



TRANSPORTEAST

Transport East Briefing

Subject: National Infrastructure Assessment – Call for Evidence
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Date 4 February 2022

We welcome the opportunity to provide comment on the National Infrastructure Assessment – Call for Evidence.

Transport East is the Sub-national Transport Body for Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Southend-on-Sea, and Thurrock. The partnership provides a single voice for our councils, business leaders and partners on our region's transport strategy and strategic transport investment priorities, working in close collaboration with the government and the rest of the UK.

We have developed our draft Transport Strategy and draft Investment and Delivery Programme, which is currently out for consultation. These documents set out a vision for the future of transport in the East and a set of strategic priorities to deliver that vision. We recommend that the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) has due regard to STB's Transport Strategies and Investment Priorities when developing the recommendations for the second NIC Assessment.

Our vision and priorities

We seek a thriving economy for the East, (reference to the East encompasses the area of the Transport East region), with fast, reliable, safe, and resilient transport infrastructure driving forward a future of inclusive and sustainable growth for decades to come.

To deliver the transport network to support this, the draft Strategy identifies four core priorities for the region. Setting out a pathway of activities to address challenges and improve transport provision.

- Decarbonisation to net zero – Transport creates 42% of carbon emissions across the region, more than any other source. We aim to achieve net zero carbon emissions from transport by 2040. Our decarbonisation pathway underpins the other three pathways in the Strategy.
- Connecting growing towns and cities – With 75 towns and cities, the East has a strong economy, but our growing places are spread out and our towns are congested. We want enhanced links between our fastest growing places and business clusters.
- Energising rural and coastal communities – Much of our population lives in rural areas or on the coast. Transport links in these areas are historically poor and this is exacerbated by poor digital connections. We want everyone in rural and coastal areas to be able to do more, more easily and more sustainably.

- Unlocking international gateways – With 13 ports and 3 international airports, we are the UK’s gateway to the world for trade. The Port of Tilbury, London Gateway, Felixstowe and Harwich International have recently been allocated Freeport status by the government. This will increase the role of logistics and distribution within the region. We want better connected ports and airports to help UK businesses thrive.
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Notes:

1. The East region within this response relates to the geography covered by the Transport East STB.
 2. The Transport East draft Transport Strategy link <https://www.transporteast.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/TransportEastStrategy.v6.pdf>
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The National Infrastructure committee has put out a call for evidence to enable it to develop recommendations for the second national infrastructure assessment, due in the second half of 2023. The commission has produced a baseline report on the state of our national systems of digital, energy, flood resilience, water and wastewater, waste, and transport. The commission is looking to identify the biggest challenges and opportunities of the future, recognising that carbon emissions from economic infrastructure must reduce further and fast.

The NIC assessment will focus on three strategic themes:

- Reaching net zero
- Climate resilience and the environment
- Supporting levelling up

This response considers those questions that relate to the East region and the emerging transport strategy.

Our core points are as follows:

- Sub-National Transport Bodies have developed regional transport strategies for their regions, based on robust evidence and widespread public consultation, each representing a single voice of their region. **These strategies should be used to underpin the second National Infrastructure Assessment.**
- Transport East’s first strategic priority is Decarbonisation to Net Zero. **We recommend the second NIC sets out an ambitious approach to decarbonisation through its infrastructure investment,** in line with the STB strategies, to deliver net zero.
- Transport East’s second strategic priority is connecting growing towns and cities. **We recommend the NIC supports better connectivity to support economic growth in regions like the East** where our economy is based on connectivity between our 75 towns and cities. That network is increasingly congested, and with 500,000 new homes predicted by 2050,

needs strengthening as a matter of urgency – both inter-region and East-West to neighbouring regions.

- A third of our population lives in rural areas, however nearly 70% of these are transport deserts, with no access to key services, education, or jobs by low carbon modes. **The NIC should prioritise better accessibility for people living in rural and small towns.**
- Transport East’s fourth priority is unlocking international gateways. With two freeports, 13 ports and 3 airports, **we recommend that the NIC prioritises the movement of people and goods to connect the international gateways in the East** with industry and population centres across the UK.
- **We strongly recommend the NIC prioritises greater funding certainty for local authorities and sub-national transport bodies** to be able to plan and deliver the next generation of projects.

Question 1: Do the nine challenges identified by the Commission cover the most pressing issues that economic infrastructure will face over the next 30 years? If not, what other challenges should the Commission consider?

Decarbonisation to net-zero is one of the four strategic priorities for the East region. Within the East region, 42% of emissions were emitted by transport in 2018. Transport related carbon emissions in the East region are from a combination of sources: the nationally important strategic and major road network along six core strategic corridors (including significant freight emissions arising from our port traffic); urban emissions related to commuter travel and linked to congestion; and a high proportion of emissions from the region’s rural network, where there are limited options for non-car travel.

Transport and mobility play a key role in urban productivity and supporting regional growth. However, work undertaken to support the transport strategy for the East region has identified that this focus needs to widen to include rural and smaller urban areas, moving away from the metropolitan centric model. Rural transport is a significant contributor to carbon emissions in the East. Improved rural connectivity and levelling up transport options within rural areas will also support the sustainable energy and visitor economy in the East, both key contributors to the economy.

The effective maintenance of our existing infrastructure is essential for resilience to the three key challenges identified in the baseline report. One of the main actions to improve the effectiveness of maintenance of the transport network and the implementation of more sustainable transport options, would be funding certainty. We recommend that the scope of the NIC assessment is expanded to include rural transport and funding certainty and includes reference to the national freeports.

Question 2: What changes to funding policy help address the Commission's nine challenges and what evidence is there to support this?

Funding policy and allocation needs to take into the need for a different approach to enable the unique challenges of rural transport and mobility, where the conventional business case cost/benefit approach struggles to demonstrate value for money because of longer distances and more dispersed populations. Transport East is the lead Sub-national Transport Authority for rural mobility and will be undertaking work to provide an evidence base that supports the understanding of rural mobility issues and will identify and develop best practice to be applied nationally.

Funding certainty is a key factor that affects the ability to plan and deliver sustainable transport options and maintenance. Greater funding certainty over 3 to 5 years is needed to ensure better, more sustainable, and more effective delivery.

Question 3: How can better design, in line with the design principles for national infrastructure help solve any of the Commission's nine challenges for the next Assessment and what evidence is there to support this?

We support the design principles of "climate, people, places, value" these reflect the priorities within the Transport East draft strategy and support the people centric approach to identifying, understanding, and responding to transport issues. Transport East has received funding to undertake people focussed modelling, Agent Base Model, and data collection to provide a greater understanding of why and how people travel. A new approach will be needed for business case development to fully utilise the benefits of good design principles within future NIC Assessments.

An area that requires greater understanding, is embedded carbon. To fully understand the impact of infrastructure on emissions and what mode solution provides maximum benefit, there is a need for a standardised approach and metrics to understand the carbon emission cost of delivering infrastructure and transport measures.

Question 4: What interactions exist between addressing the Commission's nine challenges for the next Assessment and the government's target to halt biodiversity loss by 2030 and implement biodiversity net gain?

To achieve biodiversity net gain a fully integrated approach to transport is required. This will require greater coordination of schemes across different government and local authority organisations looking at the potential to combine measures.

STB's have developed transport strategies and programmes that will deliver the strategic objectives for their regions. Having due regard for these strategies and programmes and working collaboratively with STB's will ensure the optimisation of future biodiversity net gain.

Question 5: What are the main opportunities in terms of governance, policy, regulation, and market mechanisms that may help solve any of the Commission's nine challenges for the Next Assessment? What are the main barriers?

Active engagement with STB's across all areas relating to transport and its links to and support of the economy and pay due regard to the regional strategies and programmes. To work with STB's to understand areas where policy and regulation could be developed to improve delivery of modal shift and effective use of the transport network to reduce transport related carbon emissions and deliver net zero.

A new approach to the assessment of the benefits of scheme that will provide recognition and opportunity for funding schemes to deliver net-zero and levelling up in more rural regions.

Given their unique role as single voice for their regions, with Board comprising elected local authority councillors and business leaders, we strongly recommend that STB partnerships are integrated into the governance of the major national agencies, including Great British Railways, and that the investment plans of National Highways, Network Rail and other bodies directly reflect the priorities set out in the seven Sub-National Transport Strategies now in place across England (plus the Mayor's Transport Strategy for London). Greater engagement with STBs will ensure that national investment strategies reflect local aspirations and places.

Levelling up

Challenge 8: Urban mobility and congestion – the Commission will examine how the development of at scale mass transit systems can support productivity in cities and city regions and consider the role of congestion charging and other demand management measures.

Question 16: What evidence is there of the effectiveness in reducing congestion of different approaches to demand management used in cities around the world, including, but not limited to, congestion charging, and what are the different approaches used to build public consensus for such measures.

Reducing congestion requires modal shift, this applies to all urban and rural areas, not just cities and city regions.

The East region is diverse, comprising cities, towns, and market towns with large rural areas. To achieve net zero, sustainable transport needs to be delivered across place type. The challenges faced by the towns and cities within the East region are in a way more challenging than those within cities and city regions, where the density of population provides the opportunity for more financially viable sustainable transport measures and a more simple governance mechanism that enables a coordinated strategic approach to implementing change. In two tier authorities responsibility for planning and transport sit within multiple different authorities, complicating the effective delivery of mode shift policies.

The introduction of mass transit systems and demand management within metropolitan areas in England has provided evidence of the effectiveness of this approach. However, Government needs to work with STB's and their LA's to understand the challenges to implementing such measures in diverse regions. The solution is likely to require a new approach to assessing benefit and allocation

of funding and the ability of LA's to manage demand for road space Building public consensus will require the introduction of alternative measures ahead of them becoming financially viable; to be solution led.

It is recommended that the NIC take a people and goods movement approach to identify solutions, moving on from the traditional focus on vehicle movements.

Challenge 9: Inter-urban transport across modes – the Commission will consider relative priorities and long-term investment needs including the role of new technologies, as part of a strategic multi-modal transport plan.

Question 17: What are the barriers to a decision-making framework on inter-urban transport that reflects a balanced approach across different transport modes?

The current business case methodology is a major barrier to implementing inter-urban transport. The dispersed population in regions such as the East, make financial viability of a mass transit approach challenging.

Funding certainty is also a key barrier to implementing change. For example, providing improved bus services for a fixed period based on limited financial certainty, results in poor support from the industry and frustration and anger from the public when the services are pulled. It is not reasonable to expect LTA's to underwrite the risk associated with this approach to funding sustainable transport measures.

Rail will need to become an important option for sustainable travel. This will require improved passenger services and network connectivity that is not London transit dependent.

Increasing the use of rail to transport freight will provide huge benefits for reduced carbon emissions, reducing the number of HGV's on the road network. This will require increased network capacity that does not compromise the need of passenger services. The use of rail to transport freight is particularly important for the movement of goods from our 13 ports and 3 airports: including the two freeports. These international gateways are nationally important.

Transport East draft strategy has goals to increase the level of sustainable transport to our international gateways that will support the Governments Jet Zero strategy.

A major barrier to decision making is the lack of integration planning and funding for multi-modal transport. The STB transport strategies focus on strategic outcomes, taking a multi-modal approach to achieving these. We recommend that greater weight is given to the outcomes and priorities in the unique STB transport strategies, and future funding streams given more flexibility to deliver solutions that transcend the existing limited and modally specific funding pots.

The Transport East draft Transport Strategy and IDP identifies six core strategic movement corridors. These corridors comprise growing urban areas, economic centres, ports and airports, and the road and rail connections between them and the rest of the UK. These corridors are critical to the East region's strategy and further investment will be needed along them if the region is to reach its potential as a thriving, connected, multi-centred economy, whilst reducing carbon emissions. See Core Strategic Corridors figure on the next page.

