriers that limit access to transport and services.

Physical infrastructure interventions include:

1. Designing inclusive infrastructure with and for socially excluded groups using inclusive design principles, improved lighting, signage, and wayfinding Enhancing connectivity to areas at risk of Transport Related Social inclusion, including North and East Kent, the East Sussex coastline, and coastal communities in the Solent. Many of these interventions are cited in the Strategic Connectivity Mission.
2. Upgrading interchange facilities and implementing step-free access at stations and public transport hubs to provide seamless connections between different modes of transport and support the “first-mile-last-mile” elements of journeys. Enhancements such as better signage, increased seating, and protected waiting areas will make switching between services more comfortable and convenient for all users.

Fares, Ticketing, and Service Priorities

Fares and ticketing interventions include:

1. Providing socially necessary public transport services, such as demand-responsive transport, rural bus services, ferries to islands, and other options that connect isolated communities to the broader network. These services will ensure that all residents, regardless of where they live, have access to essential services and opportunities.
2. Expanding concessionary fares and capping schemes to improve affordability for people on low incomes, young people, and those not currently well served by existing offers. This will help reduce transport-related financial burdens and increase the use of public transport.
3. Implementing integrated fares and ticketing systems that allow passengers to travel across local government boundaries by multiple modes of transport using a single ticket or fare structure. This will simplify journeys, reduce costs for passengers, and make the transport system easier to use.

Service interventions include:

4. Delivering Bus Service Improvement Plans and supporting locally appropriate models such as franchising or municipal operators, especially where commercial services are unviable.
5. Enhancing inclusive access to islands and peninsulas, such as the Solent and Medway, through integrated ferry and bus services and better access to information. This will support social and economic inclusion for coastal and peninsula communities.

<p><i>Case Study: Inclusion and integration on the Isle of Wight</i></p>

The Isle of Wight faces unique transport challenges due to its geographical isolation, with ferry services acting as a critical lifeline to the mainland. In recent years, partnerships between the Isle of Wight Council, ferry operators, and community organisations have led to initiatives aimed at making these connections more accessible, integrated, and affordable.

Local residents benefit from discounted ferry fares, making regular travel for work, education, and healthcare more affordable. Ferry operators have also invested in accessible facilities, including step-free access and trained staff, ensuring that travellers with mobility challenges can travel with greater ease.

Efforts to improve transport integration have included aligning bus schedules with ferry timetables and introducing integrated ticketing, allowing passengers to purchase a single ticket covering both ferry and local bus travel. These measures support seamless journeys across the island and encourage the use of public transport. There has also been investment in improving interchange facilities, including the Ryde Transport Hub, which was funded by the South East Hampshire Rapid Transit project.

Further initiatives go beyond traditional transport interventions and focus on supporting residents' broader needs. Medical travel subsidies help islanders access essential healthcare on the mainland, and flexible freight services ensure local businesses can move goods efficiently.

These efforts have increased access to employment, education, and healthcare, while also boosting local tourism. Thanks to these efforts, bus use is markedly higher on the island compared to many more densely populated areas in the South East. The Isle of Wight's approach therefore serves as a model of inclusive transport, illustrating how tailored and integrated solutions can enhance quality of life for isolated communities.

Decarbonisation

Mission Statement

We will support the South East's transition to net zero by 2050 by enabling the shift to cleaner transport, promoting sustainable travel choices, and adopting new technologies that reduce emissions and improve the environment and quality of life.

We will know we have succeeded when:

- The South East makes meaningful progress toward decarbonising transport, in line with national policy and public expectations.
- All surface transport trips made across the South East are net zero emission by 2050 (at the latest).
- We have not exceeded our carbon budgets for surface transport by 2050.
- The transition to cleaner transport is affordable, fair, and accessible – ensuring no communities are left behind.

Context

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

The ambition is not merely about reaching a final destination but involves adhering to a carbon "budget" and a carefully managed trajectory. These steps are vital to ensure that our total emissions are limited throughout the journey to net zero, in line with the global commitments to keep climate change within manageable limits. To reflect this ambition TfSE's policy statement on decarbonisation was updated and published in 2023 and has developed a Climate Action Plan and electric vehicle forecast studies for the region.

As a leader in global decarbonisation, the UK has made significant progress in reducing emissions, particularly in the energy sector. 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 charges – including Scandinavian countries, the Low Countries, and France. This disparity highlights the scale of the challenge ahead for decarbonising our transport systems.

Moreover, there are additional pressures where growth risks undermining decarbonisation efforts, particularly in aviation. For example, both Heathrow and Gatwick airports have ambitious plans to increase passenger numbers to a combined 200 million passengers per annum, which represents a 60% increase from current levels. Without significant changes, such growth could reverse the progress made in reducing emissions across other sectors.

It is therefore clear that the South East's transport system is not decarbonising quickly enough, while the threat of climate change is becoming increasingly urgent. We also must stay within the envelope set for total carbon emissions up to this point to ensure we stick to the carbon budgets agreed at multiple international conferences.

We recognise that we probably cannot rely solely on the market and technology to meet our targets, but clearly new technology will play a big role. We also recognise the need for ancillary industries – especially energy and, to a lesser extent, construction – to decarbonise in tandem with transport to achieve our Goal.

Outcomes

The key outcome of this Mission is to achieve net zero carbon emissions by transitioning to zero-emission vehicles and energy, increasing the use of sustainable travel modes, and reducing the

overall reliance on fossil fuel journeys – in a way that is affordable and fair for all residents and businesses.

By 2050, we aim for 100% of new private vehicles to be zero-emission, with intermediate targets of 35% by 2030 and 80% by 2040. Similarly, all buses will need to be zero-emission by 2035, and rail services decarbonised by 2050. Some local authorities in the South East want to move faster than the milestones set at a national level.

Part of this shift will include promoting active travel for short journeys and increasing the mode share of both bus and rail for longer journeys. This is especially important in the shorter term as it will help limit our emissions while most cars are still powered by fossil fuels.

Freight transport must also play its part in achieving decarbonisation. Through increased rail freight use, optimised logistics, and adapting clean technology and fuels, we will contribute to overall emission reductions in this critical sector. This will also help to ease pressure on the region's roads while supporting sustainable economic growth.

Decarbonising transport also presents opportunities to attract investment and support green jobs in the South East. These benefits will be realised as part of a balanced and affordable transition that works for residents and businesses alike.

Short Term Priorities

The immediate priority is to accelerate the transition towards a low-carbon transport network. Through improving provision for public transport and low carbon technologies, and encouraging a shift to low carbon forms of transport by:

1. Supporting the roll out of EV charging infrastructure on strategic networks and in local areas to support the rapid adoption of electric vehicles. This will ensure that private

vehicles and freight operations have easy access to charging, reducing range anxiety.

2. Supporting the transition to cleaner vehicles by working with manufacturers and fleet operators to increase uptake of zero-emission options where feasible.
3. Supporting the renewal and recycling of low emission vehicles and batteries by developing processes for recycling electric vehicle batteries and repurposing components to minimise the impact of low emission vehicle adoption.
4. Improving bus services by working with local authorities and bus operators to make bus services more affordable, reliable, and customer-focused to encourage a shift from car use to public transport.
5. Supporting local bus, freight, and ferry operators to transition to zero-emission vehicle fleets by providing financial and technical assistance to help replace diesel-powered buses with electric or hydrogen alternatives.
6. Developing local and regional active travel infrastructure by expanding walking, wheeling and cycling routes, making it safer and easier for people to choose active travel modes for short trips. This includes supporting schemes identified in the Regional Active Travel Strategy and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans.
7. Supporting sustainable neighbourhood planning with liveable neighbourhood Principles to ensure that residents can meet most of their daily needs within a short walk or cycle from home. This will reduce the need for longer car journeys and making communities more self-sufficient.
8. Identifying and addressing potential affordability barriers to low-emission transport, particularly for lower-income households and small businesses.

Long Term Priorities

In the longer term, the focus shifts towards transformative infrastructure projects and policy reforms that will accelerate momentum towards a zero-emission transport system.

Key actions include:

1. Decarbonising the railways through battery trains and rail electrification, ensuring that all rail services are powered by zero-emission energy sources.
2. Developing new rail schemes to support mode shift for passengers and freight, ensuring that rail becomes the preferred choice for long-distance travel and freight movement.
3. Implementing mass transit schemes, including Bus Rapid Transit, potentially Light Rail, and high-frequency urban rail services to improve public transport accessibility and reduce the need for private vehicle use in densely populated areas.
4. Supporting the greening of the grid to ensure low emission vehicles are powered by clean energy sources, aligning the transition to zero-emission vehicles with the decarbonisation of the electricity grid. This will ensure that the shift to electric vehicles leads to real reductions in emissions.
5. Supporting partners in reducing the embodied carbon of new infrastructure by encouraging the use of sustainable materials and construction methods. This will lower the lifecycle carbon footprint of infrastructure projects, ensuring decarbonisation extends to the construction and maintenance of transport development.
6. Exploring future national approaches to road user charging, ensuring any new models are fair, proportionate, and support sustainable travel choices.

7. Ensure the region's power networks have sufficient capacity and resilience to support the roll-out of electric vehicles, expansion of the rail network, and development – noting that power is one of the key constraints preventing significant expansion of passenger rail services.
8. Advancing research and delivery of alternative fuels by supporting innovation in hydrogen, biofuels, and other alternative energy sources for transport. This will be critical for decarbonising sectors that are harder to electrify, such as aviation and freight.

Case Study: A three-pronged approach to decarbonisation

Our decarbonisation Strategy is built around the Avoid-Shift-Improve framework, guiding us to reduce emissions through a balanced, pragmatic approach.

- **Avoid:** This element aims to reduce the need for unsustainable travel. While it's not about restricting long-distance journeys altogether, we recognise the environmental benefits of limiting certain trips until they can be fully decarbonised. With the growth of virtual tools, avoiding unnecessary journeys has never been more feasible.
- **Shift:** This focuses on moving travel demand to more sustainable modes. Our research shows that a small fraction of journeys—just 7%—make up half of a person's annual transport emissions. Shifting these trips to electrified or low-carbon alternatives could have a big impact. For example, when HS1 opened, Eurostar captured 80% of the London-Paris travel market, replacing one of Europe's busiest air routes. Local Plans provide further examples of this approach by ensuring developments have public transport and active travel connectivity.

- **Improve:** While not all modes of transport can be fully decarbonised today, advances in technology continue to make a difference. Sectors like aviation, maritime, and freight face greater decarbonisation challenges, yet modern aircraft are now four times more energy-efficient than early jet models. Research and development, along with future technologies such as carbon capture and offsetting, are essential for achieving true decarbonisation across all transport modes. Improvements can also be cascaded through existing fossil fuel powered fleets by prioritising higher efficiency engines.

Across the South East, we are already seeing this framework in action. Projects like the electrification of buses and rail in the Thames Valley, the Sussex hydrogen initiative on the south coast, and the decarbonisation of Isle of Wight ferries illustrate how the region is embracing all aspects of Avoid-Shift-Improve. Together, these efforts set a strong foundation for the South East to become a leader in sustainable transport.

Sustainable Growth

Mission Statement

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

We will know we have succeeded when:

- Population growth and economic development in the South East is underpinned by sustainable transport and infrastructure,
- The South East has created well-connected, liveable communities with easy access to key services and employment opportunities.

Context

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

One of the key challenges this Mission seeks to address is the affordability of housing in the South East. Significant investment in housing stock will be needed to address this. Additionally, many of the South East's leading industries have ambitions to grow, but are constrained by the availability of well-connected sites.

The new government has committed to reinstating housing targets, aiming to build 1.5 million homes in England over the next five years, with a significant contribution expected from the South East. In the current planning system, only through close collaborative working are major developments realised.

Transport can unlock growth in jobs and housing by providing access to development sites while minimising environmental and social impacts on existing residents and businesses. Well-planned developments can enhance the region's transport systems by increasing public transport patronage and revenues.

Sustainable growth can unlock third-party investment in transport options, such as new railway stations and active travel facilities.

Transport can also enhance places. By moving heavy traffic away from urban centres, and by making the urban realm more attractive to pedestrians and cyclists, transport can create liveable neighbourhoods and boost the quality of the environment to attract investment back to commercial centres while improving health and welfare outcomes.

Outcomes

The key outcome of this Mission is that any major development is supported by improvements to transport infrastructure and services, especially for sustainable transport. It is also important that transport is seen as an enabler to sustainable growth, and not a blocker. To achieve this, we aim to significantly increase the

proportion of residents and jobs close to high-quality public transport and active travel networks, promoting sustainable travel choices.

Specifically, this Mission seeks to promote better integrated land use and transport planning, by:

- Ensuring all major developments (e.g. 3,000 dwellings, an expansion of more than 20%, considerable growth coming from multiple, closely located smaller sites, or a major generator/attractor of demand e.g. a new hospital or stadium) have high quality public transport services (2-4 services per hour) and high-quality active travel infrastructure.
- Increasing the percentage of the population and jobs within a 1,500-metre radius of a public transport access point offering a metro-level service frequency of at least four services per hour.
- Ensuring a higher percentage of the population can reach all key services by sustainable transport modes within a 30-minute travel time, whether by public transport, walking, or cycling. This includes access to healthcare, education, shopping, and leisure facilities.
- Promoting the development of well-connected new and growing places by aligning housing and employment growth with high-quality public transport and active travel corridors, as well as good highway access. This will support the creation of vibrant, sustainable communities where residents and businesses can thrive.
- Promoting liveable neighbourhood and healthy streets planning principles to increase the attractiveness of active travel in urban areas.
- Increasing the percentage of new dwellings within 10 minutes of metro-level public transport services and high-

quality active travel routes to ensure new developments are located in places that offer residents a wide range of sustainable travel options.

This mission also recognises the importance of designing places that promote public health through walkability and active travel, while ensuring access is maintained for those who need to drive.

Integrated Land Use Priorities

TfSE has long advocated for better integrated transport and land use planning. Achieving sustainable growth and creating well-connected communities requires a holistic set of interventions that focus on integrating land use and transport planning, delivering high-quality transit services, and enablers including sustainable funding mechanisms and demand management measures.

Key integrated land-use planning interventions include:

1. Delivering new and well-connected communities by focusing development in areas with existing or planned transport infrastructure.

This includes major new towns and extensions at locations such as Ebbsfleet, Basingstoke, and Mid Sussex, as well as the development of appropriately located mixed-use communities that are relatively dense and aligned with public transport corridors.

Priority should also be given to the regeneration of greyfield and brownfield sites (where these have reasonable transport access) to make efficient use of land and minimise the environmental impact of new development.

2. Integrating land use and transport planning to locate new developments where high-quality sustainable transport is viable – including active travel links that support public health and reduce the need to travel by car where possible.

Collaborating across planning authorities and standing ready (in the longer term) for possible governance changes, such as the formation of combined authorities, that will enable more effective coordination of housing, transport, and economic planning.

Transport Intervention Priorities

Key transport interventions include:

1. Expanding public transport concessionary fares schemes to make sustainable travel options more accessible and affordable.

Initiatives like the £3 bus fare cap will encourage greater use of public transport, particularly for shorter journeys, helping reduce congestion.

2. Developing mass transit systems in major population centres, such as Solent, Sussex Coast, North Kent, Gatwick Diamond, Blackwater Valley, and Thames Valley – alongside delivering Bus Service Improvement Plans across the region.

TfSE has undertaken benchmarking studies that show many places in the South East have the scale and density to support sustainable, high-quality, mass transit systems. In the shorter term, these will likely take the form of Bus Rapid Transit systems providing a frequency of 4-6 services per hour – although in the longer term higher capacity options such as trams could be viable. These systems will improve access to jobs and services, reduce congestion, and support sustainable travel in high-density areas.

3. Delivering a high-quality, high-frequency suburban passenger rail service in the Solent area and along the Sussex Coast.

This will provide a reliable alternative to road travel and improve connectivity between suburban areas and major employment centres, supporting economic growth while reducing congestion and emissions. Upgrading the suburban rail network will enhance accessibility, increase passenger capacity, and offer a competitive and sustainable option for regional travel.

4. Embedding high-quality, well connected active travel infrastructure into the design of new communities to support healthier lifestyles and reduce car use, especially for short trips. This includes delivering Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) as well as TfSE's Regional Active Travel Strategy and Plan (RATSAP) across the region.

Enablers

Key enablers include:

- Establishing local and national funding mechanisms to forward-fund transport projects that unlock planned growth.

This includes enhanced value capture mechanisms, where the uplift in property values from new infrastructure investments is used to fund transport improvements, as well as national schemes such as road user charging to provide sustainable revenue streams for long-term investment.
- Implementing local demand management and environmental measures, such as workplace parking levies, congestion charges, clean air zones, and local tolls on new major highways.

These measures will help manage traffic demand, improve air quality, and generate revenue that can be reinvested in public transport and active travel infrastructure. They should be designed to support sustainable travel choices without

disadvantaging those who rely on driving for essential journeys.

- Boosting regional and local planning capacity and capability to ensure local authorities have the means to deliver sustainable development.

Alongside delivering better planning outcomes, this will also ensure local authorities deliver timely planning policies and decisions for the benefits of promoters, residents, and stakeholders.

- Ensuring development delivers for people and the environment

The government's reforms to the planning system, such as the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, is another key opportunity to support responsible transport delivery. TfSE will work with partners to explore how future infrastructure projects can align with the objective of these reforms, balancing economic and housing growth with supporting biodiversity and environmental net gain.

Case Study: Best practice in sustainable development

Many places in the South East have demonstrated how well-planned development, supported by strategic transport investments, can drive sustainable outcomes. While not all projects achieve their full potential, several notable examples showcase best practices in urban and transport planning. For example, the Movement and Place Framework exemplifies best practice in integrating public health, transport, and public realm improvements. By recognising transport's role in placemaking, this framework promotes safer, people-centred environments. Similarly, by prioritising vulnerable road users and sustainable transport modes, especially in dense urban areas, the User Hierarchy supports sustainable travel choices and safer streets.

Examples of sustainable development projects that align with these Principles include:

- **Crawley and Horsham:** Leveraging growth to expand the successful Fastway Bus Rapid Transit system and establish a new Thameslink-served rail station.
- **Ashford:** Concentrating development around one of the region's best-connected hubs, while safeguarding the surrounding landscapes and natural resources.
- **Southampton and Portsmouth:** Densifying brownfield sites near transport hubs is set to enable doubled rail service frequencies for local services between Southampton and Portsmouth, while improved Bus Rapid Transit services will support regeneration around Gosport and Portsmouth, enhancing connectivity across the Solent.
- **Reading Green Park:** Combining medium density business and residential growth with a new rail station and high-quality active travel corridors to reduce reliance on the car.
- **Andover:** Providing new residents with free bus tickets to enable them to explore the local public transport system and avoid relying too much on the car.

Although the planning landscape is evolving with a focus on housing affordability, these projects demonstrate that the South East has effective tools to drive sustainable growth. Such developments not only support sustainable travel but also create opportunities to unlock funding, ensuring that both housing and transport needs are met in a balanced, sustainable way.

Global Policy Interventions

The following pan-regional interventions have been identified in this Strategy, which cut across multiple Missions. Delivering these

interventions will require action at all levels of government and industry – from national to local.

- **Region-wide Service Priorities:**
 - Improve incentives to use sustainable travel choices.
 - Refine timetables to support faster growing rail markets – including regional services.
- **Region-wide Maintenance Priorities:**
 - Reduce the maintenance backlog and improve roadworks management.
 - Secure long-term funding to identify, understand, and address resilience risks.
- **Region-wide Inclusive Infrastructure Priorities:**
 - Design infrastructure to better serve socially excluded groups.
 - Upgrade interchange facilities and widen step free access.
- **Region-wide Fares/Ticketing Priorities:**
 - Offer affordable fares and concessions.
 - Implement integrated fares and ticketing systems.
- **Region-wide Service Priorities:**
 - Deliver BSIPs and leverage new bus service delivery models.
 - Provide and enhance socially necessary public transport services.
- **Region-wide Low Emission Vehicles (LEVs):**
 - Roll out charging infrastructure.

- Increase roll-out of LEVs.
- Support renewal and recycling of LEVs and batteries.
- Region-wide Modal Shift and Demand Management:
 - Improve attractiveness and raise awareness of sustainable travel options through behaviour change campaigns.
 - Promote virtual access to reduce travel demand.
 - Explore the development of an equitable and practical national road user charging framework.
- Region-wide Ferry Decarbonisation
 - Support the transition of ferry operations from fossil fuels to low carbon fuels, including inland waterways.
- Region-wide Power Priorities
 - Ensure the region's power networks have the capacity and resilience to support the rail network, roll-out of electric vehicles, and development.
- Region-wide Beyond Transport
 - Support decarbonised energy.
 - Support initiatives to tackle embodied carbon.
- Region-wide Active Travel Priorities
 - Embed high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure into the design of growing communities.
 - Deliver Local and Regional Cycling and Walking Plans.
 - Promote active travel as a means of improving public health and wellbeing.

- Region-wide Planning Priorities
 - Promote integrated land-use and sustainable transport planning policies.
 - Build planning capacity and leverage local funding measures.
 - Support greater local and regional powers to deliver integrated transport, housing, and energy outcomes, building on new devolution deals across the South East.

Part 4 | Delivery

Introduction

This chapter outlines how TfSE and its partners will transform the strategic Vision into tangible results, ensuring the South East achieves its Vision and Goals.

This work builds on TfSE's significant achievements to date, including the SIP and Delivery Action Plan. These foundational documents have provided a clear framework for identifying and prioritising interventions and policies to achieve the Vision and Goals. The SIP sets out the necessary investments across the transport network, while the Delivery Action Plan provides a practical Route Map for bringing these interventions forward, ensuring alignment with local and national priorities.

In a context of financial constraints, fragmented resources, and increasing demand for public services, TfSE recognises the critical importance of collaboration. By working closely with central government, local authorities, transport operators, and industry groups, TfSE aims to unlock the full potential of the SIP and its associated interventions.

This chapter highlights TfSE's structured delivery framework, which includes strategic planning tools, funding mechanisms, and

capacity-building initiatives. It also emphasises the importance of monitoring progress and adapting strategies to align with changing circumstances. TfSE's focus on evidence-based decision-making and strong partnerships ensures the region is well-equipped to overcome challenges and seize opportunities.

Ultimately, this chapter serves as a framework for turning Strategy into action, detailing the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, as well as the tools and processes that will drive success. By leveraging these resources, TfSE is committed to building a transport network that delivers long-term economic, social, and environmental benefits for the South East.

Challenges and Opportunities

TfSE recognises that the resources and tools for delivering meaningful change are more constrained now than in 2020. While central government will remain a key player, success will also depend on active support and collaboration from regional and local authorities, as well as the private sector.

Severe financial pressures and rising demand for local public services have placed significant strain on authorities across the South East. Over the past decade, reductions in central government funding, declining revenues, along with increased costs and risks have further restricted the capacity to develop and implement large transport projects. Additionally, fragmented distribution of resources across different networks has led to siloed planning, making coordinated efforts more challenging. To address this, TfSE advocates for longer-term funding settlements to enable more effective planning.

To deliver the South East's Transport Strategy and SIP, TfSE and its constituent authorities must explore innovative funding solutions. This includes exploring options such as greater devolution, rail industry reform, and "beneficiary pays" models that create sustainable revenue streams. While promising, these approaches

will require significant political effort and may encounter opposition, underscoring the need for a united and strategic approach.

Delivery must also reflect the need to make schemes affordable and accessible to all, ensuring that the benefits of investment are shared fairly across communities. TfSE will work with partners to understand the practical implications for local delivery capability and capacity and seek to support where gaps exist through its Centre of Excellence.

Devolution in the South East is now gathering pace, with areas such as Hampshire and the Solent and Sussex and Brighton identified as priorities for the next wave of devolved powers. Over time, all areas across the South East may evolve into Mayoral Strategic Authorities with significant responsibilities for transport, planning, and economic development. This shift represents a major opportunity to align regional and local priorities more effectively and deliver integrated outcomes. TfSE stands ready to support its constituent authorities throughout this transition – helping to build capacity, strengthen partnerships, and ensure transport remains central to future devolution arrangements. .

In the meantime, TfSE can play a crucial role in enhancing transport planning capacity across the region. This includes supporting the development of a Centre of Excellence, providing partners with access to its analytical framework, and offering resources to support early-stage scheme development. By fostering collaboration and building local capabilities, TfSE aims to empower the South East to deliver its ambitions.

TfSE's Approach to Delivery

Delivering this Strategy requires a coordinated, strategic approach to planning, prioritisation, and progress monitoring. To achieve this, TfSE has established a clear framework for translating the Strategy into actionable interventions and policies.

SIP and Policy Position Statements

The 2020 Transport Strategy provided the foundation for the SIP, which identifies the interventions and policies needed to achieve the Vision and Goals. Supporting this, TfSE has prepared Policy Position Statements that outline the global actions required to implement the SIP effectively. The SIP will be refreshed in 2025 to reflect the latest Transport Strategy.

Delivery Action Plan

This is a detailed Route Map for achieving the SIP, especially for schemes prioritised for progress within the next three years. It clarifies leadership responsibilities, resource requirements, and TfSE's role in supporting delivery. Updated annually through partner collaboration, this plan remains dynamic and aligned with regional priorities.

Analytical Framework

TfSE's Analytical Framework underpins the evidence base for all strategic decisions, from decarbonisation and electric vehicles to freight and economic assessment. It is not just a support tool for delivery partners, but a core component of TfSE's approach to strategy development, prioritisation, and monitoring. The Framework will continue to evolve, ensuring decisions remain guided by robust, up-to-date data and analysis.

Prioritisation Framework

Recognising the complexity of delivering schemes through various funding streams, the Prioritisation Framework provides a structured methodology to rank SIP schemes against criteria such as strategic fit, deliverability, and impact. This ensures resources are directed where they will have the greatest benefit.

Support for Delivery Partners

TfSE works closely with partners to provide funding, resources, and technical tools for scheme development. Key initiatives include:

- Scheme Development Funding: Supporting the early stages of scheme development.
- Centre of Excellence: Building capacity and technical expertise across the region.

Monitoring, Reporting, and Refreshing

Progress is systematically tracked through annual updates to the Delivery Action Plan and reported in TfSE's Annual Report. The State of the Region Report, published biennially, provides a comprehensive overview of how the South East is performing on key economic, social, and environmental metrics. These insights ensure alignment with strategic aspirations and inform future updates to the Transport Strategy, SIP, and Delivery Action Plan.

Roles and Responsibilities

The delivery of this strategy will require the collective effort of TfSE and its partners. TfSE's delivery approach is based on a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each. The list below outlines how different delivery activities contribute to the broader strategic outputs necessary for achieving the Transport Strategy's Missions.

- **Central Government including Department for Transport (DfT):** Central Government, particularly the DfT, plays a critical role in enabling the delivery of TfSE's Strategy by providing funding, shaping supportive policy, and enacting regulatory changes. These elements are essential for implementing interventions and achieving the Strategic Goals outlined in the SIP. The DfT's support ensures alignment between national transport objectives and the priorities for the South East, enabling the delivery of transformative projects.

- **Strategic Authorities:** If the devolution landscape continues to develop, we expect Strategic Authorities, including Mayoral Combined County Authorities, will play an increasing role in transport and spatial planning and delivery.
- **Local Transport Authorities (LTAs):** LTAs are key to implementing TfSE's Strategy on the ground, as they manage local highways, public transport services, and active travel networks. They play a vital role in developing and delivering transport projects, such as highways improvements, bus interchanges, and active travel schemes. By aligning spatial and transport planning, LTAs ensure that local development is coordinated with regional transport priorities. TfSE supports LTAs by offering technical assistance, funding for early-stage scheme development, and access to its Centre of Excellence.
- **Local Planning Authorities (LPAs):** LPAs are instrumental in aligning spatial planning with TfSE's Strategy. They develop Local Plans that integrate housing, employment, and transport priorities, ensuring that growth is supported by sustainable transport infrastructure. By embedding TfSE's Vision into local policies, they help create well-connected communities that promote sustainable travel choices.
- **National Highways:** National Highways leads the delivery of improvements to the Strategic Road Network (SRN), which is critical to supporting regional connectivity and resilience. TfSE collaborates with National Highways to help shape the development of the Roads Investment Strategy, aligning investment with the strategic priorities of the South East. This partnership ensures that projects like junction upgrades and new road links address regional challenges such as congestion and freight movement.
- **Network Rail and Great British Railways:** Network Rail currently manages rail infrastructure in the region, while GBR is set to take on strategic functions in the medium term. TfSE will collaborate closely with central government to align national rail priorities with regional needs, focusing on enhancing rail connectivity and reliability. TfSE works with these bodies to ensure that the rail network supports the South East's economic and environmental goals, including decarbonisation and improved access to international gateways.
- **Active Travel England and Sustrans:** Active Travel England and Sustrans are essential partners in promoting sustainable travel through active travel infrastructure and Public Rights of Way. They have worked with TfSE on the Development of our Regional Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan that will help achieve the Strategy's Decarbonisation and Inclusion and Integration Missions. By integrating active travel into transport planning, they support the creation of healthier, more connected communities.
- **Transport operators and port and airport owners:** Operators of public transport, ports, and airports contribute directly to the delivery of TfSE's Strategy by providing essential services and infrastructure. These stakeholders are vital in enhancing strategic connectivity, transitioning to zero-emission fleets, and improving access to international gateways. TfSE liaises with operators through our Transport Forum and seeks to address the operational challenges they face through our ongoing thematic work programme.
- **Industry bodies and interest groups:** Industry representatives and advocacy groups play a critical role in delivering TfSE's Strategy by providing insights, expertise, and support for key initiatives. Their involvement helps to ensure that transport interventions align with broader

economic, social, and environmental objectives. By engaging with these groups, TfSE fosters collaboration and builds the case for investment in transformative projects that benefit the South East.

TfSE's Role

The lists below outline the key actions TfSE must take out until 2030 to achieve our Missions, and tackle known, cross-cutting delivery challenges. These actions will evolve and become more focused as we progress delivery of the Strategy.

TfSE is committed to keeping its Strategy relevant and effective. Following this refreshed Strategy, the SIP will be updated to align with the new Missions. TfSE also plans to refresh the Transport Strategy every five years, ensuring its approach remains adaptable to evolving challenges and opportunities.

The delivery of this Strategy will take the combined effort of TfSE and its partners.

The tables to the right and on the following page outline the key actions TfSE must take until 2030 to achieve our Missions, and tackle known, cross-cutting delivery challenges. These actions will evolve and become more focused as we progress delivery of the Strategy.

TfSE is committed to keeping its Strategy relevant and effective. Following this refreshed Strategy, the SIP will be updated to align with the new Missions. TfSE also plans to refresh the Transport Strategy every five years, ensuring its approach remains adaptable to evolving challenges and opportunities.

To support the **Strategic Connectivity** Mission, TfSE will:

- Continue to support the development of the business cases for schemes in our SIP.

- Deliver on the recommendations of our studies into intermodal transfer of freight from road to rail and warehousing supply in the TfSE area.
- Work with government and local partners to develop a coherent pipeline of infrastructure investment, so that infrastructure planning across transport and utilities is delivered in a joined-up manner
- Work with National Highways and Great British Railways to help set priorities for road and rail network.
- Work with local authorities and Active Travel England to secure funding for investment that improves first / last mile connectivity to transport hubs and services by walking and cycling.
- Proactively work with government and our international gateways to identify, support, and deliver improvements to connectivity.
- Deliver the forthcoming South East Rail Strategy, which will support continued investment in the rail network

To support the **Resilience Mission**, TfSE will:

- Work with our partners to identify the specific role that TfSE can best play in enhancing the resilience of the transport network.
- Develop an evidence base on key resilience risks affecting the strategic transport network across the South East, and quantify the impacts of these risks
- Make the case to government for enhanced and consistent funding to improve the operational resilience and maintenance of strategic and local transport networks.

- With Network Rail, National Highways, Government, and local authorities, identify opportunities for targeted investment in improving the operational resilience of the Strategic Road Network, and Major Road Network and key rail links.
- Work with Network Rail, National Highways, government, local authorities, and our environmental stakeholders to understand the potential for nature-based solutions (e.g. sustainable drainage systems) to improve the resilience of networks to extreme weather.

To support the **Inclusion and Integration Mission**, TfSE will:

- Work with our partners to ensure that the impacts on Transport Related Social Exclusion be embedded in scheme development at an early stage, including as part of statutory impact assessments.
- Work through the Wider South East Rail Partnership and our Bus Forum to deliver best practice in catering for the needs of socially excluded groups in operations.
- Further develop our evidence base on social exclusion, specifically on the impacts of different intervention types on reducing social exclusion, including impacts on specific groups.
- Include methodologies that prioritise engagement with socially excluded groups in transport policy making and scheme development on the Centre of Excellence.
- Share best practice on the application of consistent approaches to integrated ticketing and fares as part of our Centre of Excellence.

To support the **Decarbonisation Mission** TfSE will:

- Work with other STBs to enhance the Carbon Assessment Playbook and further embed it in the local transport scheme assessment process.
- Continue work with the freight sector to identify and deliver initiatives to accelerate freight decarbonisation.
- Support the roll out of the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Visualiser Tool to help local authorities identify suitable locations for publicly available charging points.
- Continue work to support the roll out of dedicated charging infrastructure to accelerate the electrification of commercial vehicle fleets.
- Commence a dedicated workstream on combined transport and energy investment opportunities across the South East, exploring infrastructure improvements and service models required to deliver radical decarbonisation of both sectors.
- Work with Network Rail on options to support the decarbonisation of the railway where diesel trains still operate.

To support the **Sustainable Growth Mission**, TfSE will:

- Work with local planning authorities, local transport authorities, and Homes England to identify and roll out opportunities for forward funding sustainable transport investment as a means of enabling sustainable growth.
- Through the Centre of Excellence, work with highway authorities to adopt more widely the 'Healthy Streets' approach across the South East.
- Horizon scanning for new transport technologies, providing advice on their potential impacts on transport and wider society, and recommend policy interventions needed.

- Provide case studies and access to data and analytical tools on successful integration of land use and transport planning, focussing on enabling sustainable travel, as part of the Centre of Excellence.

To help address **challenges in delivery**, TfSE will:

- Develop a funding playbook for strategic transport infrastructure investment, to identify alternative funding sources for such investment based upon a beneficiary-pays Principle.
- Work with government to advocate for increased, consistent funding to deliver the ambitions set out in this Strategy and our SIP.
- Continue to develop the TfSE Analytical Framework and Centre of Excellence in response to delivery challenges identified by our partners.

Funding and Financing

Multiple sources of funding and financing are needed to deliver this Strategy.

The list below outlines the key funding and financing options that will be called on to deliver this Strategy. This builds on detailed work undertaken by TfSE in developing its SIP

Public finance is likely to remain the key source of funding for highway and railway infrastructure in the future. Looking further ahead, to manage demand and invest in sustainable transport alternatives, new funding models will need to be pursued in future to secure finance to implement schemes.

This could include beneficiary pays model, such as road user charging schemes, as a means of both managing demand in a 'pay as you go' model or as part of a 'mobility as a service' package, as

well as providing much needed funding for investing in sustainable transport alternatives.

Where demand management tools are proposed, TfSE will work with partners to ensure they are fair and proportionate.

TfSE will continue to identify and secure additional sources of funding to help deliver this Strategy.

- **Funding:** Money provided by users, investors, and/or government, which does not need to be reimbursed. Sourced from: private sector, local government, regional government, and the UK government. Dependent on/linked to: developer contributions; levies (e.g. business); and charges (e.g. cordons).
- **Financing:** Money provided by banks or other financiers with an expectation of a return on their investment. Sourced from: banks, lenders, investors, and the Public Loans Work Board. Dependent on/linked to: Revenue (fares, tolls) and underwriting.

Programme for Delivery

The 2023 SIP outlines how the interventions within it could be delivered. This will be refreshed to reflect this Strategy.

An updated high-level programme illustrating the potential timelines for the interventions included in this Strategy is provided in Appendix C. This will be further developed as part of the SIP refresh.

Monitoring and Evaluation

TfSE has established processes to oversee the development, delivery and benefits realisation arising from its Strategy and SIP.

This includes monitoring a set of indicators, which are outlined in TfSE's SIP and State of the Region Report. The list below outlines how these indicators map to the five Missions outlined in this Strategy.

Strategic Connectivity

- From the SIP
 - Improved journey times and reliability on the Strategic Road Network, Major Road Network and local roads.
 - Improved operating performance on the railway network, measured by Public Performance Measure (PPM) and other available passenger and freight performance measures, where available.
 - No transport schemes or interventions result in net degradation of the natural capital of the South East.
- From the State of Region Report
 - Rail and rail network reliability.
 - Average speeds for road and rail between key East-West locations.
 - One-hour public transport catchments to international gateways.

Resilience

- From the SIP:
 - Reduced delays on the highways network due to poor weather.
 - Reduced number of days of severe disruption on the railway network due to poor weather.
 - Metrics relating to reduced delay on road network suffering from road traffic collisions.

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- Reduced number of days of severe disruption on the railway network due to poor weather.
- Metrics relating to reduced delay on road network suffering from road traffic collisions.

- From the State of Region Report:

- Road and rail network reliability.
- Percentage change in delays on the Southern Rail network caused by weather events.
- Average delay on key freight links.
- Road collisions per billion vehicle miles.

Inclusion and Integration

- From the SIP:

- Increase in the number of bus services offering 'Smart Ticketing' payment systems.
- Number of passengers using 'Smart Ticketing'.
- Number of passengers using shared transport.
- Reduction in NOx, SOx and particulate pollution levels in urban areas.
- A reduction in the indicators driving the indices of multiple deprivation in the South East, particularly in the most deprived areas in the South East region.
- Increase in the number of cross-modal interchanges and / or ticketing options in the South East.

- Reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured by road and rail transport.
- From the State of Region Report:
 - Accessibility scores in the TfSE geography.
 - Transport Related Social Exclusion scores.
 - Percentage of household income spent on transport.
 - Inflation of public transport fares.

Decarbonisation:

- From the SIP
 - Reduction in carbon emissions by transport.
 - A net reduction in the number of miles undertaken per person each weekday.
 - A reduction in the mode share of the private car (measured by passenger kilometres).
 - Reduction in non-renewable energy consumed by transport.
- From the State of Region Report:
 - Transport carbon emissions total/per capita.
 - Percentage split of vehicles by fuel type.
 - Electric or hybrid cars licensed.
 - Number of EV charging points in the South East.
 - Charging devices per 100,000 of population.

Sustainable Growth:

- From the SIP
 - The percentage of new allocated sites in Local Plans supported by high frequency bus, mass transit or rail.
 - Clear and quantified sustainable transport access and capacity for Local Plan allocated sites.
 - Increase mode share of trips undertaken by active travel.
 - Increase number of bikeshare schemes in operation in the area.
 - Increase in the length of segregated cycleways in the South East.
 - Increase in the length of the National Cycle Network in the South East.
- From the State of Region Report:
 - Adult activity levels and public health outcomes tied to active travel.
 - Percentage of households with three or more cars.
 - Rail and bus trips per person per year.
 - Average distance of travel.
 - Percentage of household income spent on transport.
- Cross cutting indicators from the State of Region Report:
 - Mode share of trips per person per Year in the South East.
 - South East and UK GVA growth from 2020.
 - Biodiversity net gain.

