From: Michael Payne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 23 January 2020

Subject: Transport for the South East: KCC response to draft Transport Strategy for the South East

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: All divisions

Summary:
This report outlines the draft *Transport Strategy for the South East*, published by Transport for the South East (TfSE) in October 2019. TfSE is the emerging Sub-national Transport Body (STB) for the South East region working towards statutory status comprising the 16 Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and 5 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) covering the area from Berkshire to Medway.

The proposed KCC response fully supports the development of the Transport Strategy and identifies issues and opportunities specific to Kent. It also identifies wider policy objectives that may have differing levels of support across the region, such as demand management measures. Overall, the proposed response is supportive of the narrative of the draft Transport Strategy relating to more sustainable economic growth, and protection/enhancement of our natural and historic environment. The proposed response emphasises the benefit TfSE can have to the region by coordinating transport at a strategic level.

An officer response has been made to TfSE pending Cabinet Committee consideration and endorsement or recommendations to the Cabinet Member. An endorsed or amended response will be sent to TfSE following Cabinet Committee.

Recommendation:
The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on the proposed Kent County Council response to the consultation on the draft Transport Strategy for the South East.
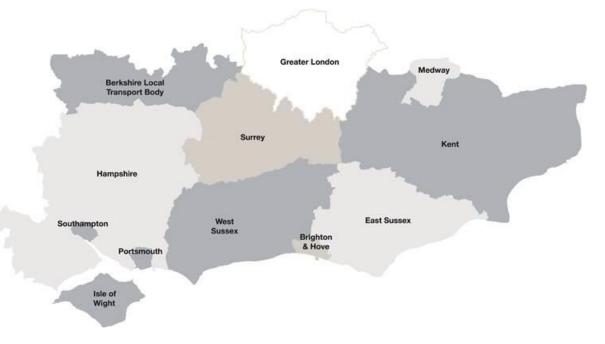
1. Background

Sub-national Transport Bodies

1.1. The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act (2016) amended the Local Transport Act (2008) and allowed for the creation of Sub-national Transport

Bodies (STBs). There is currently only one statutory STB in existence: Transport for the North; however, there are a number of STBs that are working towards statutory status and are providing a single voice for their constituent members and helping to prioritise Government transport investment in their parts of the country.

Transport for the South East

1.2.   In 2016, the South East 7 (SE7) councils proposed the establishment of an STB for the South East that would bring central Government, the South East's Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) together with Highways England, Network Rail and port, airport, rail and bus operators in one body: Transport for the South East (TfSE). TfSE first met as a shadow board in 2017.

1.3.   TfSE was launched on 4th March 2018 and is now a partnership of the 16 LTAs and 5 LEPs. Kent County Council (KCC) is a constituent authority (Decision number 16/00120 taken 8/12/18 by the Leader of the Council following discussion at Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 17/11/18) and is represented on the TfSE Shadow Partnership Board. The area covered by TfSE is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Transport for the South East area (source: TfSE).

1.4.   An update on progress with TfSE was provided to Cabinet Committee in January 2019. Most recently, TfSE held a consultation on its proposal to Government for statutory powers (discussed at Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee 16/07/19). Currently, TfSE is operating in shadow form until it becomes a statutory body. The proposal requested the general functions of a STB and powers relating to rail, highways, bus service provision, smart ticketing, and clean air zones. The proposal also requested some powers that constituent Local Transport Authorities (including KCC)

already hold on the basis that the TfSE would only operate these powers concurrently and with consent of the highway authority. Consequently, KCC's response to this consultation supported the proposal on the condition that the principle of subsidiarity is applied, i.e. that powers are made at the most immediate (or local) level.

1.5.   One of the key roles of a STB set out in the supporting legislation is to outline how it will deliver sustainable economic growth across its area, whilst taking account of the social and environmental impacts of its proposals. The draft Transport Strategy, which is the subject of this report, is a major step in the process of determining which policies, initiatives and schemes should be prioritised to deliver sustainable growth.

2.   Draft Transport Strategy for the South East and Proposed KCC Response

Approach to Developing the Transport Strategy for the South East

2.1   The draft Transport Strategy sets out an alternative approach to transport planning. Traditionally, planning has been based on extrapolating current trends to inform investment decisions ('predict and provide'). Conversely, TfSE seeks to actively choose a preferred future scenario and 'backcast' ('decide and provide') to plan what infrastructure is needed to achieve it.

2.2   The proposed KCC response is supportive of this approach but emphasises that national policy positions will have to be considered, and influenced, to push forward some of the priorities of the Strategy. It reiterates the KCC position on the proposed powers for TfSE (that they should be applied at the most appropriate level) and identifies Kent's own strategic transport priorities as set out in *Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth without Gridlock* (LTP4). Importantly, it asks for the scope of the Strategy to be more clearly set out and particularly its role in the preparation of Local Plans across the county.

Vision, Goals and Priorities

2.3   The vision statement for the Strategy is:

By 2050, the South East of England will be a leading global region for net-zero carbon, sustainable economic growth where integrated transport, digital and energy networks have delivered a step-change in connectivity and environmental quality.

A high-quality. reliable, safe and accessible transport network will offer seamless door-to-door journeys enabling our businesses to compete and trade more effectively in the global marketplace and giving our residents and visitors the highest quality of life.

2.4   The draft Strategy sets strategic goals aligned to the three pillars of sustainability:

- **Economy:** improve productivity and attract investment to grow our economy and better compete in the global marketplace.
- **Society:** improve health, safety, wellbeing, quality of life, and access to opportunities for everyone.
- **Environment:** protect and enhance the South East's unique natural and historic environment.

2.5 The strategic goals are supported by 15 strategic priorities that are most important to deliver the Strategy's vision. These include better connectivity between the region's major economic hubs, improved air quality, and a reduction in carbon emissions to net zero by 2050.

2.6 The proposed KCC response strongly supports the strategic vision and goals because they align with the Outcomes for Transport set in LTP4.

Journey Types and Key Principles

2.7 The draft Strategy identifies six journey types (radial journeys, orbital and coastal journeys, inter-urban journeys, local journeys, international gateways and freight journeys, and future journeys) and five key principles are applied to these to identify issues and opportunities for each. These principles are:

1. Supporting sustainable economic growth, but not at any cost;
2. Achieving environmental sustainability;
3. Planning for successful places;
4. Putting the user at the heart of the transport system; and
5. Planning regionally for the short, medium and long term.

2.8 The KCC proposed response strongly supports these overarching principles.

The Strategy

2.9 The draft Strategy considers each of the six journey types across the region and states the challenges and opportunities for each. For Kent, these are:

2.10 **Radial journeys** are described as being historic routes having evolved from the high demand for commuting between London and the South East. Some of the issues highlighted here include poor journey times to North Kent, Maidstone and East Kent by mainline rail, and the reduced quality of the A21 as a strategic road south of Pembury. The Strategy sets out a number of initiatives to address these, including more High Speed 1 services, improved road and rail connectivity to Thanet, and extending radial routes (such as Crossrail to Ebbsfleet).

2.11 **Orbital and coastal journeys** are longer distance journeys running perpendicular to the radial routes. They provide important east – west links but have slower journey times and lower capacity than the radial routes. Challenges are the M25 running overcapacity, lack of long-distance orbital rail services, and the poor performance of the coastal road and rail corridor (A259 in Kent and slow stopping services, such as on the Marshlink). Initiatives to address this are longer-term demand management to address highway

congestion, the delivery of the Lower Thames Crossing, completion of railway network electrification (or introduction of more bi-mode trains), railway capacity enhancements, improved orbital connectivity to Gatwick, and build consensus on a strategy for the coastal corridor.

2.12 **Inter-urban journeys** are medium-distance journeys between economic hubs and the Strategic Road Network (SRN - motorways and trunk roads) that are mostly served by the recently designated Major Road Network (MRN). Challenges are that some key routes are of a poor standard, the deterioration of bus services over recent years, and road safety 'hot-spots'. Initiatives to address these are supporting MRN and Large Local Majors schemes, supporting initiatives to enhance (but at the least maintain) the viability of bus services, and delivering better inter-urban rail connectivity.

2.13 **Local journeys** are short distance trips typically undertaken at the start or end of a journey and can be made by any mode of transport. Challenges identified include conflict between different modes and users, air quality issues on urban corridors, poor integration between modes (such as bus and rail), pressure on bus services (especially in rural areas), and affordability of public transport. Initiatives to address these issues include developing high-quality public transport, improving air quality (by reallocating space, reducing speeds, switching modes, etc.), prioritising pedestrians and cyclists over the private car, investing in passenger information, developing integrated transport hubs, lobbying Government for enhanced funding for buses, lobbying for a freeze in rail fares, and improving public transport accessibility.

2.14 **International gateways and freight journeys** generally benefit those outside of the South East making them crucial for the whole country's economy. Challenges are the proposed expansion of Gatwick Airport increasing its capacity for passengers and freight, potential expansion at Dover, poor resilience of the SRN serving the Port of Dover and Channel Tunnel, severe congestion at the Dartford Crossing, a falling mode share of rail freight nationally, it being challenging to reducing HGV emissions, and the unknown future relationship between the UK and EU. Initiatives to address these are improved public transport to airports, support for road and rail improvements to cater for port expansion, delivery of the Lower Thames Crossing, implementation of improvements to support rail freight, new technology to improve freight vehicle efficiency, and help international gateways to adapt to changes to trade patterns. TfSE also want to develop a Freight Strategy and Action Plan for the South East.

2.15 **Future journeys** are described as any journey that may be facilitated by an emerging technology. The draft Strategy emphasises that technologies and social trends are hard to predict but there are certain trends that are likely to continue, such as the 'sharing' economy, increased environmental awareness, and political devolution. Challenges identified by the Strategy are gaps in electric and digital infrastructure (such as electric vehicle charging points), potential poor economic viability in rural areas, ensuring no one is 'left behind', the risk that new technology could undermine walking/cycling/public transport journeys (as has happened with Uber), the further risk that new technologies may fragment the delivery of transport services, increased local

freight traffic due to online shopping, and the possibility that decarbonisation of transport will not solve congestion. Initiatives to address these are future proofing the digital and energy sectors, incorporating 'Mobility as a Service' into the current public transport network, encouraging a consistent approach to smart ticketing, and developing a Future Mobility Strategy for the South East.

('Mobility as a Service' describes a change from privately owned vehicles to mobility being something you can access and pay for on demand, including the integration of private and public transport through a unified journey planner and payment account.)

2.16 The KCC proposed response identifies a few factual errors in the description of some of the challenges relating to Kent. It also suggests some other challenges that are of relevance to the different journey types, such as current disruption due to the Operation Brock infrastructure on the M20, the environmental constraints in delivering new orbital routes across the South East, and international issues with rail freight paths. In terms of the initiatives to address the various challenges, KCC's proposed response is supportive and suggests some additional measures that could be considered in the Strategy. For example, the benefits of express coach services over bus services in areas not well connected by rail (e.g. Maidstone to Canary Wharf), and the benefit of interoperability of cycle hire schemes via a single app compared with multiple schemes competing.

2.17 A potentially difficult area of the draft Strategy to implement is demand management policies, which could include road user charging. The KCC proposed response states that any scheme in the South East would need to consider Government policy (such as on fuel duty) and be carefully designed subject to an extensive Equality Impact Assessment. It would also require the agreement and support of the relevant Highway Authorities.

Implementation

2.18 The draft Strategy acknowledges that the Government's current transport investment programmes (including Highways England's Road Investment Strategy 2, and Network Rail's Rail Investment Programmes) will focus on short term capacity constraints. However, in the medium to long term, the draft Strategy advocates a focus on public transport services, supporting integrated transport and land use planning, and demand management policies.

2.19 The Partners and Stakeholders were asked for their input on priority interventions, and the draft Strategy has summarised them as follows:

- **Highway schemes** – localised improvements will continue to be needed to adapt to changing traffic patterns. However, new roads or extensions of existing ones should become a lower priority in the long term. Highway schemes should target port access, major development sites, and deprived communities.
- **Railway schemes** – a high priority in the short, medium and long term.

- **Interchanges** – a continuing high priority where they facilitate multi modal journeys and accessible development.
- **Urban transit schemes** – including Bus Rapid Transit and Light Rail Transit, which are a priority for the medium to long term.
- **Public transport access to airports** – a high priority that must be delivered alongside ongoing expansion.
- **Road and public transport access to ports** – a high priority to be delivered in the short term.
- **Technology** – is supported but widespread rollout might not be realised until the medium to long term.
- **Planning policy** – interventions that can be made at this level are a high priority for the short term.
- **More significant demand management policy** – such interventions are a longer-term goal.

2.20   The draft Strategy includes a table of Key Performance Indicators aligned to each of the strategic priorities. These range from monitoring delivery rates of improvements on road and rail corridors, to measuring the percentage of sites allocated within Local Plans developed in line with Local Transport Plans, to seeing a reduction in carbon emissions from transport.

2.21   The proposed KCC response generally agrees with the proposed performance indicators but identifies a range of difficulties in applying them across such a diverse area, not least in terms of Local Government structures. This is particularly relevant to the objective which seeks to better integrate land use and transport planning because in many areas one council is not jointly the Local Transport Authority and Local Planning Authority. Consequently, the proposed response asks that Local Planning Authorities have greater involvement in developing this area of the Transport Strategy, as well as and by informed guidance on the role of and on the Transport Strategy (once TfSE is a statutory body) in the preparation of Local Plans.

2.22   There are two potentially challenging performance indicators for the environment: for no net degradation of natural capital, and no net loss of biodiversity. The Integrated Sustainability Appraisal for the draft Strategy concludes that to achieve biodiversity net gain would be "challenging" for road schemes. However, Government has indicated that biodiversity net gain will become mandatory for new developments. The proposed KCC response suggests that TfSE needs to carefully consider the implications of these indicators for future schemes and interventions, particularly those on the Strategic Road Network. It also asks whether the indicators are intended to be balanced against one another, such that some reduction in natural capital might be acceptable where a scheme significantly reduces the number of people Killed and Seriously Injured, for example.

Next Steps

2.23   The draft Strategy is currently undergoing a public consultation. Following a review of all the comments received, TfSE will revise and then seek approval for the Transport Strategy from the Shadow Partnership Board. The Strategy will then be reviewed every five years.

2.24   TfSE is commissioning a programme of studies exploring some of the themes from the Transport Strategy. This will include Area Studies that will focus on specific corridors in the South East, a Freight Strategy and Action Plan, a Future Mobility Strategy, Mobility as a Service, and, Smart and Integrated Ticketing. These studies are expected to be developed over the next two years.

3.   Conclusions

3.1   TfSE has released its draft *Transport Strategy for the South East*. KCC strongly supports the development of the Transport Strategy and welcomes the opportunity it provides to take a coordinated regional approach to transport planning so that the constituent authorities can work together to deliver a better future for the South East.

3.2   KCC's proposed response reiterates that speaking with a single voice will enable TfSE to truly influence Government decision making on transport infrastructure in the South East. It is also an important body to potentially devolve powers and/or funding down from Government to enable local decisions.

3.3   The vision and strategic goals for the draft Transport Strategy align with KCC's own ambition for transport that was set out in LTP4 (2017). Details of specific schemes will not be forthcoming until the Area Studies and thematic studies (freight, smart ticketing, Mobility as a Service, future mobility) are completed over the next two years. However, the draft Strategy does suggest some strategic-level interventions (such as support for the Lower Thames Crossing, and potential connectivity enhancements between Crossrail and Ebbsfleet).

3.4   KCC's proposed response is, overall, very supportive and welcomes the opportunity to help shape the Transport Strategy. Proposals that are potentially challenging to implement are demand management policies (including road user charging) and the closer integration of transport and land use planning across the region. The proposed response identifies that the Local Planning Authorities (in Kent, this is the districts) need greater involvement to determine how the *Transport Strategy for the South East* should be applied at a local level.

3.5   Comments received by TfSE on the draft Strategy will be reviewed and the Strategy revised accordingly. It will then be taken to the Shadow Partnership Board for approval.

4.   Financial Implications

4.1   As a constituent authority KCC contributes £58,000 per year to fund the development of TfSE. This has been matched by £1 million of funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) in 2018/19 and another £500,000 in 2019/20. Any further funding this year has been postponed due to the pre-election period.

5.   Legal Implications

5.1   N/A

6.   Equalities Implications

6.1   TfSE has undertaken an Integrated Sustainability Appraisal, which includes an Equalities Impact Assessment on the draft Strategy. It found that:

"…the interventions are likely to result in a positive impact on protected characteristics, particularly age and deprivation. Improvements to the transport network, including pedestrian and cycleways, should result in more reliable and comfortable journeys, encouraging users to move away from private vehicles."

7.   General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) Considerations

7.1   A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is not required as this consultation response does not require the processing of personal data.

8.   Other Corporate Implications

8.1   N/A

9.   Governance

9.1   Decision (16/00120) taken by the Leader on 8 December 2018 to establish and participate in the formation of TfSE was resolved at the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 17 November 2016.

9.2   The Cabinet Member or Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport represents KCC on the TfSE Shadow Partnership Board. The Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport represents KCC at the TfSE Senior Officer Group.

10   Recommendation:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on the proposed Kent County Council response to the consultation on the draft Transport Strategy for the South East.

11   Background Documents

Appendix A: Proposed KCC response questionnaire to TfSE's consultation on the draft Transport Strategy for the South East.

Further information on TfSE's draft Transport Strategy, including the full suite of documents, can be found on its website:
https://transportforthesoutheast.org.uk/transport-strategy/

Shadow Sub-National Transport Body for the South East, Item 221, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee, 17 November 2016 https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=831&MId=6225&Ver=4

Sub-national Transport Bodies: Transport for the South East, Item 146, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee, 17 January 2019.
https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s88577/Item%207%20-%20Sub-national%20Transport%20Bodies%20-%20Transport%20for%20the%20South%20East.pdf

Kent County Council's Response to Transport for the South East's Proposals Consultation, Item 198, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee, 16 July 2019
https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s91339/Item%2015%20-%20Report%20-%20KCC%20Response%20to%20Transport%20for%20the%20South%20Easts%20Proposal%20Consultation.pdf

Decision 16/00120 Sub National Transport Board for the South-East https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=2215

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