

Missing Links - DRAFT

How better South East transport links can improve UK economic potential

South East: Invest for economic growth or risk losing ground

South East England has a key position in the UK economy as the most profitable area for the Treasury. Our businesses and residents generate billions more in taxes than the area receives in public spending – some £80bn excess funds over 10 years – for the Government to spend UK-wide.

Without more investment, neither the Treasury nor the South East can fully benefit from the returns available from the area's economic potential. Investment is needed to maximise South East economic opportunities and avoid the risk of businesses leaving the South East for global competitor countries.

There are opportunities in many sectors but a focus on investing in new hi-tech transport infrastructure would also support the South East and UK position as a world leader in technology. Better transport links will also open up housing development sites.

There are 5 critical strategic transport routes – Missing Links – where investment would open up significant national and local economic potential:

- Better North-South routes will improve national access to major South East ports and airports that are used by businesses UK-wide to gain access to export markets, supply chain imports and leisure travel opportunities.
- Better East-West routes to improve and create key arteries will provide direct links between major economic centres. These direct links will increase road and rail capacity locally. They will also reduce congestion and release capacity in London by allowing travellers to bypass the capital.

The 5 projects cross multiple LEP/council boundaries but are beyond partners' funding ability without Government help. Of course, there remain additional South East strategic transport investment needs beyond these 5 headline projects.

Five headline investment needs

North-South

- 1. A34/ M3/ M40 and rail links to Southampton-Portsmouth from Oxford, West Midlands & beyond.**

Links to international gateways (two major ports plus Southampton Airport) are vital for sectors such as the UK car industry (import of parts and export of finished cars), food retailers (import of fresh fruit and vegetables) and the leisure industry (eg cruise ships).

- 2. A2/ M2 – links to the Channel Tunnel and Dover from London, Midlands, East & beyond.**

An essential link for freight traffic, business and leisure travellers to and from mainland Europe – some £150bn of UK/ European trade annually. Key sectors using this route are the logistics industry (import and export for the UK's largest overseas market) and the travel/ holiday industry.

East-West

- 3. A27/ M27 – from Dover to Southampton-Portsmouth, through developing coastal economies and university towns (existing corridor).**

Better links between major south coast ports and economic centres would deliver significant improvements for freight and leisure traffic. Current congestion on this route hampers business prospects and increases congestion on the M25 due to lack of a viable alternative coastal route.

- 4. A34/ M40 link via Oxford to Cambridge (new corridor).**

A new route to improve links along the major growth corridor between Science Vale/Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge. Highways England is already working with a consortium of authorities to study options. The route now needs a Government commitment to fund the preferred option.

- 5. North Downs Rail – from Oxford, through Reading and Gatwick Airport to Ashford in Kent (existing corridor).**

Better direct links between major South East economic centres will improve travel for millions of commuters, businesses and holiday makers, including a step change in public transport access to the UK's second busiest airport at Gatwick. The route also has significant potential to relieve pressure on rail congestion in London by removing the need for travellers to change trains in London when moving from one part of the South East to another.