

New partnership seeks shift from road to rail in the South East – and an end to diesel trains

September 22, 2020



A new partnership between Network Rail and regional transport body Transport for the South East aims to encourage people out of their cars as part of a long-term plan to improve rail services, boost capacity and cut carbon emissions.

The memorandum signed by the two organisations sets out a range of common goals that they will work together to achieve. These include better cross-regional train services, schemes to increase network capacity and new journey opportunities, shifting freight from road to rail, wider use of multi-mode smart ticketing and an end to diesel trains on the South East's railways.

Transport for the South East is the sub-national transport body for our region, bringing together local authorities, business groups and more to speak with one voice on our transport investment priorities. Its thirty-year transport strategy, published this summer, sets out how investment in transport can more than double the South East's economy, boosting jobs and opportunity, improving quality of life and cutting carbon emissions to net-zero by 2050 at the latest.

Working with Network Rail, Highways England and partners from across the public and private sectors,

Transport for the South East will turn that strategy into a strategic investment plan, setting out a prioritised package of schemes and initiatives to transform travel and support sustainable economic growth.

Priorities covered by the agreement with Network Rail include exploring options for better cross-regional services including new links between Gatwick Airport and destinations in Kent, improved journeys times along the south coast between Brighton and Southampton and the extension of high speed services from Ashford to the East Sussex coast.

The partners will also work together to support development of major upgrades to the Brighton Main Line at East Croydon, the South West Main Line at Woking and new southern and western rail links to Heathrow Airport.

Cllr Keith Glazier, chair of Transport for the South East, said: “Our transport strategy sets out a vision for the South East that is better for people, better for business and better for the planet. To do that, we need to target investment in a way that encourages people and businesses to choose high-quality and reliable public transport over less sustainable alternatives.

“Achieving that will require big changes to our transport network, so I’m delighted to have reached this agreement with Network Rail on how best to bring about that change.”

John Halsall, managing director of Network Rail’s Southern region, said: “Building, maintaining and operating a reliable railway is our number one duty to our passengers and stakeholders. At the same time, we aspire to do this in a way that cuts carbon emissions and waste, protects wildlife and has a positive impact on our people, passengers and local communities.

“I’m really excited about the promises we’ve made with our friends at TfSE as together we strive for a better and more sustainable future for everyone.”

The memorandum of understanding signed by Transport for the South East and Network Rail commits the two partners to work together in five key areas:

1. Modal shift to rail

Facilitating modal shift by:

- Exploring options to improve cross-regional services, particularly on the following corridors:
 - Ashford-Gatwick-Reading
 - Brighton-Southampton-Bristol/Cardiff
 - Ashford-Hastings/HS1 capacity
 - Abbey Wood to Ebbsfleet
- Supporting development of capacity improvements to enable the network to cater for forecast growth e.g.:
 - Brighton Main Line Upgrade – Croydon Area Remodelling
 - South West Main Line – Working Area Remodelling
 - Redevelopment of London Victoria and Clapham Junction stations
 - Western and southern rail access to Heathrow Airport
- Replacement of rolling stock recognised as no longer fit for purpose e.g. West Coastway Class 313
- Promoting specification of rolling stock that provides an appealing journey experience for the variety of different potential passengers across the TfSE region
- Bringing together the relevant agencies to improve publicly available integrated transport customer information and widen the provision of multi-modal ticketing

2. **Net-zero carbon**

Facilitating achievement of carbon 2050 targets by:

- Working with rail industry partners to enable removal of diesel traction for passenger rail services throughout the TfSE area
- Working with freight sector to influence the proportion of freight carried by rail and/or lower carbon traction

3. **Best value for taxpayers**

Efficient alignment of taxpayer funded resources by:

- Integrating strategic analysis, data sources and insight
- Where possible aligning TfSE corridor studies and Network Rail modular route studies

4. **Working openly and in good faith**

Both organisations agree to work openly and in good faith to:

- Support each other's policies and objectives wherever possible
- Assist in the development of corridor studies undertaken by TfSE and the modular study work led by Network Rail
- Work closely in terms of data sharing, analysis and policy outcomes
- Provide a clear understanding to TfSE on Network Rail policy or position by ensuring Network Rail's Kent, Sussex and Wessex routes speak with one voice

5. **Better integrated transport and land use planning**

Seeking to improve land use planning by collaborating and working to mutual benefits with relevant local, regional and central government organisations involved in determining housing policy and specification of local industrial strategies

Photo credit: Transport for the South East

For today's rail news from railbusinessdaily.com [click here](#).