

**Transport East Forum  
Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024  
Essex County Council, Chambers**

Core Members		TESOG Officers		Observers	
CLlr Kevin Bentley	Essex County Council (Chair)	Andrew Summers	Transport East	Dan Taylor	DfT
CLlr Lesley Wagland	Essex County Council	Esme Yuill	Transport East	Andrew Cook	Suffolk County Council
CLlr Richard Smith	Suffolk County Council	Rebecca Rangi	Transport East	James Bradley	Network Rail
CLlr Phil Wittam	Suffolk District Rep	Richard Doleman	Norfolk County Council		
		Alastair Southgate	Essex County Council		
		Sara Noonan	Suffolk District Rep		
		Luke Barber	Suffolk County Council		
		Mat Kiely	Thurrock Council		
		Karen Gearing	Southend City Council		
		Louise Flavell	Essex District Rep		
		Andrea Mayley	West Suffolk Council		
		Graeme Mateer	Suffolk County Council		
		Mark Lucas	UKIC		
		Matthew Stewart	EEGLA		
		Trevor Wiggett	Norfolk District Rep		

### Apologies

CLlr Graham Plant	Norfolk County Council	CLlr Kevin Buck	Southend City Council
CLlr Ben Maney	Thurrock Council	CLlr Tim Adams	North Norfolk Council

<p><b>1. Welcome and apologies, and Declaration of Interest</b> CLlr Kevin Bentley, Chair of Transport East</p>	Action
<p><b>2. Department for Transport Update</b> Dan Taylor Deputy Director, Regional Partnerships and Delivery, Regions, Cities and Devolution, Roads and Local Group gave the following update.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget/Spring Statement – Nothing significantly new. Department working through what has been announced regarding Network North. Dan gave thanks to council officers for turning around requests for spending. The fiscal environment is challenging.</li> </ul>	

- Announcements issued related to the ‘Plan for Drivers’ with regards to low traffic neighbourhoods.
  - Bus lanes use guidance: Announcement of traffic signal grants, additional guidance on 20mph speed limits and results on LTN review.
  - Further guidance will follow; draft guidance has been sent round to LAs for comment and remains open until 20th May.
- Significant schemes being progressed internally:
  - Army and Navy business case being developed.
  - Ely / Haughley - no new update
  - Long Stratton Bypass business case being assessed and will be with ministers soon.
  - West Winch Housing OBC being assessed by Investment Committee until end of April.

## Comments & Discussion

- National Highways: Members asked about A47 full length dualling. NH outlined this remains aspirational. No immediate likelihood of facilitating it but NH will continue to look at where there are pinch points. Safety is a particular concern and progress is being made to review options. Existing A47 schemes have passed through Judicial Review appeal. A47 schemes already in the programme are progressing, e.g redevelopment of Thickthorn junction.
- A120: Dependent on the wider RIS, which is going through government for approval. Members identified a lot of growth in this region but a lack of infrastructure/East West links. Right connections are important, and Chair asks that National Highways takes this back for consideration, citing the danger of spending a lot of time to widen A12, but should be much cheaper to do these schemes together.
- Rail Service enhancements Colchester-Clacton: Greater Anglia are looking to increase service frequency between Colchester-Clacton, short term opportunity set out in rail paper (later item). Members cited efficiencies of better alignment with other government funded enhancements, for example the Towns fund which is managed by DLHUC.
- It was further identified that Sat Nav operators’ direct people the wrong way within parts of the region and DfT asked if we have any protections against this? DfT to review.

DfT to investigate and respond.

DfT to investigate Sat Nav issues

## 3. Transport East Business Unit Update

Andrew Summers summarised the key elements of this paper.

- The Business Plan will set out investment programme for the forthcoming year. Members agreed two scenarios, submitted to DfT in January. Submission has been submitted to ministers for approval which will determine DfT

allocation for 24/25 to finalise the business plan, and we are still awaiting an outcome. A final Business Plan will be presented to the next Forum, assuming the funding allocation from DfT is confirmed.

- **Members endorsed agreed the proposed Transport East membership fees for 2024/25 as set out in the paper.** These are based on the MOU agreed by the Board in 2023. Transport East will begin the collection process when the new financial year starts.
- **Independent Chair:** The proposed process was endorsed by Members by email in January and process has been followed since then. Very good response to adverts and high-quality applications followed. Final interviews on W/C 25<sup>th</sup> March and formal ratification from the local authority members of this board will follow at meeting on 4th April. Contingency in place if anything should delay.
- **Future Role of TE Scoping:** In December, the Board endorsed proposal for TESOG to scope out an expanded future role of TE as a devolution partner and a centre of excellence. Good workshop held with TESOG officers in January to scope further. A Strategic Outline Case has been commissioned to be presented to forum in Summer. Members may be invited to a 1-to-1 interview to inform the strategic outline case over the coming months.

No further comments recorded.

#### 4. Communications Update

Esme Yuill summarised the key communications milestones over the last 3 months.

- Transport East led the East of England presence at the national STB/Interchange conference in Manchester which enabled Transport East to present to, and engage with, over 1000 national partners within the transport, innovation, developer and planning community. Consolidated the region's relationship with a wide range of stakeholders, consultancies, and bodies, as well as a full endorsement of our activity from Huw Merriman MP.
- Transport East chair recruitment process launched. Wide social media and activity in support of this.
- Travel Behaviour Survey launched in the East to maximise the quality and quantity of travel data we have available to our local authorities in the East. To conclude later in the spring.
- Rural Connections Report launched, which has gone through full process of public call for evidence, oral evidence and final report with set of recommendations. Launched at the Transport East House of Commons reception, and presented to Transport Minister Guy Opperman MP. These recommendations will be used to inform future work programme.
- Local district webinars held for LA officers to show how work is progressing. Next webinar in May to include rail and rural.

Next quarter:

- New chair announcement
- New business plan when funding confirmed.
- TE summit 13th June
- TE working with EELGA, EEH and CILT on East of England Net Zero conference in July 2024.

No further comments received.

## 5. Strategic Rail

### Rail Plan for the East Update

#### Suzanne Buck, Head of Strategy and Technical Programme

Suzanne presented a report outlining TE's progress to develop a Rail Plan. The report summarised activity including:

- The State of Rail (SoR) report was published in 2023, which outlined challenges on the region's rail corridors.
- The recent study on short term opportunities is nearly complete, to identify what improvements can be delivered over next 5 years. TE has developed a long list drawing on evidence from the SoR report and work done by NR to prioritise and identify those short-term opportunities. The Short-term opportunities report will be published after local elections and presented to Rail Leadership Group.
- Our regional multimodal connectivity study, which identifies connectivity and gaps between key places across the region, and where opportunities exist to improve connectivity, services and accessibility.

The planned next steps are to take forward three more localised studies on immediate rail priorities:

- Economic analysis of improvements to the East West Rail Eastern Section
- Analysis of improvements between Clacton-Colchester
- Analysis of improvements Ipswich-Peterborough.

Future areas of work could include analysis of freight on wherry lines.

The first meeting of wider South-East Rail Partnership was held in March, comprising TE, and our STB Partners England's Economic Heartland and Transport for the South East, Transport for London, Network Rail, Great British Railways and DfT. The partnership will provide strategic oversight on rail across the Wider South East regions. Next meeting is May 10th.

### Comments and Discussion

- Mark Lucas reported that West Anglia Taskforce will submit observations on the draft Short Term Opportunities report.
- Agreement across the group that the region needs better rail links, with rail access to Stansted from the North and better Freight access to Thamesport cited.
- Members suggested an East Rail Summit could be useful to raise the profile and co-ordinate action. TE agreed to scope the potential for bringing together all the rail work streams and organise a wider meeting/summit end of 2024/25
- TE working with Network rail to set up a Thameside Rail task force. This will include review of Thameside work with C2C.

## **Network Rail Control Period 7 Update**

### **James Bradley, Network Rail**

Network Rail welcomed the work on rail plan for the East and collaborative working with Network Rail on developing the evidence base. Key points:

- As of next month, there is a new group director for Anglia. Katie Frost is leaving for maternity, Lawrence Bowman new route director to cover.
- Short term – The Rail industry is entering the next funding period (CP7) for operations and maintenance up to 2029. Budget is quite positive but there are efficiency challenges. Settlement gives £2.6bn for the East. Substantial chunk of £8bn budget goes on Trans-Pennine.
- CP7 plans includes: Cambridge resignalling, Liverpool St station roof renewed and minor improvements. One of the key features is remote monitoring work re: weather resilience.
- Ely/Haughley still awaiting next steps. NR stand ready to progress. We do not anticipate major news in the short term, but it remains a well supported priority scheme for the transport industry. Big programme of electrification highlighted in other areas of the country but case being made to associate Felixstowe-Ipswich with wider plan.
- Next 3 months: Finalising study setting out improvements for Norfolk and the final study of 5-year programme along with a further piece of work that ties all these up and will then bring together their study outcomes and opportunity to align with TE Rail Plan.
- Working with GBRTT on draft legislation for UK Rail Reform. This has included recent collaboration on freight, with a single freight team now across NR and the GBR Transition Team. Rail Reform likely to continue in this general form into new Government, in advance of any legislation.

TE officers to scope the potential for a Rail Summit in 2025

<p>Comments and Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ely/Haughley – Discussion that the region should continue to advise government that Ely is our main rail priority. Members regarded that no scheme in country has a better case. It was explained because it’s an enhancement scheme, it still needs Treasury approval.</li> <li>• The Haughley scheme should be seen in relationship to Ely scheme. Haughley is a smaller and more readily deliverable scheme, and we should press for that in the short term. Concerns raised by the Board that projects such as Haughley take so long to get going, and that residents of East Anglia should understand that councils do not give up and keep pushing for key improvements.</li> <li>• On the allocation of CP7 – Cambridge signalling. Beyond the pilot scheme north of Kings Cross, is there any expected allocation of funds to digital signalling? In the next few years, implementation of digital signalling will be Peterborough-Ely, Ely-Kings Lynn. Opportunity for capacity improvements alongside digital signalling. Current priority is modernisation and making it cheaper.</li> </ul> <p><b>C) Rail Reform - Transport East response to Draft Rail Reform Bill</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recommendations to approve paper were agreed</li> </ul>	
<p><b>6. Rural Connections Report</b></p> <p>Esme Yuill summarised the Rural Connection Report and the paper was well received.</p> <p><b>Comments and discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members noted this was a very useful piece of work on behalf of the region.</li> <li>• Members further reflected on the consequences of the major housing developments as increasingly concerned that organisations do not value commercial viability of smaller communities (e.g. in rural areas).</li> <li>• Hertfordshire representative identified that popular DRT service have been delivered through the rural mobility fund, and expanded via BSIP. These services are proving popular and useful.</li> <li>• It was explained that within the Transport East connectivity work programme, one element will focus on market towns. Once completed, we should have a good picture of rural connectivity across the East.</li> </ul>	<p>Transport East to formally write to DfT to provide strategic advise on the rural transport priorities and recommendations for the East.</p>

**7. AOB**

On behalf of the Forum Members, Cllr Richard Smith set out the Forum's appreciation for Cllr Bentley, who is stepping down as Chair after this meeting. Cllr Smith noted the major contribution Cllr Bentley has made as Chair and that the Forum is incredibly grateful for all of his work.