



Transport East Forum

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Item: 4. Transport Strategy – Progress Update
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Purpose

This report sets out progress on our DfT-funded Transport Strategy work programme 2020/21.

Recommendations

Transport East Forum Members are asked to note the report, and endorse appendix A for publication on the Transport East website in accordance with DfT requirements.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Transport East's inaugural transport strategy, unique to our region and setting our ambition to 2050, will articulate a compelling case for investment and strategic approach that underpins our future transport investment. The strategy will define our partnership's single voice, leading to one set of priorities, locked into delivery plans, to achieve better outcomes for our region.
- 1.2 In July, this Forum endorsed our approach and methodology for producing our **Transport Strategy** and longer-term **Investment and Delivery Plan**¹, as well as our **COVID-19 transport recovery programme**².
- 1.3 Since endorsement from this Forum in July, Transport East has made the following progress:
 - **Secured £425k funding** for the remainder of 2020/21 from the Department for Transport for delivery of the Transport Strategy technical work and engagement programme, and COVID-19 recovery studies.
 - **Completed procurement of consultancy support** required to deliver the Transport Strategy work programme
 - Established our **Transport Strategy governance** within the partnership and with DfT
 - Completed our **Decarbonisation Evidence Base and Strategic Recommendations**
 - Scoped requirements for our **COVID-19 recovery** work on better models for **Active Travel** and **Passenger Transport / Rural Connectivity** with partners across the region and England, to commence in November 2020.
- 1.4 This report provides more details and sets out how Forum members and wider partners will be engaged over the next six months to create our first, single voice strategy.

¹ <https://www.transportheast.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Item-5c-Transport-Strategy-Report.pdf>

² https://www.transportheast.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/8-Item-5b-Appendix-Transport-East-COVID-19-programme_.pdf

2. Transport Strategy Progress Update

- 2.1 Transport East has secured £425k from the DfT to be utilised by the end of this financial year to complete the technical work required to deliver our draft Strategy, Investment and Delivery Plan and post-COVID new models of delivery.
 - 2.2 As per the government's terms and conditions of the grant, we have produced an interim business plan statement to publicly set out how this funding will be utilised. **This is set out in Appendix A, and endorsement is requested from the Forum today for the publication of this on our website.**
 - 2.3 The delivery of this scale of technical and engagement work by the end of this financial year represents a significant project and programme management challenge. To ensure this is delivered, we have completed the following:

 - Agreed with EELGA the provision of a Programme Manager for two days a week to oversee procurement and high level programme management.
 - Accelerated the procurement of consultancy support to deliver the project:

 - **Technical Support:** Supported by Suffolk County Council's procurement team and volunteers from TESOG, we have utilised the Crown Commercial Service's (Cabinet Office) national framework to procure technical consultants to deliver the methodology as agreed by this Forum. Jacobs were awarded the contract in mid October.
 - **Engagement programme:** Transport East worked with Suffolk County Council's procurement team to secure engagement specialists to deliver the Strategy Engagement Programme. Copper were awarded the contract in mid October
 - Established a bespoke Transport Strategy governance structure, including:

 - An integrated working group comprising Transport East officers, TESOG reps, Jacobs and Copper, meeting weekly for the next five months, supported by the Programme Manager.
 - A Transport Strategy Steering Group, comprising representatives from this Forum, Highways England, Network Rail, DfT and a youth council representative [TBC]
 - Establishing new formal governance between Transport East, DfT and the accountable body Suffolk County Council, including quarterly formal progress reporting meetings with DfT.

2.4 Our high level timetable for the strategy development is now as follows:

- 2.5 We have purposely phased the strategy development to avoid any public-facing activity taking place during the local pre-election period leading into May 2021. The technical work and engagement will conclude in March 2021. Officers will draft the strategy in April and May. It is planned that a public consultation on the draft strategy would be conducted over summer 2021. Further details on this will be determined nearer to the time.
- 2.6 Decarbonisation will be a key priority for our Transport Strategy. In advance of our Strategy, the Transport East Decarbonisation Evidence Base and Strategic Recommendations was completed in Summer 2020 and will be a key input to our strategy.

3. Engagement and events

- 3.1 Since the last forum we have cemented our core relationships and have been building our networks and influence, going into the strategy development period. Highlights include:
 - Over **40** stakeholder meetings and workshops across partners, central government and parliamentarians, local authorities, boundary organisations and business
 - Completion of the Decarbonisation report (with formal launch in November)
- 3.2 Our focus for the next 3 months is delivering the full Strategy engagement programme. This will largely be delivered between November 2020 and March 2021, aligned with the technical consultants work plan. Key elements of this include:
 - **Focussed 1-to-1 engagement** with Forum members and key stakeholders to understand aspirations in detail
 - Series of thematic, geographic and sectoral **workshops** to work through issues and identify potential policy levers, these will include officers, politicians, operators, transport users, charity and representative groups – for example the Ports roundtable and District councils event
 - **Public polling** to understand pan-regional public priorities
 - Expanding our network through trusted third-parties, widening awareness and understanding in preparation for the Strategy consultation in summer 2021
 - Hosting our annual **Transport East summit** in early 2021, to ensure our wider partners are fully engaged in the strategy development
- 3.3 An important consideration is how to engage effectively taking into account national and local COVID-19 restrictions over the winter. We will be delivering a digital-first engagement approach supported by activity such as telephone surgeries and physical documents to mitigate digital exclusion. Online tools including polls and whiteboards will be used to increase active participation.
- 3.4 Where we can, we will be looking to undertake site visits and walking conferences and where this not possible will seek innovative technical solutions to gather this type of insight.

- 3.5 This work will all be supported and enhanced by the wider Communications and Public Affairs Strategy agreed at the July meeting to build political advocacy, awareness raising and reputation building.

4. COVID-19 recovery – new models of delivery (Transport East Sub-Groups)

- 4.1 As reported at our July meeting, Transport East has established two COVID-19 recovery action groups, focused on Active Travel and Passenger Transport / Rural Connectivity³ to ensure low-carbon modes are central to our economic recovery. The DfT has awarded funding to Transport East to support the work of these two groups, in addition to the Transport Strategy.

³ https://www.transportheast.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/8-Item-5b-Appendix-Transport-East-COVID-19-programme_.pdf

Active Travel Sub-Group

- 4.2 Our local authorities have received tranche 1 Emergency Active Travel Funding from DfT. The purpose of this fund is to deliver temporary road space reallocation to support walking and cycling trips. The projects have supported more people to walk and cycle, however our members have encountered a range of issues arising from rapid delivery, with a number of lessons learned.
- 4.3 A pot of £2bn national funding will soon be available for delivery of more permanent walking and cycling schemes. The Transport East sub-group has identified that the lack of a strategic approach and demonstrable support for Active Travel in the East would put our local authorities at a disadvantage in securing funding when competition will be high from elsewhere in the UK.
- 4.4 The sub-group has therefore scoped a brief to develop a strategic approach to Active Travel in the East. We need to draw on the significant potential and opportunities for walking and cycling, and develop an approach that is more widely supported by businesses and communities, whilst aligning with the Government's [Gear Change](#) strategy. Transport East met with senior DfT officials in September to review our plans.
- 4.5 The DfT funding will help us develop a better approach and 'offer' for Active Travel. Our work will be complete by March 2021 and forum members will be invited to input into the work.

Passenger Transport and Rural Connectivity Sub-Group

- 4.6 The requirement for passenger transport operators to maintain social distancing measures has created significant challenges for operators and severely limited services and capacity. This has impacted on communities and individuals who rely on buses and trains to access services, school, higher education, employment and other services, as well as impacting on the financial viability of service provision by local authorities and operators.
- 4.7 These issues are particularly felt in sub-national areas such as ours, dominated by rural and semi-urban areas and high car ownership. We do not benefit from a major metropolitan public transport governance model. COVID-19 has exposed the deficiencies of the existing model of local passenger transport system, and the need for a better model of delivery.
- 4.8 We are not alone. The seven sub-national Transport Bodies have identified 'rural connectivity' as one of four key themes to tackle together at a pan-England level, pooling resource and expertise, and avoiding duplication. Transport East has volunteered to be the national 'Rural Connectivity' thematic lead amongst the seven English STBs. Transport East and Norfolk County Council subsequently co-led a national workshop this summer to scope the national requirements, building on work already completed by Midlands Connect on rural connectivity.
- 4.9 As a result, the Transport East sub-group, supported by guidance from the national STB group, has scoped piece of work to be embedded within our strategy to develop a sub-regional evidence base to help us define a better operational model for both passenger transport and rural connectivity for our part of the world, but closely linked to wider issues across England.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Members are requested to comment on these proposals today, and endorse Appendix A for publication on our website.
- 5.2 Following today's meeting, we will:

- Publish the Business Plan Statement on our website
- Hold the first meeting of the strategy steering group in mid-late November
- Initiate the engagement programme

Appendices:

APPENDIX A: Interim Business Plan Statement (for publication on the Transport East website.