Transport, Access and Communications

Where we are now

The need to provide affordable and sustainable travel choices has never been greater. A high quality transport and communications infrastructure is crucial for residents to access jobs, education, learning, health facilities, shops and other services. It provides essential links to support economic growth and regeneration. However, East Sussex has a mixed provision of travel choices. Trunk roads, which are maintained by the Highways Agency, make up only 2.8% of our road network and our rail infrastructure is limited. This inadequate road network adversely impacts the condition of our own road network as people use minor roads in and between rural areas and coastal towns to avoid traffic congestion. Unreliable journey times on these routes are cited as one reason for poor economic performance, which reduces the attractiveness of the county to new businesses. Consultations with residents have revealed a range of transport issues including the need for better bus and rail services and improved travel choice for school journeys. Road safety continues to be a key priority in East Sussex.

Local Area Transport Strategies (LATS) are being established or updated for most of the larger urban areas and market towns in the county. Hastings has been designated as a Regional Hub in the South East Plan which will contribute to the social, economic and environmental regeneration of the town and surrounding area. Access to transport is particularly important for rural communities. Volunteer and rural bus schemes are improving, but transport in rural areas remains a challenge and needs to improve. Town and Parish Councils have funded improved travel and access for young people. The County Connect Service, a partnership between the Pensions Service, Fire & Rescue and Adult Social Care enables officers from these services to visit older and vulnerable people in their homes giving them greater access to public services.

We are keen to reduce the number of people who travel by private car to reduce congestion, minimise the impact on the environment and improve air quality. Investment is being made into alternatives to the car such as better facilities for walking and cycling, quality bus services and rail improvements

(e.g. more services on existing lines, extra stations and expansions to the network.)

Reducing the travel needs associated with future development is tackled in the Local Development Frameworks. Local authorities and public transport partners have also worked together to improve access to travel information, but there is still much to be done on improving accessibility, affordability and providing innovative community transport solutions. Major investment has been made into Broadband, the installation of Community Help Points and mobile libraries which are bringing services closer to people, particularly those located in the more remote rural locations.

The Challenges Ahead

Implementing the Local Transport Plan for the county and Local Area Transport Strategies will help to make best use of our existing infrastructure, reduce the need to travel and develop a wider range of sustainable and affordable travel choices such as walking, cycling and public transport. This will help to ensure the effect on our environment of developments to support new housing and employment sites is minimised. At the same time improvements are needed to the county's road network to make East Sussex a more attractive location for business and visitors and to unlock our major development sites for housing and employment.

Our strategic priority for 2026 is to improve sustainable travel choices and access to services and facilities within and between communities in the county

Our key tasks will be to:
- Implement the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road and support the development of the Newhaven Port Access Road
- Increase sustainable travel choices, improve public transport and reduce the need to travel by car
- Improve road safety and reduce congestion, minimise negative impacts on the environment and improve air quality
- Reduce the number of children, young people and adults of all ages who are socially excluded by improving access to jobs, education, learning, health and other services through affordable transport and technology related solutions including next generation broadband

- Improve the maintenance and management of our transport network.