

ENGLAND'S ECONOMIC HEARTLAND

Annex 1

Creation of a Wider South East Rail Partnership

Purpose of paper:

This paper sets out proposals for how the wider south eastern sub-national transport bodies (STBs) (Transport East (TE), Transport for the South East (TfSE), England's Economic Heartland (EEH) as well as London (through Transport for London- TfL)) will better work with the rail industry, particularly Great British Railways (GBR) and Department for Transport, through a new 'Wider South East Rail' partnership. It also provides more detail on the proposed governance, structure and remit for the partnership.

Context:

In February 2023, the Secretary of State set out the government's latest plans for Great British Railways (GBR). This includes the proposal set out in the Williams-Shapps White Paper for national rail reform to establish a Wider South East Rail partnership. England's three sub-national transport bodies (STBs) in the wider south east are uniquely positioned to work with the new body to maximise the potential of our rail network, ensuring its full integration with the wider transport network aligned to our regional Transport Strategies and Local Transport Plans.

Strategic direction:

The regional transport strategies have been developed to facilitate economic growth and have regard to social and environmental impacts. They are based on both local evidence and national policy, taking account of Local Plans and land use allocations, economic activity, local transport integration and environmental conditions within each region. They identify the role of strategic transport in supporting the wider south east and UK economy, making the case for transport investment to increase productivity and highlights the impacts of not investing.

The economic potential of the wider south east is spread across high performing cities, towns, innovation centres, international gateways, science parks, coastal and rural communities. Our connection with the global city of London is important and historically has been the defining orientation of its rail network. However, the wider south east economy requires both radial and orbital rail connectivity for it to flourish for the benefit of

the UK economy. There are also parts of this wider region that need support and investment if they are to level up.

The three STB transport strategies prioritise integrating rail into a wider connected transport network with improved east west connectivity, enhancing capacity and reducing congestion on both the radial routes and London transport network. This will support mode shift to rail for both passengers and freight, as well as helping enable economic growth and decarbonisation.

Wider South East Rail Partnership:

Creating a Wider South East Rail Partnership will ensure the agreed transport strategies for regional connectivity are embedded in GBR's approach. The partnership can work alongside GBR to take a strategic planning approach to facilitating economic growth, enabling social benefits, and increasing connectivity. The Secretary of State has set out they will have regard to our Transport Strategies in the development of policy and investment decisions. The oversight role of the wider south east partnership will ensure due regard is given to the rail interventions set out in each of our strategies and published or developing strategic investment pipelines which would improve connectivity across our regions and better access to rail for all.

The partnership is endorsed by the respective STB Boards to oversee strategic elements of rail planning across the wider south east and, where required, provide collective advice to the Secretary of State on rail delivery priorities for the region. The three regional transport strategies and strategic investment pipelines and Mayor's Transport Strategy – all subject to rigorous public consultation and endorsement through locally democratic processes - alongside GBR's 30-year plan for rail, will provide an established framework on which the Partnership can collaborate and identify the investment priorities in the Wider South East.

The proposed partnership will bring together the three STBs (TE, TfSE and EEH) with GBR and TfL, with the STBs representing all local authorities and businesses priorities. It will provide strategic oversight of timetabling and infrastructure investments and have a focus on ensuring consistent customer experience in areas for passengers such as access, ticketing and communications, and freight including capacity and traction.

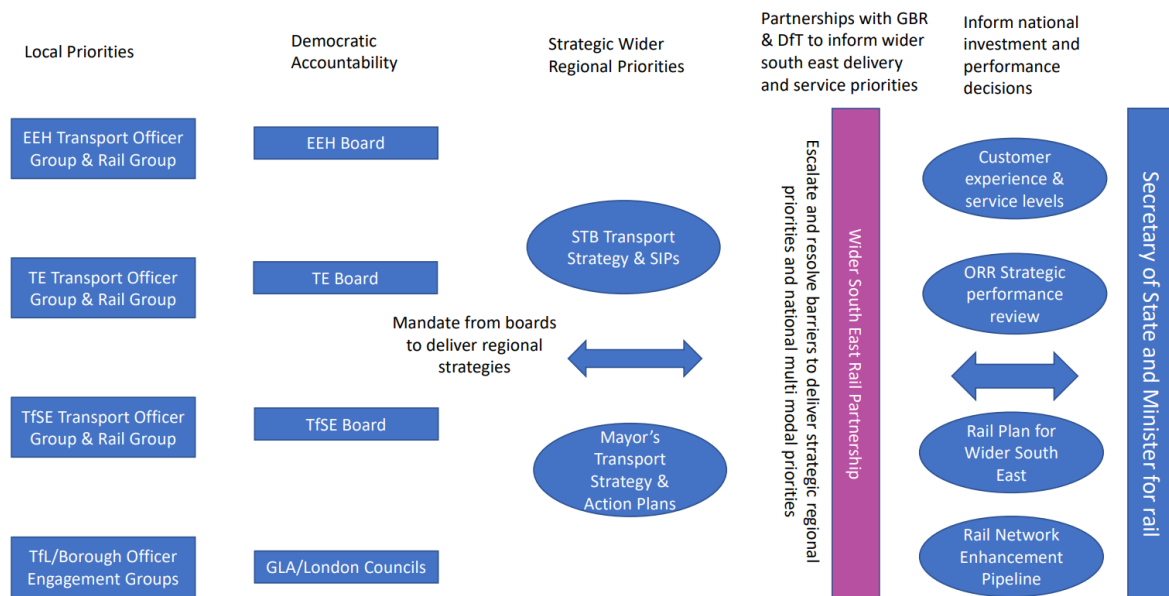
It is anticipated that the partnership will work alongside devolution deals as well as emerging deals taking place across the wider south east.

Governance:

On the Wider South East Rail Partnership Board would be:

- Two officer representatives (Chief Officer and Technical Lead from the three wider south east sub national transport bodies)
- Equivalent senior representatives from Transport for London
- Senior representatives from Great British Railways Transition Team/Network Rail (GBR only once fully set up)
- Senior representatives from Department for Transport
- Subject experts to be drawn in as required – consider attendance of ORR?

Structure:



Benefits to government:

- Clarity of rail vision and priorities of the wider south east within an integrated transport framework
- Streamlined strategic engagement on rail planning, investment and customer experience (passenger and freight) within the wider south east through a democratically accountable structure
- Provision of timely, strategic advice on rail investment, performance and customer experience

Benefits to regional partners:

- Mechanism to embed rail priorities as set out in regional integrated strategies into wider GBR and DfT planning, investment decisions and performance management
- Coordinated escalation point for local strategic rail issues
- Coordinated voice to Secretary of State for Transport on regional rail priorities to ensure 'due regard' is taken by government

The remit of the Partnership would be:

- To provide a coordinated view of London and the wider south east rail investment priorities and rail performance oversight to the Secretary of State for Transport informed by our Transport Strategies and Investment Pipelines
- To provide oversight of the relationship between civic and business leadership in the wider south east and Great British Railways on strategic rail matters, informed by each of the three STBs in the wider south east: England's Economic Heartland, Transport for the south east and Transport East; and Transport for London

- To ensure common issues and opportunities for the wider south east are taken forward consistently and with senior level engagement from Great British Railways and DfT and this is considered by agreed partnerships between Great British Railways/Network Rail (during transition) individual STB areas, GBR regions and London
- To develop a single consistent integrated rail vision for the wider south east, drawing on each individual STB's investment plans
- Ensure 'due regard' is taken by government, GBR/NR to regional rail priorities as decisions on investment, performance and customer experience are taken.
- Strategic rail performance oversight:
 - To meet and report quarterly (*) on levels of service on wider south east railways, identifying inconsistencies that require tighter oversight and interaction, including an annual/6-monthly meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport
 - To shape agreements for rail services that encompass the whole customer offer (passenger and freight) on rail services in the wider south east, including providing strategic advice on new franchising and timetabling arrangements
 - To report annually to ORR on the performance of the wider south east rail network to inform their regulatory functions
- Strategic rail planning and formal investment advice:
 - To review evidence from GBR and advise on priorities as set out in our investment priorities, for managing rail connectivity between London and the wider south east, including crucial east west and orbital connections
 - To review evidence on changing travel patterns in the wider south east and ensuring emerging policies are consistent with current and future trends, eg fares, access arrangements etc