



The Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport

Response to TfSE Strategic Investment Plan consultation

1. Introduction

1.1 The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT UK) is a professional institution embracing all transport modes whose members are engaged in the provision of transport services for both passengers and freight, the management of logistics and the supply chain, transport planning, government and administration. Our principal concern is that transport policies and procedures should be effective and efficient, based on objective analysis of the issues and practical experience, and that good practice should be widely disseminated and adopted. The Institute has specialist forums, a nationwide structure of locally based groups and a Public Policies Committee which considers the broad canvass of transport policy.

1.2 CILT is pleased to respond to the consultation and this submission was prepared jointly by our South East Region and our Rail Freight Forum. It focusses on the key strategic issues and does not attempt to cover the detail of specific schemes, which we imagine will be the main thrust of local and regional input. Please connect it with our response to your questionnaire submitted on behalf of the Institute by Julian Worth, Chair of our Rail Freight Forum.

2. Analysis

2.1 In general terms, we support the aims and objectives of TfSE but have some overriding concerns that achievement of key objectives has not been adequately addressed and that obtaining the required funding may prove problematical.

2.2 The TfSE Transport Strategy rightly places great emphasis on achieving Decarbonisation of transport in the region and the SIP reiterates this aim. There is, however, very little in the Plan to support this key objective, particularly for Freight and Logistics. We are aware of a TfSE study into charging etc but funding provision needs to be made in the SIP, even if the detail is not yet known. Similarly, there is no clear strategy for modal shift – much the most effective means of decarbonising transport – which we regard as a serious omission. Facilitation of modal shift is a first step, but we would have expected to see much more overt planning and investment provision for modal shift in the SIP.

2.3 More generally, the SIP is overwhelmingly passenger-orientated with freight and logistics seemingly little more than an afterthought. Again, we are aware that a Freight & Gateways study is underway and, whilst parts of the region do not see large amounts of freight, this is certainly not the case with the A34, M20 and M25 plus some other corridors, together with the parallel rail routes. Much greater consideration and investment provision are required for these corridors, particularly as HGVs generate a disproportionate share of carbon emissions.

2.4 For all the Plan highlights and contains funding proposals for rail, mass transit and active travel, the detail of the plan contains large numbers of road schemes. This is not necessarily wrong, but it does resemble a traditional highways authority investment plan and thus has the feel of ‘yesterday’s solutions for tomorrow’s problems’. This is especially so given the absence of provision for decarbonising road transport, particularly HGVs and buses. We would again make the point that modal shift can address some of the pressure on key sections of road and potentially remove or reduce the need for highway expenditure. A more holistic pan-modal approach is needed.

2.5 We are concerned that the Government levelling up agenda will constrain the level of support available in this part of the UK. The South East has a high overall population with several major conurbations but with many rural and spread-out suburban areas meaning that public transport levels and frequencies are well below those in many other parts of the country. This exacerbates the need for car usage across the region. In addition, bus fare levels are generally higher than many other parts of the country.

2.6 As well as very high car usage, a combination of high consumer demand, poor cross-country rail freight links and the high level of international freight flows serving a number of ports across the region, lorry traffic also competes for the already insufficient road capacity. Transport networks in the South East have tended to develop to be geared towards London that has led to a number of corridors where capacity has been seriously outstripped by demand.

2.7 A key objective of the TfSE transport strategy, which we strongly support, is to reduce car dependency. One of the key elements of this strategy is to improve bus service levels as well as affordability of travel. Currently the bus industry is facing its worst crisis period for 40 to 50 years with slow post-Covid recovery in usage levels exacerbated by severe uncertainty regarding future Government funding as well as serious staff shortages. The Government is supporting Bus Service Improvement Plans while at the same time Local authorities are cutting support levels and operators are deregistering commercial operations with little likelihood of them getting public support. For the objective of improved bus provision to be achieved, all uncertainty needs to be taken away from the industry and sustainable funding to be provided. Although buses are highlighted here the funding constraints post-Covid are industrywide and are hugely exacerbated by the current economic uncertainty regarding energy costs and future Government energy policy.

3. Conclusion

3. 1 We consider that the SIP sets out to achieve the right objectives but has a number of blind spots and fails to address crucial aspects of transport. It is very disappointing that Decarbonisation and the needs of Freight and Logistics are not properly addressed, with very little funding being allocated for these critical activities. Passenger travel is addressed more adequately but we have serious concerns about funding and delivery of mass transit improvements, as recent history has taken us in the opposite direction.

Submitted by:

Daniel Parker-Klein

Director of Policy and Communications

The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport

Daniel.parker-klein@ciltuk.org.uk

07894 620655

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