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Date: 10<sup>th</sup> January 2020

Dear Sir/ Madam,

**Transport for the South East (TfSE) Transport Strategy – consultation response**

England's Economic Heartland (EEH) is the Sub-national Transport Body (STB) for the region stretching from Swindon across to Cambridgeshire, and Northamptonshire down to Hertfordshire, incorporating the area defined as the Oxford to Cambridge Arc.

EEH shares borders with TfSE at the boundaries of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Swindon with Berkshire, Slough, and Wiltshire. As a neighbouring STB, we welcome the opportunity to comment on your draft Transport Strategy.

EEH and TfSE enjoy a strong working relationship, the continuation of which is crucial to allow us to respond strategically and operationally to challenges and opportunities that exist across the boundaries of the two sub-regions. In addition we have a shared interest in terms of the relationship between our areas and London.

EEH previously responded to TfSE's consultation on becoming a statutory Sub National Transport Body supporting, in principle, TfSE's proposal.

EEH published its Outline Transport Strategy in July 2019. The Outline Strategy set out our expectations for a Heartland's transport system that can support and enable the region to realise its economic potential, but doing so in a way that brings improved quality of life for all of our residents and businesses. EEH is clear that economic success cannot be at the cost of the environment.

EEH's draft key principles that were set out in our Outline Transport Strategy are 'enabling economic growth', 'accessibility and inclusion' and 'quality of life and environment'. These principles also strongly align with the strategic goals of TfSE's transport strategy; economy, society and environment (the three pillars of sustainability).

TfSE's move towards 'planning for people' and 'planning for places' therefore wholly aligns with EEH's emerging vision and approach. We welcome TfSE's shift from traditional 'planning for vehicles', and we jointly share the aspiration for a joined up approach to transport and spatial planning, helping to support our communities to live and work in a way that minimises their impact on the environment and which allows for user-centred transport solutions.

Responses to the EEH Outline Transport Strategy have confirmed that the environmental impact of transport, increasing resilience of infrastructure against future climate change, and protecting the region's special natural environment should be a high priority in EEH's final Transport Strategy. We are therefore supportive of TfSE's recognition of the role that transport plays in delivering the UK's legislative requirement for net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

TfSE's commitment to a net zero carbon transport system by 2050 is in line with the approach proposed by EEH in its Outline Transport Strategy. However, it is clear from EEH's further analytical work, and from responses received in our engagement phase, that the need to enhance the natural environment and address decarbonisation of the transport network is a higher priority for businesses and residents than ever before.

We, as Sub National Transport Bodies, need to be more ambitious in what is possible and continue to recognise that meeting the target of zero carbon by 2050 will require a step change in the way that transport is planned and provided at all levels of transport planning: local, sub regional and national level. EEH would like to continue to work closely with TfSE as we explore the challenges and opportunities that decarbonisation presents, bringing Government alongside us on the journey.

In addition, EEH welcomed TfSE's acknowledgment of the significance of working together to manage scheme interfaces between neighbouring STBs. EEH is pleased to continue working collaboratively with TfSE on projects that affect our two regions.

One such example, the corridor from the Solent area northwards, is a route identified by EEH's as an important corridor, including a key freight corridor, and is of particular importance for joint working between us. Other strategically important corridors that are likely to require joint working include: M25 South West Quadrant, M4 corridor, the Great Western Main Line and a broader relationship on rail services (see below).

We share a common interest in the ensuring that rail services connecting the two regions through London serve our residents and businesses needs as well as those of

London. As we look to the prospect of changes to the rail franchising regime post the publication of the Williams review there will be a need to work together to ensure that we collectively work to ensure an appropriate level of representation in any governance framework that has implications for inter-regional services.

Major infrastructure projects such as the planned expansion of Heathrow will be conditional upon improved surface transport connections into the adjoining regions. EEH conditionally supports the expansion of Heathrow, dependent on the delivery of comprehensive programme of investment that delivers the step change in connectivity to and from the airport by non-car modes that is required in order to mitigate the impact of the expansion proposal on the surrounding area. This joint challenge of surface access to Heathrow has been acknowledged in the TfSE Transport Strategy.

Future freight and logistic requirements are a key priority for EEH given the focus on realising economic potential; we published the report of our Freight Study in July 2019.

A key priority following from that report is the need to develop a data standard for freight data collection. EEH is supporting local partners to consider options for how automated freight data can best support freight and freight connectivity across the region. We invite Transport for the South East to collaborate with EEH on this project, which is also in line with the National Infrastructure Commission's findings on the constraints associated with lack of freight data. Transport for London and Greater London Authority share the appetite to work together on a regional basis and we will subsequently be contacting you to develop this work.

More broadly, in seeking to deliver the transport strategies for EEH and TfSE, we would welcome the development of an ongoing collaboration and relationship around rail. This approach would address joint priorities and help shape the future of rail services in both the TfSE and EEH region. By example, the Great Western Main Line (GWML), which runs through both the EEH and TfSE region is an important shared interest. Working together, the STBs will be able to review key priorities such as capacity constraints that currently exist between Didcot and Oxford and provide a shared position on the preferred way forward.

Our response to TfSE's consultation on becoming an STB also highlighted the growing relevance for joint working between the bodies, particularly if TfSE's ambitions for bus franchising and quality partnerships are realised. We are keen to work with TfSE should powers be granted for franchising arrangements. It is important that any future decisions around bus services would be to the advantage to both TfSE and EEH residents and businesses.

In conclusion, EEH welcomes TfSE's Transport Strategy, which clearly sets out the South East region's policies, work programme and transport priorities for the future. We look forward to continuing our excellent working relationship to help address common

challenges and opportunities and ultimately deliver much needed investment in transport infrastructure.

Yours sincerely



**Mayor Dave Hodgson**  
**Chair, EEH Strategic Transport Forum**