

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

TRANSPORT



Congestion on roads, railways, airports and ports continues to be a key challenge for the South East.

NATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

ICE has compiled State of the Nation reports each year since 2000, drawing on expertise across its membership and beyond to stimulate debate and to highlight the actions needed to improve the UK's infrastructure.

ICE's State of the Nation: Transport 2013 UK report presents a series of detailed recommendations – for the short, medium and long-term. While all are important, we believe that three are particularly critical to our success:

- 1. IMMEDIATE ACTION TO IMPROVE ROAD CONDITIONS, PLANNING AND FUNDING**
- 2. ENSURING CLEAR NATIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGIES FOR ALL PARTS OF THE UK**
- 3. CONTINUING AND EXTENDING DEVOLUTION TO FULLY-INTEGRATED TRANSPORT BODIES**

Our emphasis is on making best use of existing assets and achieving the most with public money. The headline recommendations are backed by a series of further points requiring rapid action and a suite of detailed changes by mode and topic. The report concludes with a proposal to create the capacity to address the major social, economic, environmental and technological change which ICE anticipates through the 2020s.

The UK report, with the full detail behind our recommendations, can be downloaded at ice.org.uk/SoNTransport. This briefing sheet highlights how ICE's UK-level recommendations impact on business and communities across our region.

Our ability to meet this challenge affects not only businesses and people living in South East England¹, which is the most successful economic region outside London², but also impacts on London and the rest of the UK.

Every day tens of thousands of people commute between London and South East England, while Eurotunnel and the region's ports and airports act as major gateways between the UK and the rest of the world. Our transport networks are running at full capacity in spite of increased investment.

The management of transport infrastructure in South East England is complex. The establishment of eight Local Transport Bodies in 2013 and the involvement of eight Local Enterprise Partnerships in transport infrastructure have added further levels of involvement to the existing Highway Authorities, Highways Agency, Port Authorities, Airport Operators, Train Operating Companies and Network Rail.

To enable effective delivery of transport infrastructure maintenance and improvements there needs to be good working relationships between all of those organisations.

But more than that, there needs to be a proper strategic and regulatory framework to bring forward the private and public sector investment needed to maintain and develop an integrated transport network that serves the needs of the region and the nation.

There needs to be a long-term, funded plan for investment in transport infrastructure; a plan which is developed through political consensus and then delivered by professionals without politically inspired changes or delays being introduced into the process.

That infrastructure needs to provide suitable routes for freight moving from gateways in the South East to the rest of the UK as well as making appropriate provision for cyclists making local journeys.

The increase in the number of people working from home means there is an increasing reliance on local routes alongside the demands of commuters.

In parallel with an investment plan there needs to be improvements to the passenger experience. The Oyster card in London allows passengers to use different modes of transport through one payment system and those principles could usefully be expanded to other geographical areas allowing true integration.

Improving real time information for bus and railway passengers would also enhance the passenger experience and would encourage greater use of public transport.

THIS BRIEFING SHEET

The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) is a UK-based organisation with over 80,000 members worldwide and over 10,000 members in South East England. Founded in 1818, the ICE has become recognised worldwide for its excellence as a centre of learning, as a qualifying body and as a public voice for the profession.

The ICE has compiled State of the Nation reports each year since 2000, drawing on the expertise across its membership to stimulate debate and to highlight the actions that needed to improve the nation's infrastructure.

This briefing sheet highlights how the main recommendations from the 2013 State of the Nation: Transport report impact on business and communities across South East England.



**RECOMMENDATION 1:
TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO IMPROVE
ROAD CONDITIONS, PLANNING AND
FUNDING**

Our network of 29,600 miles of roads³ is fundamental to the social and economic vitality of South East England, enabling goods and people to get to and from our international gateways, the local towns and cities across the region, and to London. To underline their importance, the ONS trends survey 'Portrait of the South East, 2011'⁴ notes that we have the highest number of vehicles using our roads and the highest rate of car ownership in the UK. The ten years from 1998 to 2008 saw average daily motor vehicle flows on both major and minor roads remained unchanged but the flows on motorways increase by nearly 20%.

MAINTAINING OUR ROADS

Dedicated funding for programmed maintenance is necessary to repair deteriorating highways, which has been particularly adversely affected by the snow and ice during 2012 and 2013.

To put this in context, the 2013 ALARM⁵ survey reported a continuing major shortfall in local authorities' road maintenance budgets across the UK of the order of £1 billion per year – equivalent to around a 12 year backlog based on current budgets.

At a time when local authority budgets are stretched, we need to protect roads maintenance funding, find ways to make the best use of limited resources and to share experiences to spread leading practice.

One prominent example is the Isle of Wight's use of a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) to secure long-term investment and reduce costs for the comprehensive upgrade – and maintenance over 25 years – of the Island's road, footway and cycleway network⁶. The PFI is financed in the main through a Government grant – not a loan and therefore does not have to be repaid. The council will make an annual contribution which will be less than the sum it currently pays to provide the services that will in future be provided through the PFI. Work began on 1 April 2013 and will see the bulk of the Island's roads upgraded within the first seven years.

In another part of the region, the SE7 Partnership⁷ has committed to working together to improve the quality of services and to achieve savings. Its current five-year Highways programme, led by Surrey County Council, has enabled 16% reduction in costs for seven local authorities across Hampshire, Surrey and Kent.



A3 Hindhead Tunnel project (Image courtesy of Balfour Beatty)

When budgets are stretched to an extent that we need to be concerned about the integrity of the road network as a whole, we should be willing to listen to proposals to down-grade some rural roads to by-ways in order to prioritise the more essential maintenance work.

**INVESTING IN OUR STRATEGIC
ROAD NETWORK**

Congestion on roads remains a fundamental challenge for South East England.

The M25 is an obvious concern, and we welcome recent upgrades and plans for managed motorway schemes including hard shoulder running⁸. Congestion on other motorways also needs to be addressed with the M3, M4, M20 and M40 being particular black spots. Their importance is not just to the local economy along those corridors but also as key access routes to international gateways such as airports and ports.

The Dartford Crossing continues to be a bottleneck, often causing major delays on either side of the toll booths stretching back several miles along the M25 with knock on effects on roads feeding onto the motorway. Much delay can be traced back to the toll booths, which could be addressed through free-flow tolling. We also welcome the Department for Transport's consultation on a third Thames crossing to find a solution to easing congestion.

ICE South East England sees the challenge in both the short and long-term. In the short-term, we need to take a strategic view of our roads network and

to invest in the both refinements and major new schemes to make the most of those assets. The Hindhead Tunnel scheme, completed in 2011⁹ is an example of how a major new scheme can aid connectivity, enhance the environment and remove traffic blight.

In addition, smaller scale upgrades in road layout or for new technology can do much to ease congestion in hotspots, enabling the network to operate more effectively as a whole. The Highways Agency's recent pinch point programme has been helpful in this regard, enabling upgrades across the region from improving the M40 junction 4/A404 Handy Cross to installing technology to extend controlled motorway running on the M25.

We welcome the fact that the Department for Transport is working with Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Transport Bodies to give local organisations the ability to identify the key infrastructure where investment is needed to support the local economy. We believe this could help with an integrated approach to transport planning across the region.

However, in the longer-term, we believe the pressure of an increasing population and constrained public finances means that incremental improvements alone will not be sufficient. We believe the UK needs a different way to look at the long-term challenges for transport – and that we need to look again at the thorny issue of road user charging. We continue this point under the next section concerning national transport strategies.

3. This number breaks down as 3,669 miles of major roads and 25,929 miles of minor roads. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/rdl01-road-lengths-miles>. 4. See 'Regional Trends, No. 43 - Portrait of the South East, 2011 Edition' at <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/re/regional-trends/regional-trends/no--43--2011-edition/index.html> 5. <http://www.asphaltindustryalliance.com/alarm-survey.asp> 6. The Isle of Wight Highways PFI encompasses 803km of rural and urban roads, 767km of footways, 12,068 street lights, 209 bridges and structures, cycle ways, public car parks, signage, CCTV and street furniture. 7. The SE7 Partnership involves Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council, Hampshire County Council, Kent County Council, Medway Council, Surrey County Council and West Sussex County Council.



**RECOMMENDATION 2:
ENSURE CLEAR NATIONAL TRANSPORT
STRATEGIES FOR ALL PARTS OF THE UK**

The lack of a clear UK strategy for transport is most clearly seen in the debate and uncertainty over a national hub airport.

**AVIATION – A ONCE IN A
LIFETIME DECISION**

The UK’s existing hub airport, Heathrow, operates very close to maximum capacity and is not adequate for our future needs in its current configuration. The overarching policy set down in the 2003 Air Transport White Paper and the previous administration’s decision to proceed with a third runway at Heathrow have been discarded but not replaced. The Davies Commission has been set the task of examining the need for additional UK airport capacity and recommending to government how this can be met in the short, medium and long-term.

This is a once in a generation opportunity to enable the UK to maintain a competitive advantage through development of a larger hub airport – or to accept that other nations take the lead as gateways into Europe with further loss of economic activity. Brave political leadership is required – including by opposition parties.

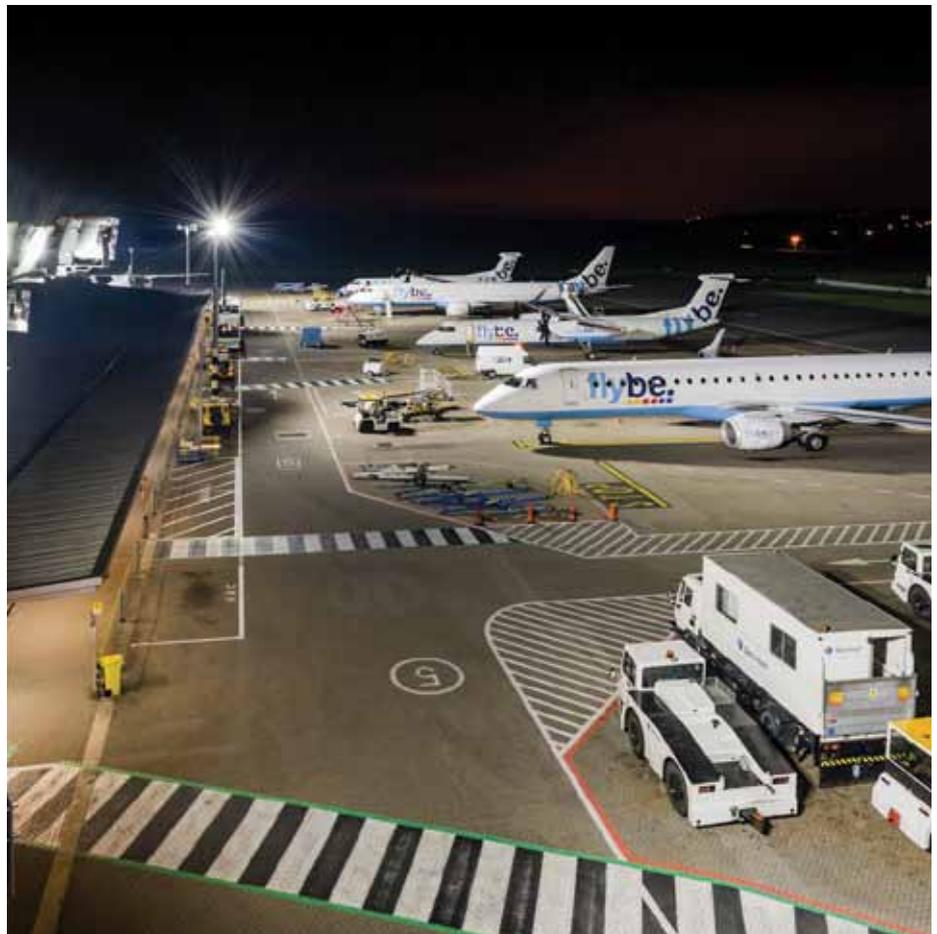
Expanding Heathrow physically or developing a new hub airport will require massive private sector investment. This will not be achieved if investors do not believe that the UK has an aviation strategy that can survive a change of government.

Therefore ICE believes the Government must use the Davies Commission findings to make a prompt and clear decision on where to locate additional airport capacity.

And the decision – when made – will set the shape of the transport landscape in South East England for generations to come. A shift to the east of London – or elsewhere – would see a major reconfiguration of the strategic road and rail routes into and around London, while increased passenger traffic at Heathrow has significant implications for our existing transport infrastructure. In effect, this represents a binary decision which will then set constraints on road, rail and even port developments for the next half century.

LONG-TERM CHALLENGES.

ICE, in its national report, highlights a number of long-term challenges facing our nation’s transport networks. They include a growing population, the rising costs of fuel, greenhouse gas emissions and the impact of new technologies. Government could ignore these questions for as long as possible



The hub decision will impact on the region’s others airports as well (Image courtesy of Southampton Airport)

as being ‘too difficult’ and hope to muddle through. Instead, ICE believes we need to begin a national conversation about how to deal with the risks and opportunities they present and believes the future of how we pay for travel – or road user charging – should be at the front of the agenda.

ICE South East England believes it vital that any national conversation about road user charging reflects the geography of our urban and rural landscapes. We do not have a dominant metropolitan centre within the region: instead we have a number of interconnected transport hubs and urban centres, while travel in and around much of the region is dominated by London. South East England is a driving force for the UK economy but our towns and cities suffer from the effects of congestion on our strategic roads, railways and town centres. It is vital that future thinking on road user charging reflects the diversity and dynamism across South East England, and looks at models that can work in this more complex landscape. The UK is more than its largest cities.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:
EXTEND DEVOLUTION TO POWERFUL,
FULLY-INTEGRATED TRANSPORT BODIES**

While ICE believes those priorities are right for the UK as a whole, we need to recognise that South East England does not sit readily into a metropolitan framework.

Many of our major transport links feed, or circumnavigate, London – while our cities and towns, for the most part, do not lend themselves to ‘Manchester’ or ‘London’ style solutions. And yet the need for integrated planning and delivery remains.

We need to recognise that existing national agencies (Highways Agency, Network Rail) and the asset operators (Train Operating Companies, Airport Operators, Ports, etc) can bring a ‘larger than local’ view and that our top-tier local authorities (Unitary authorities and County Councils) provide a foundation of strategic thinking and delivery at the local level.

8. The Highways Agency ran a hard shoulder running pilot project on an 11-mile stretch of the M42 motorway, near Birmingham starting in September 2006. The trial proved successful with reduced journey times, more predictable journeys, and reduced accident rates
9. The Highways Agency and its partners completed the dual carriageway link between London and Portsmouth and created tunnels to carry traffic underneath the Devil’s Punch Bowl Site of Special Scientific Interest. The new road is 6.5km (4.0 miles) long, including the 1.83km (1.14 miles) twin bored tunnels. The project won the ICE Thames Valley Engineering Excellence Award in 2012.

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Local Transport Bodies provide vehicles for these different parties to come together to identify solutions for an economic area (the Thames Valley, the M3 corridor, or the Solent area for example). While LEPs have been able to create a vision and a focal point for their economic areas since their formation in 2010, their development has been hampered by limited powers and minimal funding, which is only now being addressed, albeit in a piecemeal way. Local Transport Bodies should have control of significant funds going in to their areas from 2015, and they need to establish themselves quickly if we are to avoid losing further impetus.

Here we look at two issues that illustrate these concerns – one pan-regional and the other very local.

RAILWAYS – INTEGRATED THINKING ACROSS THE REGION

The benefits of sound strategy and planning can be seen on our railways in recent years. The aims and programme of the 2014-19 'Control Period' (CP5) are largely in place, and the industry is gearing up to deliver. ICE endorses Network Rail's focus on achieving greater efficiency (reducing industry costs by £3.5 billion by 2019¹⁰) while also improving capacity and journey times on key routes.

In South East England, we are seeing the benefits with the major upgrade to Reading Station and in upgrades to many smaller stations across the region. However, we should not be complacent. The East-West Rail link¹¹ project seeks to establish a strategic railway connecting East Anglia with Central, Southern and Western England. The Western section will link Oxford to Bedford and will be opened in 2017. Our interviews for this report shows that the very large number of partners involved and the number of different funding streams that need to be brought together means that such schemes can only come forward with exceptional leadership and commitment¹².



Reading station area redevelopment (Image courtesy of Network Rail)

If we want to evolve and succeed as a nation, we need to make sure our institutional framework is more robust so that it can do more than maintain the status quo. The future of Local Transport Bodies will be a key test of that aspiration.

The East-West Rail project also hints at the benefits of more visionary thinking. Travel routes in to London are hugely congested at peak travel times, with London being a bottleneck for those who need to travel across the capital. Improved rail links around the capital could be part of the solution. In a similar way, new routes can ease congestion on existing parts of the network. The proposed Crossrail 2 scheme could benefit commuters in Hampshire and Surrey by reducing the overall demand at London Waterloo station.

CYCLING – INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Cycling could make a much greater contribution to our journeys – two-thirds of which are five miles or less. Cycling's share of trips in the UK is extremely low (around 2%) compared with the best Northern European nations. Transport policy needs to embrace cycling as a mainstream travel choice in the UK.

The Cycle Demonstration Towns programme (CDT)¹³, which includes Aylesbury, Brighton and Hove and Woking, has seen notable increases in cycling levels. Each year for three years Cycling England invested up to £500,000 in each town to improve cycling facilities. Between 2005 and 2008 Aylesbury saw a 10% increase in the number of adults cycling in any week and a 234% increase in the number of pupils cycling to school at least once per week while in Brighton and Hove the equivalent figures were 7% and 156%.

These figures suggest that for a relatively modest investment significant increases can be achieved in the number of cycling journeys undertaken. But we need leadership from our towns and cities – and integrated thinking with other modes of transport – to replicate this success across the region.

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View the full report online at
ice.org.uk/stateofthenation



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¹⁰. Much of this identified in the 'Realising the potential of GB rail' produced by Sir Roy McNulty in 2011
¹¹. See <http://www.eastwestrail.org.uk/> ¹². In this case from the Department for Transport, Network Rail, and the Local Authorities including Buckinghamshire County Council. ¹³. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/background-to-the-cycling-city-and-towns-programme>