Short-term
Strategic Transport Plan
2020/25 - DRAFT
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1.0 Introduction

At the time of writing our nation and local communities are in the grip of the coronavirus pandemic. This outbreak will have significant and as yet uncertain implications for individuals, society, the economy and the environment for a long time to come. These implications especially in relation to transport need to be fully understood, considered and incorporated into the plan as it progresses.

Meanwhile, we will continue to plan for our future and support the recovery of our nation.

Local authorities across England have responded to the Government’s request for greater strategic thinking about transport investment by forming Sub-national Transport Bodies (STBs). STBs were identified, with accompanying legislation, within the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 which introduced changes to Part 5 of the Local Transport Act 2008. The Act enables existing individual authorities to formally join in a partnership to produce a Strategic Transport Plan and represent its members in discussions and the delivery of strategic transport infrastructure.

Our Strategic Transport Plan considers all modes of transport within the context of strategic travel. Strategic travel is defined within this plan as travel between two local authority areas, for example somebody living in Trowbridge, but working in Bristol or a road haulier travelling from the Port of Poole to Gloucester.

By considering these connections at a Sub-national level, it enables local authorities to consider the role and function of the complete travel corridor instead of focusing on local issues within their administrative boundary. This approach enables a long-term plan to be produced that identifies a sequenced list of investment priorities based on assessing the impacts along the whole travel corridor. It also recognises the collective impact of schemes and their mutual benefit across a wider area regardless of where the improvement is physically located.

Depending on the travel corridor and the location of the travel issue requiring mitigation, the investment priority may include a variety of improvements including passenger transport schemes; strategic cycle schemes; highway capacity schemes; urban traffic management schemes; green travel infrastructure or integrated ticketing solutions.

All improvements identified will include the overarching need to decarbonise the transport network in line with the government’s emerging Transport Decarbonisation Plan. Due to the scale of this challenge the STBs are in a better position to take strategic leadership of this matter on behalf of its local authority members.
2.0 Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body

The Western Gateway area offers a prosperous and resilient economy set in highly desirable areas of outstanding natural beauty and world heritage sites which are recognised globally. Collectively the Gateway area offers a place to live, work and invest in. It covers some of the country’s most prosperous, fastest-growing conurbations and is home to over 3 million people. Figure 1 illustrates the communities covered by the Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body.

As a collective the Western Gateway area has a strong and growing expertise in world leading industries including advanced engineering, high-value manufacturing, aerospace, military, financial and professional services, digital information and communications technology, cyber security and defence.

Over the next 20 years the Western Gateway area is planning for a step change in prosperity and productivity. This will be achieved through an ambitious growth agenda delivering 300,000 new homes and over 190,000 new jobs. To maintain the quality of our environment it is vital to consider transport improvements appropriate to their setting, which also does not diminish the quality of life and the characteristics of our built and natural environments. Figure 2 illustrates the geographic extent of the Western Gateway STB area within the national context.

Figure 1 – The communities covered by the Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body
The Western Gateway STB is formed by a collective of local authorities and key stakeholders that have made a commitment to work together to drive innovation, maximise sustainable economic growth and support social mobility by enhancing strategic travel connectivity across South West England. Members of the Western Gateway STB are committed to working together and providing a single voice to Government on strategic transport investment and prioritisation. This makes working with the Department for Transport (DfT), Highways England and Network Rail much more streamlined and results in fewer, but much more coordinated conversations and removes the risk of competing local priorities.

The expected outcomes of these investment priorities will support inclusive growth by retaining and increasing the number of working age people and the opportunities they have for employment in the Western Gateway area. Transport improvements will help deliver the large number of employment opportunities identified by local authorities and increase the productivity of those in employment throughout the area. All of these outcomes will ensure a sustainable future for the communities living in the Western Gateway area.

In addition to the elected members which represent the constituent local authority members the Western Gateway STB board also includes members from the DfT, Highways England, Network Rail, Peninsula Transport STB and representation from the Western Gateway Transport and Business Forum. The STB is not about taking decisions and responsibilities away from local communities, instead it focuses on strengthening delivery by demonstrating strategic leadership and working collaboratively for material advantage for the Western Gateway area. Figure 3 summarises the Western Gateway STB decision-making process.
The STBs role in the Strategic Decision Making Process

The STB’s role is to provide leadership on cross boundary and strategic travel issues including:

- Representing its members in discussions with Government, Strategic Infrastructure Providers, neighbouring STBs and Transport for Wales
- Representing its members in discussions with Train Operators for service improvements
- Agreeing Strategic Road Network priorities
- Agreeing Major Road Network priorities
- Agreeing Rail Infrastructure priorities
- Identifying and promoting Strategic Cycle Route priorities
- Leading on significant matters that require strategic solutions such as
  - Transport decarbonisation
  - Electric vehicle infrastructure
  - Digital connectivity

The Western Gateway STB does not have a scheme delivery role. To achieve the strategy outcomes, it is important to understand from the outset which stakeholders will be important to fully engage with implementing the plan to ensure it is deliverable. Figure 4 clarifies the area of responsibilities for transport delivery by mode.

It should be noted that Local authorities can also have a role in promoting and supporting strategic highway and rail schemes particularly in relation to developing business cases for improvements or subsidising services until they become commercially viable. In the long-term, subject to funding, this is a role the Western Gateway STB would like to further engage with and support.
Figure 4 – The role of stakeholders in the delivery of transport improvements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travel mode</th>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highway - Strategic Road Network</td>
<td>• Highways England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highway - Major Road Network</td>
<td>• Transport Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Highway Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highway - Local Road Network</td>
<td>• Transport Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Highway Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rail Infrastructure including stations</td>
<td>• Network Rail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Train Operating Companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Transport Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail Services</td>
<td>• Train Operating Companies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Transport Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bus Infrastructure</td>
<td>• Bus operators</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Highway Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Transport Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus / Coach Services</td>
<td>• Bus / Coach operators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Transport Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking and Cycling Infrastructure</td>
<td>• Transport Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Highway Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Network</td>
<td>• Private sector – digital providers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.0
Our Short-term Strategic Transport Plan (2020-25)

The purpose of the Strategic Transport Plan is to provide clarity on Sub-national transport priorities for investment discussions with the DfT, neighbouring STBs, transport infrastructure providers (Highways England / Network Rail) and transport operators (Train, Bus and Coach operating companies) enabling more effective and meaningful engagement.

The impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic for individuals, society, the economy and the environment will be significant. The legacy of the pandemic may alter how people choose to travel in terms of their mode of transport, when they travel in terms of avoiding peak periods of travel demand and the frequency of weekday trips with a likely increase in homeworking and video conferencing. These individual decisions will have a profound impact on the operation of strategic transport network during this plan period and into the long-term. The reallocation of existing highway capacity for walking and cycling may also fundamentally impact how urban environments function and increase demand for more strategic cycle schemes providing inter-urban connectivity.

At the time of writing this plan the implications of the pandemic are not understood, so it remains important to be flexible and adapt. With this in mind the short-term plan will only cover the next five years and will require on-going monitoring. This is to match the Government’s existing Strategic and Major highway funding rounds. As such the schemes identified as short-term priorities reflect existing funding commitments.

Despite the short timeframe the plan identifies long-term strategy aims and provides stakeholders with information on how the STB will function on behalf of its members. Work on the long-term Strategic Transport Plan has already begun.

The production of the updated evidence base required to inform the long-term plan will be overseen by four new strategic partnership groups each formed to consider one of the four strategic travel corridors identified in the Western Gateway area. As the corridors span wider than the Western Gateway area it is intended that neighbouring STBs and strategic transport providers be invited to join so the corridor can be considered as a whole. The four corridors identified include:

- South East to South Wales
- South East to South West
- Midlands to the South West
- Midlands to the South Coast

The Long Term Strategic Transport Plan will have an extended timeframe to 2050 and will provide long-term certainty for the stakeholders the plan represents. The aim is for this plan to be adopted in March 2023 and it will be used to inform future Government investment decisions post 2025. The plan is intended to complement local transport strategies to enable the delivery of shared objectives.

The Western Gateway STB is a non-statutory partnership. As a result, the Strategic Transport Plan, once approved by its members, will carry no material weight in terms of formal decision making. It will however provide the DfT with greater assurance regarding future decision making as part of a wider devolution agenda and help the member authorities align their priorities in a more efficient way to maximise economies of scale and also support Sub-national supply chains.
The aim of the plan:

To enable sustainable economic growth by identifying a long-term investment programme designed to deliver a well-connected, reliable and resilient strategic transport system; that supports the nation to recover from the impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic, influences the carbon reduction agenda, closes productivity gaps and makes the Western Gateway area more competitive, while respecting its world class natural and built environments.

The STB will do this by:

- Providing clarity, accountability and a focus on strategic travel issues by supporting national policy directives with its members;

- Speaking with the authority of its members in discussions with Government, Transport Infrastructure Providers, and Transport Operators regarding the prioritisation of transportation funding programmes;

- Providing certainty to stakeholders by producing a long-term programme of strategic investment priorities intended to improve resilience across the strategic transport network;

- Taking responsibility with Transport and Highway authorities, alongside transport operators for the decarbonisation of the strategic transport network by leading the debate at a national level and sharing best practice;

- Supporting digital innovations and best practices through collaborative working and piloting rural and urban connectivity schemes;

- Working in partnership with the region’s Local Enterprise Partnerships and Economic Powerhouse to facilitate and support growth; and

- Working in partnership with stakeholders outside the Western Gateway area to ensure cross boundary issues are considered and shared priorities for strategic transport improvements are identified.
4.0
The benefits of improved connectivity

Many of the conurbations and strategic travel corridors that traverse the Western Gateway area are subject to a variety of constraints, such as regular delays and congestion (particularly at peak times) and constraints imposed by a lack of capacity on highway or rail networks. This can negatively impact business productivity and the willingness of individuals to travel when accessing employment or the continual reliance on the car.

Connectivity improvements reduce or remove these constraints. The quantifiable impacts of these benefits include: Greater productivity from the existing workforce due to much improved journey times on the corridors, and additional Gross Value Added (GVA) from those employed at new employment sites across the Western Gateway area.

In addition non-quantifiable benefits include: enhanced connectivity to the international gateways, e.g. the major ports as well as the airports in the area; reducing levels of relative deprivation in certain parts of the STB area, e.g. by opening up access to more employment and other activities it will benefit communities currently experiencing poor links to these opportunities; and generating tourism benefits as improved connectivity will help enhance the Western Gateway’s important visitor economy.

Connectivity improvements will also generate a series of positive impacts that align with the UK Government’s ambition to rebalance the economy including:

- Supporting the national recovery from Coronavirus pandemic: providing strategic leadership to its local authority members in terms of long-term strategy development in response to the UK Government’s post pandemic recovery plan and providing additional capacity for local authority officers to focus on front-line transport operations;
- Boosting productivity levels: as the UK is experiencing a widespread ‘productivity gap’ in relation to other countries and enhancements across the Western Gateway can help to redress this;
- Boosting employment in developing, high-tech sectors: the Government’s Industrial Strategy White Paper sets out several sectors that need to be developed and several of these are in the Western Gateway (e.g. in the Bristol conurbation); and
- Boosting housing delivery: the UK faces a national shortage of housing units, especially in the affordable sector. By helping to unlock housing sites across the STB area, improvements to the strategic corridors will enable the region to meet its housing targets as well as providing those who work across the STB to find good, affordable homes, and also remain in the region.

An economic connectivity study undertaken to inform this plan has identified the benefits of improved connectivity within the Western Gateway area including:

- Agglomeration-based productivity improvements: £5.5 billion p.a. across strategic corridors (with labour supply benefits as well);
- GVA impacts from employment at the new sites: £12.3 billion; and
- Total land value gains from unlocked housing: £1.3 billion.
To achieve the benefits of improved connectivity the following Strategic Transport Plan outcomes have been identified:

### Improved connectivity and reliability of strategic transport corridors to economic centres and international gateways

- Manage delivery of planned growth to increase productivity of labour markets and supply chains and improve access to national and international markets.
- Enhance digital connectivity opportunities as smart technology advances and creates new economic opportunities ensuring enhanced productivity.
- Support competitiveness of peripheral economies by supporting better freight connections enabling increased productivity for Gateway Area businesses trading with the rest of the UK.

### Adoption of net zero carbon solutions to strategic connectivity

- Lead the decarbonisation (including off setting) of strategic transport user emissions.
- Lock in the benefits of reduced travel resulting from impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic by working with partners to facilitating behaviour change.
- Support the adoption of fossil-fuel-free transport.
- Improve the public transport connectivity offer to achieve mode shift away from the private car.
- Support walking and cycling for the first and last mile of trips when accessing strategic public transport facilities.
- Support long-distance walking and cycling connections including the National Cycle Network/English Coastal Path.
- Maximise the use of strategic corridors for wider societal co-benefits including: Verge management, Biodiversity net gain, Tree planting to increase canopy cover and pollinator and habitat corridors.
- Agree shared approaches to good highways management to ensure highways longevity, improved drainage and management of surface water.
- Identify where renewable energy opportunities could exist along Strategic Travel Corridors.
Overriding Strategy Themes

- Improved Connectivity
  - Metro
  - Strategic
  - International

- Decarbonisation
  - Education
  - Training
  - Services
  - Food
  - Tourism
  - Opportunity

- People
- Places
- Environment

- Houses
- Jobs
- Industry
- Commerce
- Trade
- Manufacturing
- Education
- Training
- Services
- Food
- Tourism
- Opportunity
5.0 Transport Challenges

Improving metro connectivity

The ability to provide a robust multi-modal urban transport offer for people living within and travelling to the Western Gateway’s three strategic urban areas or hubs is a key challenge. Within this plan we have defined these hubs as having a combined population of over 250,000 and forming one functional economic area. The three hubs identified include:

- Cheltenham and Gloucester
- The West of England including: Bristol, Bath and Weston-super-Mare.
- Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

As the population of the Western Gateway area grows there will be an increased need to travel when accessing employment. Servicing connectivity is important for business to business, employees to employers and also leisure trips. Car ownership and dependency is generally high, in the main urban centres. The area’s LEPs all fed back that congestion is a major concern for businesses and is affecting competitiveness, both operationally and reputationally. This reflects factors such as the diversity of travel patterns, employment locations on urban fringes, and poor rail connectivity.

Traffic congestion at pinch points is a major barrier to increased productivity. We have hosted a series of engagement events to seek stakeholder feedback. Many businesses reported significant time lost in congestion and the additional risks associated with damaging the reputation of the area. There is widespread agreement by stakeholders for the need to manage existing road space more effectively, with a balance required between better management of existing road space, supporting future growth and providing better facilities for walking/cycling/passenger transport.

The latter would remove unnecessary local trips from the strategic routes enabling a more efficient and reliable transport network.

There was recognition by stakeholders of the importance of transport hubs and the role of interchanges in urban areas, especially with improving the first and last mile walking and cycling links. Concerns were raised by stakeholders regarding land-use planning and the need to ensure development takes place in locations that can provide a range of transport options to reduce reliance on the car. There was also broad consensus that despite the critical need to reduce carbon emissions there is still a responsibility to plan for growth and in some cases additional road capacity will be required.

Enabling access to jobs especially for the young, lower paid and apprentices (flow of labour and skills) was a key issue for the Chamber of Commerce. The need for greater modal choice to enable individuals to travel is inescapably linked to the wider performance of the economy.
Improving Strategic Connectivity and Network Resilience

The Western Gateway area is a crossroads for national connectivity. Strategic transport interventions play a fundamental role in driving economic growth. They facilitate the development of housing and employment space, improve connectivity between business and skilled people and improve connectivity between businesses. Resilience in this context is broadly described in terms of journey time reliability and the ability to manage existing demand and future growth. A lack of resilience within a transport network results in its failure with poor journey times and commensurate harmful impacts on productivity, economic growth and local business activity.

This issue was raised by key stakeholders in relation to the freight services accessing international ports. In addition, the conflict between rail passenger and rail freight service capacity was recognised and cited as a reason for the ongoing reliance on the car.

A number of highway resilience issues were identified including:

- The impact on the local highway network following any accidents on the M4/M5;
- The safety issue of mainline queuing on the motorway at several junctions on the M4/M5 during peak travel times;
- Constrained urban networks within the historic centres of Bath, Cheltenham and Salisbury;
- Limited capacity and delays on important strategic routes including A350, A36, A37 and A46; and
- Poor connectivity and delays are reportedly pushing tourists to different destinations.

A number of rail issues were identified including:

Priorities for improving Metro-Connectivity

Providing reliable alternatives to car use within and between the travel to work areas of urban centres would mitigate the impacts of growth and help improve the quality of place for our communities. In addition we will look to facilitate both new passenger transport routes and an increase in service frequencies and urban and inter urban cycle routes to to ensure that new communities have access to a full range of travel choices. This will be delivered:

- Through metrobus network within the West of England area
- By extending MetroWest rail services from the West of England area to Gloucester & Westbury
- By Prioritising sustainable transport within Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area, together with improving connections to the wider region
- Identifying and promoting Strategic (inter-urban) Cycle Route priorities

The expected outcomes of delivering these priorities include:

- Multi-modal travel that unlocks the wider economic benefits associated with improved access and increased economic activity
- Minimised increase in car-based travel demand derived from the scale of planned growth
- A move to a low carbon transport network resulting in less journey delay and improved air quality.
- The frequency of services, quality of rolling stock, signalling, and the need to increase capacity;

- Balancing increased local access to the rail network with faster long-distance services;

- Long rail journey times between many of the urban centres relative to their actual geographical distance apart; and

- Poor digital 4G and Wi-Fi connectivity on many rail routes reducing productivity during time in transit.

### Priorities for Improving Strategic Connectivity and Network Resilience

Improved connectivity will improve productivity by maintaining and enhancing external transport linkages. For the Western Gateway STB four strategic corridors have been identified and each will have its own plan to outline strategic transport priorities:

- South East to South Wales
- South East to South West
- Midlands to the South West
- Midlands to the South Coast

**The expected outcomes of these improvements include:**

- A transport network resilient to extreme events;
- Improved journey time reliability; and
- The smart operation and management of the transport network through increased use of technology and live travel information.
Improving access to International Gateways

Bristol Airport is the largest airport in the South West and one of the top 10 largest UK airports. It primarily serves a mixture of UK and European destinations on both a scheduled and chartered basis. The airport has planning consent to handle up to 10m passengers a year. Future growth is supported by the designation of a strategic employment zone.

Connectivity is a major issue for the airport. It has no direct access onto the motorway network. There is also no direct rail access. This lack of access impacts negatively on the reputation of the airport and increases passenger leakage to alternative airports outside the Gateway area such as Birmingham Airport, Cardiff Airport and the South East airports. Furthermore, poor connectivity is making it difficult to attract and retain staff.

Bournemouth Airport, the Port of Poole and Portland Port also suffer with similar connectivity issues. There are no motorway connections to the south coast ports located within the Gateway area and the existing strategic road network connection experiences resilience issues. Significant growth is planned for all three international gateways with the Port of Poole recently opening its new £10m South Quay cruise berth and significantly increasing its capacity for conventional cargoes and cruise ships. Portland Port’s annual freight volumes have increased to almost 500,000 tonnes of cargo and increasing numbers of cruise ships are visiting the port each year. The Bournemouth International Growth programme (BIG) aims to transform accessibility to the airport and nearby Wessex Fields sites and releasing 70 hectares of employment land with the potential for creating up to 10,000 new jobs over the next decade.

Priorities for Improving access to international gateways

In alignment with the government’s Industrial Strategy, it is imperative that international gateways are well connected to the market and that access is not a barrier to growth and enhanced productivity. Despite a climate emergency being declared by many local authorities, this is not anticipated to halt the demand for air travel, although the impacts of the Coronavirus Pandemic will significantly reduce demand in the short-term. It is also considered a priority to maximise sustainable access to ports and efficiency of freight logistical activity.

The expected outcomes of these improvements include:

- Improved public transport access arrangements to Bristol Airport to enable it to fulfil its potential and become a leading national airport;
- Improved strategic road network and public transport connectivity to the south coast ports; and
- Improved business connectivity with international markets.
Improving digital technology and innovation

For the Western Gateway area to benefit from new technologies it will be essential to adopt a collective approach to the development and delivery of transformational technology. Technology has a major role to play in helping to address existing congestion/transport issues. The Gateway area wants to be at the forefront of global digital technology and innovation to ensure transport networks are digitally enabled and ready to meet the needs of private travel, as well as the transition from petrol and diesel powered vehicles.

Priorities for Improving digital technology and innovation

This would include a range of technological improvements where the collective development would benefit from economies of scale including shared research development of:

- A strategic approach to the installation of a network of electric vehicle charging points;

- The delivery of smart city technology including use of mobility data and smart ticketing;

- The use of smart technologies to manage urban transport environments and assets; and

- The potential of other emerging technologies, such as the integration of autonomous and semiautonomous vehicles onto the network.

By understanding and addressing these challenges as part of the Long-Term Strategic Transport Plan the expected outcomes would include:


- Investment in transport innovation with research and business sectors;

- Reduction in the risk of piecemeal delivery across the Gateway areas; and

- Improvement of highways assets, network management, safety and user experience.
6.0 Strategic Transport Plan Objectives

Economic

A function of transport is to support economic growth by enabling key employment sectors to thrive. The role for transport in this context is two-fold: ensure the transport network enables employees to get to work; and that goods can be transported to facilitate supply chains using good quality reliable strategic networks.

The Western Gateway area supports over 1.6 million jobs and covers some of the country’s most prosperous fast-growing conurbations. Bristol and South Gloucestershire provide the largest number of jobs in the area equating to approximately 28% of all jobs. Office of National Statistics (ONS) data also shows that not only do certain areas in the Western Gateway lag behind other areas with respect to productivity but also that the ‘productivity gap’ has been widening over time.

The Western Gateway STB’s role is to improve strategic connectivity to close the productivity gap.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Objectives</th>
<th>Long-term Economic Outcomes</th>
<th>Long-term Economic delivery priorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure the effective operation of labour markets</td>
<td>Managed delivery of planned growth to increase productivity of labour markets and supply chains</td>
<td>Increase the productivity of those in employment throughout the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enable greater integration between employment clusters</td>
<td>Low journey times and high journey time reliability on strategic road and rail linkages to key centres and international gateways</td>
<td>Quicker, more frequent rail services between Western Gateway hubs and strategically important centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance business connectivity to international markets</td>
<td>High quality strategic road and rail connections to key centres and international gateways</td>
<td>Improved inter regional connectivity for communities located outside the Western Gateway hubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support growth of international gateways</td>
<td>Highly resilient strategic transport network</td>
<td>Improved connectivity along the region’s strategic travel corridors linking neighbouring areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve North-South connectivity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved network resilience to maintain strategic connectivity during storms and flooding events to minimise strategic travel disruption</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved multi-modal connectivity airports particularly Bristol and Bournemouth</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved access to ports particularly at Poole, Portland and Bristol</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social

The rate of population growth forecast to 2041 is higher within the Western Gateway area when compared to England as a whole. Population growth is a significant external driver of traffic growth and the rate of expected travel growth within the south west is between 0.3% and 1.2% annually. Growth is not evenly distributed and will negatively impact a number of strategic travel corridors. Bristol is the most accessible urban centre in the Gateway area and is forecast to have the highest levels of population growth. The impact of planned growth must be managed to reduce its impact and manage the transport network more effectively.

The Western Gateway STB’s role is to improve strategic connectivity to reduce dependency upon the car and to create a more sustainable and low carbon transport network. This includes widespread improvements in passenger transport networks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Objectives</th>
<th>Long-term Social Outcomes</th>
<th>Long-term Social delivery priorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Support the delivery of new homes and employment opportunities</td>
<td>• Encourage modal shift away from the private car</td>
<td>• Deliver strategic housing and employment sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support multi-modal travel options for urban travel to work areas</td>
<td>• Ensure transport is not a barrier to delivering strategically important housing sites</td>
<td>• Retain and increase the number of working age people in the Western Gateway area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Embrace the role of technology in supporting strategic travel</td>
<td>• Support positive place-shaping by removing reliance on the car for strategic travel</td>
<td>• Increase strategic travel options to create a more sustainable low carbon transport network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support the rebalancing of the national economy by maximising the economic opportunities of living and working within the Western Gateway area</td>
<td>• Become the UK’s most digitally connected region to facilitate future mobility options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use technology to effectively manage the highway network and promote ‘end-to-end’ journeys by sustainable modes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Environmental

Transport contributes to a significant proportion of the UK’s carbon emissions. Reducing carbon emissions associated with infrastructure and transport pollution is fundamental to reducing the impacts of transport on climate change and air quality.

Outdoor air quality across the Western Gateway area is generally good however there are a number of Clean Air Zones (CAZ) and Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) declared at a number of locations due to exceedances in the allowed annual mean NO2 level (at 40µg/m3).

Climate change is likely to exacerbate the number of flooding incidences (surface water flooding, sea level rises, tidal flooding) that will impact strategic transport connectivity due to the vulnerability of much of the transport networks to the impacts of storms and flooding events.

The impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on travel demand are not at this stage understood, but the decision taken to support the reallocation of highway space to support walking and cycling within urban centres does present a once in a generation opportunity to deliver a lasting transformative change. Should an increased number of short distance trips switch from the car to active modes of transport this will create greater efficiencies for strategic travel through the removal of vehicular traffic from congested routes and significantly improve the quality of environment for local communities.

The Western Gateway STB’s role is to lead the transport decarbonisation agenda (including off setting) of strategic transport user emissions on behalf of its members and will actively engage with the Department for Transport in the production of the national Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental Objectives</th>
<th>Long-term Environmental Outcomes</th>
<th>Long-term Environmental delivery priorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The Decarbonisation of the strategic transport network</td>
<td>• Encourage modal shift away from the private car</td>
<td>• The removal of carbon from strategic travel user emissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support the adoption of fossil-fuel-free transport</td>
<td>• Adoption of net zero carbon solutions to strategic connectivity</td>
<td>• Improved air quality in urban centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Improve air quality</td>
<td>• A coherent network of electric vehicle infrastructure</td>
<td>• The widespread use of electric vehicles in non-urban areas</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support walking and cycling for the first and last mile of trips when accessing strategic public transport facilities</td>
<td>• Maximise the use of strategic corridors for wider societal co-benefits including: Verge management, Biodiversity net gain, Tree planting to increase canopy cover and pollinator and habitat corridors</td>
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<td>• Support long-distance walking and cycling connections including the National Cycle Network/ English Coastal Path</td>
<td>• Identify where renewable energy opportunities could exist along Strategic Travel Corridors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Agree shared approaches to good highways management to ensure highways longevity, low carbon construction materials, improved drainage and management of surface water</td>
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</table>
As part of the evidence base collated to inform this strategy, a separate Western Gateway Rail STB Strategy has been produced and is available at westerngatewaystb.org.uk. The information outlined within this draft strategy reflects the outputs from the first phase of the strategy. Outputs from the second phase (including scheme priorities) will be available as this strategy nears completion and will be included within the appropriate area strategies.

Every location within the Western Gateway will require a combination of activity types, and for rail to expand its role and be the mode of choice in more situations it is important to ensure that it facilitates most or all activities. Five rail themes (objectives) have been identified with supporting priorities. Delivering these will ensure rail use is increased and our vision for rail is achieved.

The Western Gateway STB vision for rail:

To be a region that is sustainably connected and provides high quality, value for money travel opportunities for all its businesses, residents and visitors.

**Theme 1: Choice - To make rail a realistic and viable option for journeys to, from and within Western Gateway**

This theme seeks to make rail the mode of choice across Western Gateway. Although in some parts of the region such as in the Greater Bristol area, rail is competitive with car. However, for the vast majority of people, the following aspects drive the predominance of car as a modal choice: infrequency of services, on-train journey times, the need to interchange for many journeys, the need to access stations by car. Coupled with the conception that rail has of being unreliable and expensive, there is a real need to improve both the reality and the perception of rail travel.

The priorities identified in this Strategy focus on three of the underpinning aspects: frequency, interchange and reliability, to drive the identified need for change. A further aspect that cuts across each of the priorities, and features under other themes as well is the concept of the 7-Day railway – not just in terms of evening and weekend services, but the availability of rail as a mode even during disruptive engineering works.

**Theme 2: Decarbonisation - To enable rail to contribute more actively towards the decarbonisation of the Western Gateway**

This theme acknowledges that rail can and will be a key contributor to the Climate Change Emergency and decarbonisation national agenda. Building on the theme of ‘Choice’, which alone has the potential to contribute to decarbonisation, this objective and the subsequent priorities focus on more specific aspects of rail transport that are high on the national government’s agenda.

The contribution that burning diesel fuel makes to climate change is now recognised, and as such the first two priorities focus on how to reduce the carbon footprint of rail – either by better utilising each litre of diesel burnt (where diesel is the only choice of fuel available), or by proactively pursuing other fuel choices, where electrification, hydrogen and battery-powered are all becoming viable options.

It is also important to acknowledge the huge carbon footprint of freight when transported by road and the contribution that rail could make to reduce that carbon footprint. It is also
important to establish the use of rail as an end to end passenger journey option. The challenge of rail freight is as much with the first mile / last mile part of the journey and considering local distribution to and from rail freight terminals, also by rail, will be pivotal to unlocking this priority. With several deep-sea ports located in and near Western Gateway, this was identified as a long-term priority.

**Theme 3: Social Mobility - To provide equal journey opportunities by rail for all residents of Western Gateway**

Similar to the decarbonisation theme, this builds on and contributes to the theme of ‘Choice’ but focusses specifically on addressing the needs of the more remote, less connected and/or deprived parts of the Western Gateway area. All three priorities are focussed around unlocking access to rail in its widest sense – physical, social and financial, and making rail an integral part of connecting those remote and often deprived communities. Successful delivery of this objective will lead to a rebalancing of the regional economy, providing equal opportunities to all Western Gateway residents. A particular emphasis was placed upon the lack of north – south connectivity across the region, partly a consequence of the current railway geography and Network Rail route structure.

**Theme 4: Productivity - To enable rail to contribute more actively to improvements in productivity across Western Gateway**

This theme focuses on the affordability of rail, and once again links back to the theme of ‘Choice’. Until the cost of rail travel is perceived as being competitive with car, and affordable to all parts of society, some individuals will feel disadvantaged and choose not to use rail. Statistics strongly suggest that Western Gateway, like many regions outside London and the South East, are less productive, and this is driven by poor transport connectivity.

**Theme 5: Growth – To enable rail to provide sustainable travel options for housing and job growth across Western Gateway**

This theme picks up the importance of the link between housing and industrial growth. It is directly linked to all the other themes due to its alignment with Planning Policy. The first priority is targeted specifically at the alignment of transport and planning policies, aiming to promote planning authorities to consider at all stages how Local Plan allocations can be sustainably connected to the wider transport network. The second priority takes this concept to the next stage, focussing specifically on developing Transit Oriented Communities, i.e. placing sustainable transport interchange at the very heart of an existing or new community. The third priority under this theme is about making infrastructure resilient to climate change. If when considering where people will live and work (and travel between the two) in the future, then the locations and routes between them must be resilient to climate change emergencies, such as river and coastal flooding, extreme heat and cold and sea level rise. Thus, a resilient rail network is at the core of sustainable growth.
## Western Gateway STB Rail Strategy priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Priority 1</th>
<th>Priority 2</th>
<th>Priority 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Choice</strong></td>
<td>To make rail a realistic and viable option for journeys to, from and within Western Gateway</td>
<td>Improve frequency of services to provide more flexibility in travel options</td>
<td>Make rail to rail interchange (where direct services not possible) as seamless as possible</td>
<td>Improve operational reliability of the network to give confidence in rail as a mode of choice</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Decarbonisation</strong></td>
<td>To enable rail to contribute more actively towards the decarbonisation of the Western Gateway</td>
<td>Identify ways to reduce the carbon emissions per passenger of rail journeys on diesel rolling stock</td>
<td>Identify alternatives to diesel rolling stock including priorities for electrification</td>
<td>Identify ways in which more freight can be transported by rail rather than road, in particular to deep-sea ports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Mobility</strong></td>
<td>To provide equal journey opportunities by rail for all residents of Western Gateway</td>
<td>Improve multi-modal interchange to rail through improving access to stations by car, bus and active modes</td>
<td>Create new direct journey opportunities by rail between places that are not currently rail-connected, particularly north – south and rural areas</td>
<td>Make rail travel more affordable through fares management and incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Productivity</strong></td>
<td>To enable rail to contribute more actively to improvements in productivity across Western Gateway</td>
<td>Improve rail journey times/speeds and Generalised Journey Time (GJT) to make rail competitive with the equivalent road journey</td>
<td>Provide improved rail connectivity (passenger and freight) to international gateways – airports and ports</td>
<td>Improve strategic connectivity with cross-border economic hubs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Growth</strong></td>
<td>To enable rail to provide sustainable travel options for housing and job growth across Western Gateway</td>
<td>Align rail investment, including new stations/lines with future growth areas</td>
<td>Identify opportunities to develop and invest in Transit-Oriented Communities</td>
<td>Promote and maximise resilient design principles to protect the region against the implications of climate change</td>
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8.0
Western Gateway’s Northern Transport Hub

The Western Gateway’s Northern Hub consists of the emerging Cheltenham and Gloucester City region. It is a prosperous and resilient economy set within a highly attractive natural environment with a population of approximately 250,000. Figure 5 illustrates the area included within the Northern Hub.

This is the core growth area in Gloucestershire with several strategic development locations progressing as urban extensions closing the physical distance between the two urban centres. The volume of traffic on routes between Cheltenham and Gloucester will continue to increase as new housing and employment sites are delivered. Mainline queueing on the M5 at junctions 9, 10, 11 and 12 continues to occur on a regular basis.

Figure 5 – Western Gateway’s Northern Transport Hub

[Map to be inserted]
Gloucestershire’s Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is in the top three LEP’s for employment within knowledge intensive manufacturing and services. It has the highest percentage in all LEP regions of employees in high and medium technology manufacturing and an abundance of SME’s in cyber security and creative industries, including digital, all of which have high growth potential; and for some businesses there is capacity for significant expansion in export. It is the LEP’s ambition to make Gloucestershire a UK cyber capital with Cheltenham being the ‘cradle of cyber innovation’. Delivering this ambition would have great economic benefits for the Northern Hub and Western Gateway region.

The primary aim of the LEP’s Industrial Strategy is to support the M5 Growth Zone by ensuring the availability of quality employment land is in close proximity to the M5 motorway. The focus is to retain and expand its productive high value manufacturing sector, whilst also supporting accelerated growth in knowledge-intensive services which are growing, but still under-represented relative to the rest of the UK. The geographic focus is for the delivery of employment land around Junctions 9 and 10 both located within the Northern Hub. This is supported by a number of transport related proposals linked to improved junction capacity and access.

The Hub benefits from being located on the Midlands to South West strategic travel corridor, in addition to strong links to Oxford and South Wales. It also has great potential to access the Trans Midlands Trade Corridor and the economic spine of the country. This would be good for both inward and outward investment for the Northern Hub and region as a whole.

The car dominates both local and strategic travel within this hub, but there is a need to develop reliable passenger transport alternatives and improve cycle networks to remove local trips from the strategic network.

Outputs from the Gloucestershire Rail Investment Strategy highlights that enhanced regional service between Bristol and Birmingham would deliver substantial economic benefits and improve connectivity south of Gloucester and transform connectivity north of Cheltenham to Worcester. This priority differs from the type of service improvement proposed by Midlands Connect by favouring fast inter-city connections between Bristol and Birmingham instead of improving regional connectivity.

The M5 corridor and wider Strategic Road Network (A40, A46 & A417) are a key focus for the Northern Hub due to the need to provide connectivity within the hub and to other hubs within the Western Gateway. However, all SRN routes can be subject to severe delays and seasonal peaks of traffic and this has an impact on the local network affecting business productivity, efficient delivery of goods and services and longer term growth potential.
Transport priorities identified to support strategic connectivity

Short-term – 2020-2025

- Upgrade of M5 J10 to remove southbound strategic travel from Cheltenham
- Upgrade of M5 J9 and alignment of the existing A46 to deliver a major Garden Town at Ashchurch
- M5 J11/A40 Cyber Park access at Cheltenham to facilitate additional development and tackle congestion in Cheltenham and the M5
- A430 Llanthony Rd and St Ann Way improvement to increase highway capacity improvements to Gloucester bypass to improve journey reliability and capacity in the south west of Gloucester.
- A417 Missing Link to complete dualling of the A417/A419 linking M4 to M5 and improving network resilience and alternative to M4/M5 Almondsbury interchange
- Comprehensive upgrade of strategic cycling routes for shorter distance travel including the Gloucester to Cheltenham link and Cheltenham and Bishops Cleeve route
- MetroWest Phase 2 - re-open the Henbury to Bristol rail line to passenger services and improve services between Bristol, Yate, Gloucester & Westbury

Medium to long-term – post 2025

- Upgrade of M5 J12 to increase capacity and support growth proposals
- Dualling of A40 between Over and Longford roundabouts to increase capacity of outer ring road
- Mass Transit solution to support modal shift within urban area
- Improved regional rail service increasing viability of rail as the preferred travel choice for longer distance travel
- Rail signal upgrades at Worcester Shrub Hill and Gloucester to facilitate additional connectivity from the Midlands to Gloucester and South-West, and at Bristol East to improve connectivity for local services.
- Other rail improvements which include a passing loop at Ashchurch for Tewkesbury to support the garden town and prevent a significant number of road trips being added to the network as a result.
- Strategic multi-mode interchanges at Motorway junctions to encourage sustainable ‘last mile’ journeys and reduce congestion in the urban areas

These schemes will support the following objectives:

- Ensure the effective operation of labour markets
- Support the delivery of new homes and employment opportunities
- Support multi-modal travel options for urban travel movements
- The Decarbonisation of the strategic transport network
- Support the adoption of fossil-fuel-free transport
9.0 Western Gateway’s Central Transport Hub

The Western Gateway’s Central Hub is a prosperous city region with a population of 1.1 million and an economy worth over £35bn a year. The hub is diverse, with the vibrant and densely populated centres of Bristol, Bath and Weston-super-Mare, complemented by surrounding rural areas and towns. Figure 6 illustrates the area included within the Central Hub. Growth within the hub has exceeded the national average over the past 15 years, while population grew by nine per cent between 2001 and 2011. Productivity is the highest of all city regions in England outside London.

Figure 6 – Western Gateway’s Central Transport Hub

[Map to be inserted]
The Central Hub sits on the crossroads on the Midlands to South West and South East to South Wales strategic corridors. In addition, Bristol Port and Airport are among the Central Hub’s largest economic assets and improving accessibility to both the docks and the airport are a priority. The Portbury, Avonmouth and Severnside Enterprise area is one of several important areas of employment land. The recent completion of the new Avonmouth junction on the M49 will assist with the access needs resulting from the removal of the Severn Bridge tolls, however, public transport access to the port is still limited.

The Central Hub represents the West of England region which is known across the UK and further afield for its creativity and quality of life and it is frequently recognised as one of the best places to live in Britain. The region attracts students from across the globe to attend some of the UK’s top-performing universities. It has a highly skilled and talented workforce, which is attracted by the top-class job opportunities, supporting the clusters of world-leading sectors within or adjacent to the region including aerospace, financial, nuclear and innovation.

There are seven key growth areas in the West of England and transport capacity improvements would effectively unlock almost 19,000 jobs (net) across these sites, including the Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone, South Bristol, Bath and Weston-super-Mare. There is a focus on the Filton Enterprise Zone and The Avonmouth Severnside Enterprise Area to encourage manufacturing clustering and provide room for growth. Manufacturing output in the area is roughly 20% higher than it is nationally.

The Local Industrial Strategy highlights that one of the main challenges facing the central hub is that of productivity and the adoption of new technology for supporting businesses. Despite Bristol and Bath being home to clusters of world-class businesses, there is a significant ‘long tail’ of low-productivity businesses, the Western Gateway STB has a role in ensuring that the businesses have access to appropriate pools of skilled workers by supporting strategic connectivity.
Despite increased bus passenger numbers, increased levels of walking and cycling, improved road safety and reduced CO2 emissions. The central hub continues to face serious transport challenges, which will become more acute with the anticipated scale of growth in the area. Transport priorities for the central hub include a strong focus on active travel, public transport and decarbonisation in response to the climate challenge.

Sustainable, active, and mass transit projects are to be prioritised including a regional electric charging network, various walking and cycling packages in the greater Bristol, Bath and Weston-super-Mare area. These upgrades are vital to tackle the problems of congestion, poor air quality and severance in some communities, as well as addressing the capacity issues on both the M4 and M5 corridors. Improving connectivity to the enterprise zones around the Central Hub will bring agglomeration benefits as well as increasing the size of the recruitment pool and improving productivity.

In the long term the vision is for a mass transit system that encompasses the whole of the Central Hub that links into the strategic transport network. This includes vital links to the Airport, making the surface access strategy more sustainable and open to people across the South West. There are some road network upgrades planned, such as extending the smart motorway infrastructure on the M4 (subject to imminent necessary safety upgrades being implemented, after the February 2020 DfT and Highways England review) linking the A4174 ring road to a new M4 J18A junction to give direct access from the M4 to the east of Bristol linking with the airport. There will continually be a need for the rail strategy for the area to link in with other transport upgrades in order to keep up with demand as well as supporting freight to rail ambitions from Bristol Port.
Transport priorities identified to support strategic connectivity

Short-term – 2020-2025

- M5 to J16 slip roads, and a non-motorised user crossing to complete the strategic cycle route from the northern side of Bristol
- Upgrade to A4174 ring road including improvements for MOD roundabout to accommodate future growth
- Bristol Airport corridor improvements to improve access to the international gateway
- A371/A368 Banwell bypass to improve air quality and public realm in the centre of Banwell and support the delivery of Weston Villages
- MetroWest Phase 1 - re-open the Portishead to Bristol rail line to passenger services and enhance services on the Severn Beach and Bath to Bristol lines, to provide additional local rail connectivity
- MetroWest Phase 2 - re-open the Henbury to Bristol rail line to passenger services and improve services between Bristol, Yate, Gloucester & Westbury
- Metrobus – Cribbs Causeway extension from Bristol Parkway railway station and The Mall, via the Cribbs Patchway New Neighbourhood
- Metrobus – Bristol city centre to Nailsea (Clevedon)
- Bristol South West Economic Link recommended a range of transport improvements to strengthen connectivity to Bristol, Bristol Airport, Weston-super-Mare and M5 J22.
- Park and Ride improvements at M32, A38(S)/A4174, A4018, A432, A38(N) and A4 Portway and A370 Long Ashton to promote greater Public Transport use.
- An area-wide electric charging network
- Walking and cycling packages in the greater Bristol and Bath areas, as well as within and between the larger surrounding towns and villages
- Weston-super-Mare Cycling and Walking Network improvements
- Bristol East and West rail junction upgrades will be remodelled to add additional rail capacity enabling the additional/new connectivity

Medium to long-term – post 2025

- M4 J18a improved links to east Bristol and easing demand at the M4/M5 Almondsbury interchange when accessing Bristol Airport
- M5 J14 improvements to accommodate future growth
- M5 J15 (Almondsbury Interchange) to manage demand for the Severn Crossing and help support existing economic performance in the West of England City region and nurture economic links between south Wales and the West of England;
- M5 J19 phase 2 will improve junction capacities and enhance access between the motorway network and the Royal Portbury Dock, Portishead, Portbury and Pill.
- M5 J21a – A new junction to facilitate growth
- Weston-super-Mare metrobus
- Weston-super-Mare Park & Ride
- Weston-super-Mare Local bus, walking and cycling improvements
- Weston-super-Mare Local highway and junction improvements
- Bristol Temple Meads station will be redeveloped as part of the Temple Quarter masterplan Electrification of the Great Western Mainline.
- Mass Transit solution to support modal shift
These schemes will support the following objectives:

- The Decarbonisation of the strategic transport network
- Support the adoption of fossil-fuel-free transport
- Support multi-modal travel options for urban travel movements
- Embrace the role of technology in supporting strategic travel
- Ensure the effective operation of labour markets
- Enable greater integration between employment clusters
- Enhance business connectivity to international markets
- Support growth of international gateways
- Support the delivery of new homes and employment opportunities
10.0
Western Gateway’s Southern Transport Hub

The Western Gateway’s Southern Hub is formed by the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) City Region which includes towns in Dorset outside of the BCP Council boundary. Figure 7 illustrates the area included within the Southern Hub. Based upon latest Office of National Statistics (ONS) Subnational Population Projections (SNPP) the BCP city region has the joint largest projected population growth (9.9% or 47,621) of any major non-mayoral English Primary Urban Area. The population is predicted to rise to 530,710 by 2036.

Figure 7 – Western Gateway’s Southern Transport Hub

[Map to be inserted]
The Southern Hub is located on the south coast and includes two of the Western Gateway’s international gateways namely the Port of Poole and Bournemouth airport. Safeguarding the development of these international gateways is vitally important for the region, but localised congestion is having a major detrimental impact on productivity. Safeguarding the development of these international gateways is important as they are a key asset of the hub, and heavily involved with the economic growth opportunities within the region. Aviation Business Park is developing links with the Port of Poole to develop a ‘port economic partnership’-style agreement, with the ability to channel business and goods through the port to the business park.

Advanced manufacturing and financial services are also strong sectors within BCP and the Dorset economy as a whole, with companies such as Barclays International, Deutsche Bank and JPMorgan locating their contact centres and headquarters in the area. The area’s proximity to London, access to a highly skilled workforce and quality of life for employees are key aspects which have encouraged such companies to settle in the area.

The Southern Hub has recently focused on reducing the region’s dependency on private cars in order to tackle localised congestion issues, achieve its aims of decarbonisation and the public health problems associated with vehicle emissions. Improvements in the public transport travel-to-work offering will help remove a significant number of short journeys from the network at peak times.

BCP and Dorset Council have been successful with a recent bid into the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) which will represent a step change in infrastructure for urban travel within the conurbation. The TCF including local contribution from partners represents £98m of investment in sustainable transport solutions programmed for delivery by 2023. It will facilitate the accelerated delivery of a coherent network of pedestrian and cycle route improvements on key corridors along with bus journey time reliability enhancements. The aim is to provide people with real choices on how to travel without a car and reduce carbon emissions and particulates which have negative impacts on air quality and public health. The key corridors focus on major employment growth sites which will further provide for sustainable economic growth in the region enabling non-car access to some of our largest employment sites. The proposals within the TCF bid were as follows:

- 3 new Connectivity Corridors
- 5 new Cycleways
- Improved network management including bus priority ad HGV management
- Bus infrastructure and interchange facilities
- Joint ticketing via integrated travel app
- Expanding shared bike scheme to Christchurch
- Comprehensive wayfinding improvements
- Improvements to workplace/education facilities
The TCF bid also focuses on daily connectivity issues within the Southern Hub. However, it does not include necessary improvements to strategic travel interchanges. The connectivity from stations, rail frequencies, strategic road connectivity and access to Bournemouth Airport and the Port of Poole still require significant improvements to enable a high-quality integrated transport system from cross-boundary journeys and to support the region’s economic competitiveness.

There is a need to improve transport connectivity to Bournemouth Airport and Aviation Business Park, a major employer and hub of manufacturing and industry in the area. The Bournemouth International Growth programme has funded significant investment in infrastructure improving access to the airport and Aviation Business Park; unlocking land for economic activity.

One of the main transport requirements for the area will be an effective north-south link to the M4. This will open up new business opportunities by making it easier to transport freight from the ports and improve road access to London and the rest of the Western Gateway area. The Western Gateway’s Midlands to South Coast corridor highlights this missing link and the need for investment in the A350 corridor, which is being investigated as part of the recently announced RIS 2 Highways England strategic study portfolio.
Transport priorities identified to support strategic connectivity

Short-term – 2020-2025

- Delivery of Transforming City Fund programme to reduce localise congestion
- A338 junction improvements to increase additional capacity and support future growth
- Upgrade Blackwater Junction (Bournemouth) to support Bournemouth International Growth Programme at Bournemouth Airport and Wessex Fields
- Lansdowne Business District - Combined package of urban realm, deployment of council operated 5G digital connectivity, public transport and sustainable transport investment to support growth opportunity.
- Heart of Poole regeneration scheme – a Future High Street bid
- Completion of Growth Deal funded ‘Townside Access’ improving strategic connections from the A31 trunk road to the Port of Poole

Medium to long-term – post 2025

- Improved road access to Portland Port, Port of Poole and Bournemouth Airport to ensure efficient access to international gateways
- A338 Wessex Fields Phase 2 to improve network efficiency and support future growth
- Ferndown, Wallisdown, Poole (FWP) corridor transport Improvement package, funded by Growth Deal including network efficiency, sustainable transport improvements and structural works
- A31 to Poole Link Road feasibility – improving access around the north of the city region and supporting planned growth
- M4 to Dorset Coast access improvements to significantly increase north-south connectivity informed by the outcome of Highways England’s RIS2 study
- Review and development of Park and Ride plan to reduce urban vehicle movements
- BCP light rail network to improve metro connectivity

These schemes will support the following objectives:

- Ensure the effective operation of labour markets
- Enable greater integration between employment clusters
- Enhance business connectivity to international markets
- Support growth of international gateways
- Improve North-South connectivity
- Support the delivery of new homes and employment opportunities
- Support multi-modal travel options for urban travel movements
- Embrace the role of technology in supporting strategic travel
- The Decarbonisation of the strategic transport network
- Support the adoption of fossil-fuel-free transport
11.0 The Western Innovation Corridor
Strategic Corridor H1 – South East to South Wales

The strategic transport focus is to improve connectivity, sustain the growing economic and research centres based along the corridor and strengthen links to international gateways.

The Western Innovation Corridor runs from London and the South East to South Wales. This route focuses on strategic movements along the M4, M32, M48 & A4 highways and the Great Western Mainline and Golden Valley rail line. The M4 is part of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) and is home to a range of economic hubs including the Western Gateway’s Central Hub (formed by the West of England region and the Swindon M4 growth zone, a cluster of businesses and economic activity that extends east of Swindon to the west of Chippenham. The removal of the Severn Bridge tolls has changed the economic dynamic of this corridor with increased economic activity now taking place between the West of England and South Wales. Ambitious plans are now in place via the Western Gateway Powerhouse to strengthen these economic links further. Figure 8 provides a high-level interpretation of the extent of the corridor.

Figure 8 The Western Innovation Corridor – H1 - South West to South Wales.

[Map to be inserted]
Role

This corridor is a key economic route for the UK providing connectivity between a number of economically dynamic cities and towns. It is front and centre in helping the Western Gateway STB deliver the ‘western innovation arc’ from Swansea to London by building on the world leading public and private sector research, science and technology assets present in the region. The strategic road and rail connectivity enable centres such as Swansea, Cardiff, Bristol, Bath, Swindon, Reading and London to be directly connected which attracts a range of industry leading businesses to the corridor including Airbus, Rolls Royce and Intel. The corridor also facilitates connectivity between the Western Gateway and other key locations for research, academia and innovation such as Oxford, Science Vale UK Enterprise Zone and Basingstoke. The strength of the corridor’s economy creates a significant commuter belt for both road and rail. Connectivity to London and Heathrow (for international connections) is a key driver for commuter and business travel in the corridor.

There are also high levels of commuting between the major centres within the corridor, such as Swindon, Chippenham, Bath, Bristol and South-East Wales. This attracts businesses to the area by providing high levels of agglomeration with deep and well-connected labour markets and business-to-business connectivity. The links from London and other highly productive urban centres to Bristol Port are also achieved via corridor H1, and this is a vital consideration in achieving the low journey times and high reliability as stated in the economic outcomes for the corridor.

Current Economic Function

The South West is an area of high car ownership, according to the National Travel survey in 2017/18 the average number of vehicles per household was 1.4 in the South West compared to 1.2 in England as a whole. This has an impact on economic performance as current and future growth sites are constrained by acute congestion and detrimental effects on journey time and reliability across the corridor. Despite the latent growth potential within the corridor footprint, the success of the corridor as a whole depends on appropriate management of this increase in trips by private vehicle.

The Government is committed to rebalancing the UK economy. The completion of the Great Western Mainline electrification and the delivery of improved city region connectivity through initiatives such as Metrobus in Bristol and the South Wales Metro will help productivity and economic performance. This strategic corridor has a key role to play in supporting further devolution of funding and decision making and help the South West achieve its economic potential. Connectivity via the M4, A4 and Great Western Mainline has brought businesses closer together and allowed a flow of people, goods and information along its axis from Wales to London. This is important for the Swindon M4 Growth Zone, which is home to 14,300 businesses and accounts for 55% of GVA for the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership. The overall function of the M4/A4 east-west corridor is vital for maintaining the economic competitiveness of the region and supporting its future growth ambitions.

Figure 9 illustrates the role of the corridor in the region as a distributor of growth and an important instrument in sustaining and growing economic success.
International connectivity remains essential for developing future trading relationships, increasing exports and supporting growth industries located in the corridor such as advanced engineering, high-value manufacturing, aerospace, renewables, financial and professional services, digital information and communications technology. A major function of this corridor is providing access to Heathrow Airport and the international markets which can be accessed directly. The Great Western Mainline provides an important link from the Western Gateway area to London Heathrow, the UK’s most significant international transport hub, making the region more attractive for businesses and investment. The corridor also provides access to Bristol Port from the South East and England's Economic Heartland via the M4 and the Great Western Mainline. As the UK develops new global trading relationships, Bristol Port is well-placed to support UK exports to new global markets, particularly those outside of the EU and in America. Bristol has consent to construct a deep-sea container terminal on the foreshore of the Avonmouth Docks which will further enhance Bristol Port’s role as a crucial international gateway in a post-Brexit trading economy.

**Future economic potential**

Targeted investment in the H1 corridor will help to distribute growth and act as an important instrument in sustaining and growing economic success in the corridor. Investment to the East of Bristol is focused on supporting and nurturing economic strengths whilst investment to the West of Bristol will help to strengthen and unlock ever growing economic links.

The recent removal of the Severn Bridge Toll has changed the character of transport in the Bristol region, and has resulted in a greater-than 10% increase in traffic crossing into Wales. It has effectively brought Chepstow and Monmouthshire into the functional economic area around the Bristol conurbation and is likely to lead to future economic gain through better connectivity. However, as a result of the increased traffic flows and capacity constraints on the M4 approach to the M4/M5 Almondsbury Interchange, there are pinch points on the M4 and M48 on the Bristol side of the crossing. This congestion may negatively affect the local economy in Bristol and could compound existing congestion on the M4 corridor particularly around Newport if interventions in public transport or highway investment are not delivered.
The Great Western Cities report in 2016 noted that renewable energy was a key growth area for the cities of Bristol, Newport and Cardiff. Local authorities in the Western Gateway are supportive of improved environmental performance and helping to tackle climate change, most recently demonstrated through climate emergency declarations. The growth of the renewable sector in Bristol and the success of their bid to the European Local Energy Assistance facility in 2019 has resulted in a wave of clean energy projects. As such, the potential for this sector to flourish in the Western Gateway region is high, and this will be helped by encouraging a cluster of businesses in this sector to share ideas and work collaboratively in delivering growth. Improved transport connectivity will help businesses access the knowledge and skills within the wider corridor, including locations such as Oxford and London to help build knowledge share and collaboration.

Investment in sustainable measures will need to be balanced with highway improvement schemes and other demand management measures in the corridor. Both are important for increasing the attractiveness of the Western Gateway area to investors. The recent closure of the Honda plant at Swindon was a set back to the region but it does leave opportunities for other large companies to access the corridor and bring new business opportunities to the area, especially within the Swindon M4 Growth Zone. The future potential of the corridor is high as it provides a two-way link with the economic, knowledge and cultural capital that exists in the Western Gateway and other locations such as Oxford and London. Improved connectivity will help to rebalance the economy of the country through the growth in knowledge-based industries attracted by the economic advantages of the Western Gateway area compared to London and the wider South-East. The proposed delivery of housing growth in the Central Hub (circa 16,200 homes across multiple sites in Bristol alone), over 5,000 homes in Chippenham and additional strategic housing sites at Royal Wootton Bassett, Malmesbury, North Keynsham and Corsham will help to fuel this transition further and help to provide the labour pools required to support the key economic growth sites in the corridor.

Current and planned schemes

One of the major projects that has taken place over the last few years along this corridor is the electrification of the Great Western Mainline, with a 20-minute reduction in journey time from the South West potentially leading to £19.9m annual benefits to rail users and £32.5m from wider impact benefits. Network Rail hope that, once the project has finished, train capacity will increase in the peak hour by 30%. The first electric trains ran between London Paddington and Cardiff Central in January 2020, reducing journey times by up to 14 minutes.

A new junction on the M49 was completed in December 2019, as part of a project to unlock the economic potential of the Avonmouth Severnside Enterprise Area. The junction provides direct access from the Avonmouth Port to the Strategic Road Network (SRN), lack of which has previously been a barrier to growth in the region. The project will also relieve congestion on local roads to support business needs.
Summary of strategic transport priorities for the Western Innovation Corridor – H1 - South West to South Wales

Transport priorities identified to support strategic connectivity

Short-term – 2020-2025

- Upgrade at M4 J17 to support growth along the M4 corridor and facilitate development in the A350 growth corridor in Wiltshire;

- Cycling and walking infrastructure to improve labour market efficiency through greater active travel opportunities between Bath and Bristol.

Medium to long-term – post 2025

- M5 J15 (Almondsbury Interchange) to manage demand for the Severn Crossing and help support existing economic performance in the West of England City region and nurture economic links between south Wales and the West of England;

- Severn Crossing mass transit system to provide a sustainable, viable alternative transport options between South Wales and West of England. This will improve connectivity to Cardiff and Newport from the Central Hub, help manage the demand for travel on the highway corridor following the removal of the Severn Crossing Tolls and capitalise on the subsequent movement of people and ideas;

- Upgrade or replace structural assets between Swindon and the M48 that are reaching the end of their life to ensure transport links are maintained and remain viable in the longer term;

- New junction (M4 J18a) between M4 J18-19 with an associated link to the A4174 Bristol ring road. This would provide another means of access to Bristol Airport without using the M5 and will also divert traffic away from the M5 Avonmouth Bridge to improve resilience in the wider Bristol area.

- Continued electrification of Great Western rail line to South Wales to enhance train connectivity and performance;
Future scheme and associate objectives for corridor the Western Innovation Corridor – H1 - South West to South Wales

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The Southern Growth Corridor
Strategic Corridor H2 – South East to South West

The strategic transport focus is on improving network resilience.

The Southern Growth Corridor supports two strategic travel corridors:

• The A303 corridor linking Basingstoke (M3) with Exeter (M5) and the South West Peninsula. This supports a number of key sectors including defence and life sciences as well as the tourism industries of Wiltshire, Dorset and the South West Peninsula.

• The A31/A35 corridor linking Southampton (M3) with Exeter (M5) and the South West Peninsula. This strategic link connects Western Gateway’s southern hub of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) and Dorchester.

Both corridors also encompass rail movements along the West of England line and the South Western Mainline between London and the South West. The corridor serves a number of rural areas (with the exception of the BCP Southern Hub) and the roads themselves are often single carriageway with pinch points and congestion problems along the route. The corridor runs through areas with environmental designations including the New Forest National Park, Cranborne Chase AONB, Blackdown Hills AONB and Dorset AONB, whilst the A303 is the main road to Stonehenge World Heritage Site. Figure 10 provides a high level interpretation of the extent of the corridor.

Figure 10 The Southern Growth Corridor – H2 South East to South West

[Map to be inserted]
Role

The Southern Growth corridor provides two important functions; it provides interconnectivity for growing coastal communities and maritime ports while also being a key tourist route, linking holidaymakers from the South East to the South Coast, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall. Network resilience is key issue with seasonal travel peaks often causing widespread congestion on strategic routes which negativity impacts upon productivity. The BCP area welcomes 17 million day and overnight visitors every year, although the exact proportion is unknown; many come by car.

The unique aspect of this route is its proximity to several AONBs which are a major asset of the Western Gateway area. Access to the natural environment is key for quality of life and creates additional, high-quality tourism opportunities in the area.

One of the major challenges of this corridor is managing the variability in traffic flows throughout the year. Average measures of flow and congestion often do not accurately capture the extent of the disruption in the summer months. Highways England report that traffic levels on the A31 approaching Bournemouth in the Summer peak rise by up to 20%. Due to the environmental designations through this part of the Western Gateway there are also limits on schemes which are viable.

Current economic function

This corridor supports a widespread rural economy in Wiltshire and Dorset. Good connectivity is vital for ensuring business success. In 2018, 99.8% of all rural enterprises in England were SMEs, and 71% of all those employed at registered rural enterprises were SMEs; these small businesses require high quality road links joining them with urban centres (including the Western Gateway’s Southern Hub) in order to sell goods and services, have an adequate pool of workers from which to recruit, and connect with other local businesses. It is also important for goods vehicles to be able to access business sites in rural areas in order to distribute any physical products.

Tourism has been established as a key focus of this corridor, and its importance to the Western Gateway cannot be overstated. Both the A303 and the A35/A31 form strategic routes and provides alternatives to the M4 / M5 from the South East. Connectivity to London and the South East by rail from Portland, Weymouth and Dorchester is poor, with some of the slowest journey times across the Western Gateway area. Slow and unreliable train services affect the attractiveness and the accessibility of a destination, so it is important that access by road is easy and consistent. BCP (Southern Hub) has a strong financial and professional services sector which traditionally benefits from good rail connectivity. The current level of provision does not provide a viable level of service from locations such as Weymouth which inevitably puts additional pressure on the highway network in already congested areas. Figure 11 summarises the economic role of the corridor and the ambitions for its future development.
Future economic potential

The economic potential of the southern region of the Western Gateway area is marked by its current productivity gap. Rural productivity in the South West is currently 8% lower than in urban areas. In economic productivity Dorset contributes £2.5bn below the national average. However, investing in the connectivity of this corridor would begin to reduce the gap by bringing people closer to jobs and improving access of rural businesses to urban centres and population hubs. The delivery of strategic housing sites at locations such as Salisbury (6,060 homes), Amesbury (2,785 homes), BCP (11,800 homes), and Weymouth (1,500 homes) will help in supporting labour markets and ensuring an effective housing mix is provided to support the corridor’s economy.

The south coast ports will play a vital role in boosting the economic output of the region, but to do this they require adequate connectivity and investment in the surrounding network. The Port of Poole reported that the lack of motorway infrastructure in Dorset, with only 5% of the roads at dual carriageway standard, results in hauliers using the A31 to reach the M27 & M3 motorways. This results in congestion occurring at the southern part of the M3 near Southampton. Ongoing widening and dualling of the A31 will improve link capacity and provide more resilience for freight traffic, but delays remain likely at the convergence of the two motorways. Additional customs regulations resulting from Brexit may also spread demand for short-sea shipping opportunities as ports in the South East become less efficient. This may result in increased demand for ports in the South West. In order to be ready for this opportunity the quality of the surrounding highway network must be improved, whilst investment in rail freight at the Port of Poole could create capacity on the rail network to remove HGVs from the road.

With increasing awareness of the mechanisms of climate change and a greater appreciation for individual action a growing number of people are choosing not to fly, and to take holidays in the UK. This presents a significant opportunity for the south coast and the South West Peninsula; the South West is fourth in the UK for direct tourism GVA. Wales and the South West have the highest proportion of economic output directly attributed to tourism spend (tourism ratio), at 4.9% and 4.5% respectively, as shown in Figure 12.
Investment in this Corridor will provide necessary resilience during periods of peak demand and future-proof these routes as holiday corridors. In Western Gateway’s recent Port Connectivity study, the cruise industry was also identified as a major growth area, which will further increase the draw of the coast and the need to focus on the A-road network between the urban centres.

Having identified the potential growth of the UK holiday industry, both Southampton and Bournemouth Airport have stated plans to increase their passenger numbers, so appropriate actions will need to be taken to allow this growth to occur. Southampton is already well-connected by public transport, but Bournemouth lacks both public transport and effective highway links. It has also begun a partnership with the Port of Poole, using the nearby business park as a catalyst for economic opportunities, which could open up a major new opportunity for the BCP area, but will require infrastructure to support this growth and allow the site to be accessible by new employees and freight services.

There are several network resilience schemes planned for this corridor and the most significant is the A303 Stonehenge project. This project aims to dual the road between Amesbury and Berwick Down to increase capacity and resilience, as well using a tunnel as it traverses past Stonehenge to prevent it from affecting the visitor experience. Upgrades to the railway to improve capacity may also alleviate the problem by removing cars from the roads and improving the passenger experience. This includes lengthening of peak services on the Paddington-Newbury-Taunton route.

The A31 is a key route along the south coast, especially with the potential growth of the tourism and cruise industries, and the widening of the route at Ringwood will help alleviate congestion in this area particularly during peak periods. Digital signalling upgrades from Basingstoke to Weymouth and electrification of the line in the long term will also improve rail connectivity in this area.

Summary of strategic transport priorities for Southern Growth Corridor – H2 South East to South West
Transport priorities identified to support strategic connectivity

Short-term – 2020-2025

- Ongoing upgrade of A303 (Amesbury to Berwick Down & Sparkford to Ilchester) to expressway in order to improve business efficiency in the A303 growth corridor and facilitate enhanced strategic connectivity between the south east and south-west.

- A31 Widening at Ringwood to provide additional SRN link capacity

- M271/A35 Redbridge roundabout upgrade at Southampton to provide at Southampton RN junction capacity

- A338 Southern Salisbury Improvements to ensure that the transport network in Salisbury has the capacity to accommodate future growth;

- Improved travel interchange at Weymouth and Poole stations to give people the appropriate information to choose low-carbon options for their journey and improve the onward journeys of tourists landing at Weymouth from a cruise.

Medium to long-term – post 2025

- Improved road and public transport access to Portland port and Bournemouth Airport to improve access to international gateways and enhance business efficiency along the south coast

- South West Main Line redoubling of the track at Moreton and on the approach to Weymouth station to improve rail connectivity and access to labour markets in the Southern Hub.

- Improved electricity supply along the whole Poole to Weymouth section of the SWML to support the performance of rail networks in the corridor to support access to labour markets
### Future scheme and associate objectives for the Southern Growth Corridor – H2 South East to South West

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The Western Growth Corridor
Strategic corridor V1 – Midlands to South West

The strategic transport focus is on supporting growth and improving regional rail access.

The Western Growth Corridor is a nationally significant economic corridor connecting the economic powerhouses of the Peninsula, Western Gateway and Midlands Engine. This corridor supports access to national and international markets and resources to help drive growth and economic performance for the country as a whole. This corridor runs north to south and encompasses the M5, A38 and A46 corridor (Midlands Connect Trans-Midlands Trade Corridor). It provides access to both Bristol Airport and the Port of Bristol. The Cross-Country rail franchise provides strategic connectivity linking the South West and South Wales with the Midlands, North and Scotland and the Great Western Railway rail franchise supports regional connectivity. Figure 13 provides a high level interpretation of the extent of the corridor.

Figure 13 The Western Growth Corridor – V1 Midlands to South West

[Map to be inserted]
The corridor offers a significant connectivity opportunity, and an efficient transport strategy for this corridor could transform the sectors which are shared between the Western Gateway area and the Midlands including the aerospace, professional services and advanced manufacturing industries. The M5 is also the UK’s ‘holiday motorway’ and acts as a funnel for traffic from the Midlands and the North to the Western Gateway and Peninsula, giving it economic significance for the tourism industry, as well as trade.

The Western Growth corridor plays a key role in connecting the South West and the Midlands. However, to fulfil its economic potential it is essential to balance local, regional and national connectivity in order to support the demands of the economy going forward. A range of strategic transport priorities have been established which will assist economic performance by improving labour market efficiency, increasing business and economic connectivity, providing access to international gateways and enabling development within the corridor. A blend of investment in road and rail will be needed alongside improved public transport connectivity in the hubs to help manage local trips on the strategic road network and ensure the long-term viability of strategic connectivity in the corridor.

Role

The M5 links Birmingham and the Black Country in the North, through Worcestershire, to Cheltenham, Gloucester and Bristol, Taunton and Exeter in the south. It connects major employment and population hubs and is the focus for future growth in Gloucestershire. Significant strategic growth is expected to come forwards in this corridor over the next few years, including 60,000 new homes in Gloucestershire and over 100,000 new homes in the West of England area. Almost all local plans highlight the strategic importance of the M5, A46 and the Bristol-Gloucestershire-Worcestershire-Birmingham rail line as pivotal to the fulfilment of local growth ambitions.

The Western Growth corridor is an employment and trade corridor which brings together businesses in the Midlands and the South West from similar clusters. The Midlands and the South West are centres of worldwide expertise in aerospace, advanced manufacturing and professional services, and connecting businesses in these areas could provide significant agglomeration benefits and knowledge-sharing, as well as increasing the size of the pool of employees for businesses in the west of the UK. The A46 is identified as part of the Midlands Connect Trans-Midlands Trade Corridor (TMTC) which is the economic spine running from the M5 at Tewkesbury up to the Humber Ports via the economic hotspots of Warwick, Coventry and Leicester. With the links to Bristol and other ports in the South West, this is a key route for logistics and haulage companies in accessing the Midlands and South-West.

A consequence of the role played by the M5 and reliance on the car for private and business travel is that regional rail offering along this corridor is poor. Long-distance strategic rail connectivity between major urban areas is good, but this offer is at the expense of shorter regional trips. Limited alternatives to the car will continue to result in the majority of people living along the corridor being reliant on the car for shorter distance regional trips. As new growth is delivered, this will result in an increased use of the M5 and a significant reduction in its ability to fulfil local growth ambitions. Without modal shift, the corridor will also fail to support the overriding need to decarbonise the transport network and increase conflicts between private and freight trips.
Current economic function

The Midlands to South West corridor currently provides both a regional and national economic function. For the Western Gateway area, the corridor plays an integral role in supporting connectivity and access between the Northern and Central Hubs within the Western Gateway Area whilst also facilitating access to the Peninsula and the Midlands. Figure 14 summarises the economic role of the corridor and the ambitions for its future development.

Figure 14 - The economic role of the Western Growth Corridor – V1 Midlands to South West

The Northern Hub of Gloucester and Cheltenham is home to knowledge-intensive manufacturing and services, including cyber security and creative and digital industries. Current plans are focused on unlocking land for housing and employment within the Gloucestershire M5 Growth Zone, including the delivery of a new Cyber Business Park near Cheltenham and extensions to Gloucester’s Southern Fringe. The Western Gateway’s central hub covering the West of England area is home to a range of industries at the cutting edge of design, culture, engineering and aerospace, electronics, social enterprise and digital creativity. All these industries rely on connections within the Western Gateway and links to the Midlands and South West to secure the skills, knowledge and supply chains required for growth. The majority of employment growth is focused on the Enterprise Areas and Zones close to the strategic transport network emphasising the key role access and connectivity plays to the economy of the corridor. This demand for connectivity is further supplemented by the international gateways of Bristol Airport and the Port of Bristol. In addition to being key centres of employment they both have a key economic function in providing access to international trade and facilitating business and personal travel from the Western Gateway area.
Future economic potential

This strategic corridor is an economic powerhouse within the Western Gateway region, and one of its most important assets for growth and productivity. However, it is also most at risk from its own future success, with the M5 and the M4/M5 Almondsbury Interchange both under pressure from the increasing volumes of traffic, the A46 in need of investment to provide an alternative route to the East Midlands avoiding congestion issues in Birmingham, and the Worcestershire-Birmingham M5/Birmingham Motorway Box and local highway networks at capacity. The removal of the Severn Toll will encourage traffic from the Midlands and the North to use the A46/M5 as a route to Wales which will unlock new interactions with the Welsh economy and open up new possibilities in terms of trade, but will also cause congestion and reliability problems, particularly around the urban areas on the M5 such as Gloucester, Cheltenham and Bristol.

The future economic success of this corridor is intrinsically linked to the growth that has been planned in the area. Gloucestershire has located many of its housing and employment growth sites around the M5 and the A46 and they are dependent on appropriate transport links for their success. A system of mass transit joining the urban hubs and growth sites is vital for sustainable growth in the area, including rail upgrades with regular local stopping services and better connectivity from Worcester through Gloucester, Cheltenham and Ashchurch to Bristol and a new station at Charfield. This optimisation of alternative modes of travel will strip out local trips from the national network, leaving capacity for strategic journeys and freight movements and simultaneously contributing to the decarbonisation agenda. Managing future demand particularly with regards to increased operational resilience, future capacity and the management of seasonal traffic will play a pivotal role in the economic growth potential of the corridor and the wider area going forward.

Current and planned schemes

Current and planned schemes for this corridor are focused on facilitating growth by enabling improved access to strategic growth sites. The delivery of these schemes will help to improve business efficiency, access to new job opportunities, access to labour markets and help strengthen key economic sectors such as cyber security and advanced manufacturing. CA summary of the current and planned schemes is detailed below:

Summary of strategic transport priorities for the Western Growth Corridor – V1 Midlands to South West
Transport priorities identified to support strategic connectivity

Short-term – 2020-2025

• Capacity improvements are required at the following M5 junctions to support planned growth:

  • Junctions 9 & 10, to support growth in Gloucestershire and improve capacity related issues by managing the flow of traffic and avoiding the occurrence of mainline queuing.

  • Junctions 19 and 21 to support growth in the region by improving access to Bristol’s international gateway at the port and attracting further investment and development at J21 Enterprise Area.

  • A417 Missing Link to complete dualling of the A417/A419 linking M4 to M5 and improving network resilience and alternative to M4/M5 Almondsbury interchange.

  • Access improvements to Bristol Airport (A38) Major Road Network funded opportunity for online capacity improvements on A38 from Churchill Gate to Bristol Airport.

  • MetroWest Phase 1 - re-open the Portishead to Bristol rail line to passenger services and enhance services on the Severn Beach and Bath to Bristol lines, to provide additional local rail connectivity.

  • MetroWest Phase 2 - re-open the Henbury to Bristol rail line to passenger services and improve services between Bristol, Yate, Gloucester & Westbury.

  • Charfield Station – Re open a station at Charfield between Yate and Cam and Dursley to provide rail services from Charfield, Wotton-under-Edge and the surrounding areas to Bristol and Cheltenham and Gloucester.

Medium to long-term – post 2025

• M5 Junctions 12, 13 & 14, to support growth in Gloucestershire and improve capacity related issues by managing the flow of traffic and avoiding the occurrence of mainline queuing.

• M5 J15 (Almondsbury Interchange) to manage demand for the Severn Crossing and help support existing economic performance in the West of England City region and nurture economic links between south Wales and the West of England;

• Upgrade of A46 to expressway to relieve capacity issues at the Birmingham Motorway Box. This will support the growth of businesses in the South West by improving access to the TMTC and providing resilience on the network when there are issues on the M5.

• A48 upgrades including transport improvements at Chepstow to provide an alternative route accessing the Midlands and avoiding the M4/M5 Almondsbury interchange.

• Rail capability, capacity and signalling Worcester Shrub Hill and Gloucester to facilitate additional connectivity from the Midlands to Gloucester and South-West, and at Bristol East to improve connectivity for local services. This will both improve strategic connectivity in the South West and support the decarbonisation agenda by adding rail capacity to entice users off the roads.

• Electrification of Bristol to Birmingham rail line – to support decarbonisation agenda and provided further line capacity benefits.

• Other rail improvements which include a passing loop at Ashchurch for Tewkesbury to support the garden town and prevent a significant number of road trips being added to the network as a result.
Future schemes and associate objectives for the Western Growth Corridor – V1 Midlands to South West

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The Missing Link Strategic Corridor V2 – Midlands to South Coast

The strategic transport focus is on supporting growth, providing new strategic access and opening up economic opportunities.

Corridor V2 is the missing strategic link within the Western Gateway area and it covers movements from the South Coast to the M4 and onto the Midlands. Existing highway access within the corridor is of mixed standard and quality. It is also subject to congestion and delays resulting from a number of pinch points through historic market towns. At this stage the preferred strategic routing of the highway corridor improvements is not defined and will be informed by work being undertaken in partnership with Highways England as part of the second round of the Road Improvement Strategy. Highway links covered by this corridor include: A36, A37, A338, A350, A354 and A358. Whilst the individual corridors play an important role to the multiple local economies, the true strategic potential of the corridor is yet to be realised. Figure 15 provides a high level interpretation of the extent of the corridor.

Figure 15 The Missing Link Strategic Corridor V2 – Midlands to South Coast

[Map to be inserted]
This corridor also benefits from a number of railway lines including: the Golden Valley Line, the Heart of Wessex Line and the TransWilts rail link between Swindon, Westbury, Salisbury and Southampton. These routes facilitate local rail movements despite the varying quality of access to the south coast. Due to the limited number of carriages used overcrowding is commonplace on these rail links.

This corridor has the potential to drive change in the Dorset and Wiltshire economies and benefit the whole of the Western Gateway region through better access to its coastal international gateways and providing additional strategic resilience and connectivity for north-south movements in the Western Gateway area.

**Role**

The role of Corridor V2 is to unlock the potential of the south coast and facilitate greater economic alignment between the north and south of the Western Gateway by providing improved strategic connectivity from the M4 and A303 corridors to the south coast.

Improving north-south links will open up direct access to the Western Gateway’s Southern Hub and the rest of Dorset to the Northern and Central Hubs of the Western Gateway and the Midlands. Investment would also further encourage tourism to Dorset’s natural assets and for the growing cruise industry at Portland, Poole and Southampton.

Strategic connectivity improvements for this corridor has the potential to realise both local growth ambitions and forge significant agglomeration benefits by removing barriers to increased north and south travel in the Western Gateway area. This will provide additional resilience on strategic road corridors such as the M27 and A34 when accessing the Midlands from the south coast.

The A350 has been designated a Growth Zone, and as such, the aspiration is to increase the ‘effective density’ of locations along the route by maximising transport investment at the right points along the corridor. This has been a longstanding goal and is something Wiltshire Council have been incrementally improving (e.g. the significant increase in TransWilts services between Swindon and Westbury through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund) and are seeking to continue (e.g. through current Restoring Your Railway bids to increase the capacity on the Melksham single track line, and to deliver a 4th platform at Westbury).

Improving both highway and rail capacity will help facilitate greater business engagement and knowledge share amongst complementary businesses and sectors including finance and professional services. For this reason, the TransWilts rail link will continue to play a role for regional connectivity.

**Current economic function**

This corridor is currently characterised by a blend of economic zones driving local economies without any clear corridor relationship. The potential for greater agglomeration is evident through the balance of industry sectors currently located to the north and south of the Western Gateway Area including concentrations of employment in financial services and business, and professional services in Bournemouth, Bristol and Swindon. Likewise, the commitment from all the LEPs in the Western Gateway to build on their strengths of advanced manufacturing, innovation and technology means there is latent potential to improve business interaction along this corridor.

A key driver for the corridor’s economy is the connectivity needs of the south coast ports and access to international gateways. The A34 is the main corridor to markets in the Midlands for automotive trade and container imports. The A350 and A36 also provide important links for freight travelling North West from the Solent. The Western Gateway’s Port Access Study has highlighted that the Port of Poole lacks a reliable north/south connection to the M4 and M5 resulting in vehicles using the A31, M27 and A34. Improvements to this corridor will provide an alternative link and increase network resilience. Connectivity to the airports at Southampton and Bournemouth is also a key driver for the economy to the south of Western Gateway. These airports provide local access to international travel and the ability to access international markets. Therefore, effective highway and rail access is essential.
Future economic potential

This corridor experiences significant infrastructure constraints. Whilst there is relatively good east/west connectivity from the southern and northern parts of the corridor to London and the South East, this is not the case for north–south journeys to the Midlands. Figure 16 summarises the economic role of the corridor and its ambitions for future development.

Figure 16 - The economic role of the Missing Link Strategic Corridor V2 – Midlands to South Coast
The primary challenge for this missing link is the long journey times exacerbated by congestion and peripherally from other parts of the UK. This is a critical issue in terms of connectivity from the Western Gateway’s Southern Hub to the north, the market towns serving the rural areas in Dorset and Wiltshire in the central part of the corridor, and the rapidly growing towns in western Wiltshire. The economic potential from improvements to journey times on the A36 and A350 has been estimated in the South of England North-South Connectivity (2019) report as leading to £20.5bn agglomeration impacts over 60 years. The establishment of the A350 as part of the Major Route Network between the M4 and A36 should help to promote the delivery of this further.

Furthermore, improvements would help facilitate/enable access to new employment sites such as those identified in the West of England and the M5 Growth Corridor. Despite being of a predominately rural nature, Corridor V2 intersects with the A350 Growth Zone which accounts for 24% of GVA for Swindon and Wiltshire LEP and 9,900 businesses in the area. It links several strategic growth sites including Chippenham, Westbury, Melksham and Trowbridge whilst providing effective access and interchange with the M4, A303 and the south coast ports.

Current and planned schemes

Current and planned schemes for this corridor are focused on facilitating growth by improving journey times and reliability within the corridor. The delivery of these schemes will help to improve business efficiency, access to new job opportunities, access to labour markets and help strengthen key economic sectors such as advanced manufacturing. A summary of the current and planned schemes are detailed below:

- A350 improvements (informed by Highways England’s M4 to Dorset Coast RIS2 study)
- Chippenham Station Masterplan
- Chippenham Transport Strategy
- Trowbridge Transport Strategy
- Gillingham Growth package
- Salisbury Transport Strategy

Corridor V2 has the potential to transform the north-south connectivity of the Western Gateway and change the economic dynamic of the economy. However, to fulfil its economic potential it is essential to develop a strategic programme of interventions which balance investment in highway infrastructure with a longer-term ambition to improve connectivity by rail. A range of strategic transport priorities have been established which will assist economic performance by improving labour market efficiency, increasing business and economic connectivity, providing access to international gateways and enabling development within the corridor.

Summary of strategic transport priorities for the Missing Link Strategic Corridor V2 – Midlands to South Coast
Transport priorities identified to support strategic connectivity

Short-term – 2020-2025

- A350 Chippenham Bypass - Major Road Network funding for scheme to complete Chippenham bypass to improve highway performance on A350 Major Road Network corridor

- A350 Melksham Bypass - Large Local Major funded improvement to Melksham bypass to improve highway performance on A350 Major Road Network corridor

- A350 Yarnbrook/West Ashton Relief Road to improve highway performance on A350 Major Road Network corridor

- A350 capacity improvements are required in order to support growth and improve north-south connectivity along the corridor. This has been picked up in the commitments for further investigation in RIS2. Improvements to the corridor will likely also improve the environmental effects of traffic on this route as the current congestion and tailbacks cause air quality issues especially in the towns along the A350.

- Improved travel interchange at Weymouth and Poole to give people the appropriate information to choose low-carbon options for their journey and improve the onward journeys of tourists landing at Weymouth from a cruise.

Medium to long-term – post 2025

- A350 improvements at Westbury to improve highway performance on A350 Major Road Network corridor

- Capacity improvements to the single rail track through Melksham to support further frequency service enhancements to the Trans Wilts train service.

- Line speed improvements and timetable enhancements on the Heart of Wessex line and signalling improvements and passing loop at a suitable location.

- Improved road access to Portland Port to facilitate more efficient vehicle access from Portland via Weymouth, and support growth at the port especially in the advent of any short-sea shipping opportunities.
## Future schemes and associate objectives for the Missing Link Strategic Corridor V2 – Midlands to South Coast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timescale</th>
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<th>Economic objectives</th>
<th>Social objectives</th>
<th>Environmental objectives</th>
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<td>International gateway access</td>
<td>Improve N-S connectivity</td>
<td>Delivery of new homes and employment</td>
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<td>Track redoubling at Weymouth</td>
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<td>Long term</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Improved access to Portland, Poole and Bournemouth</td>
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15.0
Short-Term Scheme Priorities (2020-25)

The following schemes have been identified as Sub-national priorities to support strategic travel for delivery between 2020 and 2025. As such the schemes either have funding committed within an existing programme or the scheme is progressing through the business case process.

The schemes are not listed in priority order the numbers relate to the location of the schemes illustrated in Figure 17.

**Strategic Road Network priorities**

1. M4 J17 capacity improvement to support growth
2. M5 J9 capacity improvements to support growth
3. M5 J10 capacity improvements to support growth
4. M5 J19 capacity improvements to support growth
5. M5 J20 capacity improvements to support growth
6. M5 J21 capacity improvements to support growth
7. M271 / A35 Redbridge roundabout capacity improvements
8. A31 highway widening to increase link capacity
9. A303 upgrade to expressway to increase link capacity (Amesbury to Berwick Down & Sparkford to Ilchester)
10. A417 highway widening and safety scheme to increase link capacity

**Major & Local Road Network priorities**

11. A31 improved highway connectivity to the Port of Poole
12. A38 access improvements to Bristol Airport (A38) to increase link capacity and support future growth
13. A338 Southern Salisbury Improvements to increase highway capacity and support future growth
14. A430 Llanthony Rd and St Ann Way capacity highway improvements to resolve an existing pinch-point
15. A350 Chippenham Bypass to increase link capacity and support future growth
16. A350 Melksham Bypass to increase link capacity and support future growth
17. A350 Yarnbrook/West Ashton Relief Road to increase link capacity and support future growth
18. A371/A368 Banwell bypass to improve air quality and capacity improvements to support future growth
19. A4174 highway capacity improvements to support future growth
20. Upgrade Blackwater Junction (Bournemouth) to support Bournemouth International Growth Programme at Bournemouth Airport and Wessex Fields
21. An area-wide electric charging network (not illustrated on map)
Rail

22. Bristol East and West rail junction upgrades will be remodelled to add additional rail capacity

23. Improved passenger interchange at Weymouth and Poole stations

24. MetroWest Phase 1 - re-open the Portishead to Bristol rail line to passenger services and enhance services on the Severn Beach and Bath to Bristol lines, to provide additional local rail connectivity

25. MetroWest Phase 2 - re-open the Henbury to Bristol rail line to passenger services and improve services between Bristol, Yate, Gloucester & Westbury

26. Charfield Station – re-open a station at Charfield to provide passenger services to Bristol, Cheltenham and Gloucester.

Bus

27. Metrobus – Cribbs Causeway extension from Bristol Parkway railway station and The Mall, via the Cribbs Patchway New Neighbourhood

28. Metrobus – Bristol city centre to Nailsea (& Clevedon) extension

29. Park and Ride improvements at M32, A38(S)/A4174, A4018, A432, A38(N) and A4 Portway and A370 Long Ashton to promote greater Public Transport use

Walking / Cycling

30. Comprehensive upgrade of strategic cycling routes for shorter distance travel including the Gloucester to Cheltenham link and Cheltenham and Bishops Cleeve route

31. M5 to J16 non-motorised user crossing to complete the strategic cycle route from the northern side of Bristol

32. Walking and cycling packages in the greater Bristol and Bath areas, as well as within and between the larger surrounding towns and villages

33. Weston-super-Mare Cycling and Walking Network improvements

Transforming Cities Fund

34. Delivery of Transforming City Fund programme to reduce localise congestion

Other – local regeneration schemes – not identified on map

• Bristol South West Economic Link recommended a range of transport improvements to strengthen connectivity Bristol, Bristol Airport, Weston-super-Mare and M5 J22.

• Lansdowne Business District - Combined package of urban realm, deployment of council operated 5G digital connectivity, public transport and sustainable transport investment to support growth opportunity.

• Heart of Poole regeneration scheme – a Future High Street bid
Figure 17 – Location of short-term Sub-national transport priorities for delivery between 2020-2025.

[Map to be inserted]
16.0
Next Steps

This Short-term Strategic Transport Plan has been primarily produced using existing evidence provided by each local authority member and reflects existing spending priorities where they support delivery of the STBs long-term objectives.

Within its current format it is not able to influence decisions, but it sets the long-term strategy aims of the STB and provides stakeholders with information about how the STB will function on behalf of its members. Raising awareness and understanding of the role of the STB will provide greater confidence in the STBs ability to discuss Sub-National issues on behalf of the member authorities, and to engage with neighbouring Sub-National Transport Bodies, local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships.

The Long-Term Strategic Transport Plan 2025-2050

Work has already commenced on the Long-Term Strategic Transport Plan and this document will be used to influence future funding decisions. The aim is for this plan to be approved by the board in March 2023.

At the time of writing the Short-Term Plan, very little new evidence has been produced on behalf of the STB. With the exception of the STB’s Economic Connectivity Study, Rail Strategy and Port Access Study the STB has not produced new evidence. These studies are essential building blocks to inform the Regional Evidence Base and the long-term strategy, but there are many other components required before the STB can identify with confidence the sequencing of scheme priorities.

New strategies that will be produced for the STB include:

- Input into the National Decarbonisation Strategy
- Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy
- Understanding Sub-National Modelling Requirements
- Strategic Corridor Studies
- Freight Strategy
- Future Mobility options for Rural Transport
- Strategic Bus and Coach Strategy
- Last Mile Access strategy to key passenger transport termini
- Strategic Cycle Routes.

The commissioning of these strategies will be subject to funding.

To focus these strategies and inform the development of strategic corridor strategies, the STB will be forming four new strategic partnership groups. Each will oversee the production of evidence for the Western Gateway’s strategic travel corridors. In addition to those local authorities located on the corridor, membership of the group will include the Western Gateway Powerhouse, neighbouring STBs and strategic infrastructure providers.

Figure 13 identifies each of the transport corridors and the local authority that will lead the partnership.
**Figure 18 – Strategic Corridor Partnership Groups to oversee the production of Long-Term Strategic Transport Plan 2025-2045**

- **H1 - South East to South Wales**: West of England Combined Authority
- **H2 - South East to South West**: BCP Council and Dorset Council
- **V1 - Midlands to South West**: Gloucestershire County Council
- **V2 - Midlands to South Coast**: Wiltshire Council

For further information on the Western Gateway STB and the Strategic Transport Plan please visit [www.westerngatewaystb.org.uk](http://www.westerngatewaystb.org.uk)
The Western Gateway is formed by an alliance of the following Local Authorities: