



**Solent Future Transport Zone Programme**  
**2020-21 Annual Report**

September 2021

(Version 2.1)

*Produced In Partnership with:*



## **1. Introduction**

This document provides an annual update of the Solent Future Transport Zone (FTZ) Programme, which principally covers the period from July 2020 to June 2021 (although it also covers the initial Covid response trial of the drones project in April / May of that year). It has been compiled by Solent Transport in conjunction with the University of Southampton, who lead the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the Programme on Solent Transport's behalf, and the University of Portsmouth, who lead the M&E for some of the major projects within the Programme. It is divided into three further sections, which describe:

- (i) our summary progress to date;
- (ii) our approach to "baselining"; and
- (iii) the initial lessons learned during this reporting period.

This report should be read in conjunction with the separate Solent FTZ "Outcome matrix", which provides a summary of the main outcomes expected from the Programme. Together, these two documents provide an annual update on the status of the Programme, and have been produced for the benefit of the Department for Transport (DfT), who fund the Solent FTZ Programme, and to fulfil the reporting requirements suggested by NatCen, who act as the National Evaluation Coordinators for all the U.K. FTZ Programmes on their behalf. These documents build on the original Approach to Monitoring and Evaluation for the Solent FTZ Programme, as produced in January 2021, which outlines the Theme 1 and Theme 2 projects as well as the geographical area covered by this Programme, and sets out the overall framework under which it is being monitored and evaluated.

It should be noted this report is a working document (v2.1), as submitted to NatCen, and is subject to approval by the Solent FTZ Programme Board, which meets towards the end of September. Revisions may therefore result following this Board meeting, which meets approximately every two months (with the last being on 13 July), as it has not been possible to obtain Board approval prior to the NatCen suggested reporting deadline of 10 September 2021. This report may also be revised further following the appointment of the new Research and Evaluation Manager for the FTZ Programme, who is expected to join in November 2021, particularly in terms of programme evaluation methods and the approach to baselining.

## **2. Progress to Date**

The Solent FTZ Programme Manager (PM) and the University of Southampton (UoS) currently already report progress to NatCen on a regular basis, including a formal report approximately every two months, as well as engaging in "Community of Practice" and other workshops as suggested by NatCen to share ideas and learnings with the other FTZ Programmes in the UK. Further coordination activities also occur between the project managers involved on the major/longitudinal projects being assessed by NatCen, including Mobility as a Service (MaaS) and Data Management<sup>1</sup>. The current status of the projects within the Solent FTZ Programme is given in Table 1, as at September 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> Solent FTZ are not developing a specific Data Hub as part of its programme. However, several of the major projects involve data management and the sharing of information across different systems.

**Table 1 - Status of Projects within the Solent FTZ Programme**

<u>Theme<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Summary</u>
1	e-Scooter Trials	<i>In progress: trials well underway</i>	Trials on the Isle of Wight, and Portsmouth and Southampton are well underway, with nearly a thousand e-scooters in total: with IoW 100, PCC 340 and SCC 550 e-scooters being deployed as at end June 2021, and their usership is continuing to grow, especially in Southampton. These trials are likely to continue until at least March 2022, pending local decision making, with progress being reported directly to the DfT by the scheme operators, Beryl and Voi. There have been more than a quarter of a million trips across all schemes. Early surveys undertaken by Voi which the University is in the process of validating show up to 44% reallocation of journeys made by the scooters are replacing car or taxi journeys. This if true could equate to significant carbon savings in the short-to-medium term.
1	MaaS Trials	<i>In progress: teams mobilised</i>	The Project consortium has been established, with teams from Solent Transport, Trafti, the Behavioural Insights Team and Unicard working together, along with those from the Universities of Southampton and Portsmouth, who are leading the research development and M&E of MaaS. A Minimum Viable Product (MVP) is being developed during the fourth calendar quarter of 2021, after which there will be regular release cycles to deliver further features and optimise the MaaS App. These major releases are expected to occur quarterly, with system change processes being developed to manage the delivery of research and functional requirements, and coordinate the work between the different project teams.
1	Growing Solent Go	<i>In progress: governance established</i>	Establishment of Project Board to oversee the development of the "Solent Go" smartcard and its integration with the MaaS Platform. This Board meets at the same time as the MaaS Project Board. New "Saver 5" carnet tickets now being offered and promoted through the smartcard. Solent Go will be migrated onto the new MaaS platform over the coming months.
1	Bike (and e-Bike) Share	<i>In progress: planning / scheme preparations underway</i>	Preparations underway, including a Demand Study to size the scheme, and exploratory options for the approach to procurement, in anticipation of a launch of the scheme in 2022.
1	DDRT (Dynamic Demand-Responsive Transportation)	<i>In progress: reviewed / in</i>	Review largely completed, with options for how the trials would be funded and operate being discussed with local

<sup>2</sup> Theme 1=Projects relating to Personal Mobility; Theme 2=Sustainable Urban Logistics Projects.

		<i>approach planning</i>	transport authorities (LTAs), potential operators and technology partners.
1	Mobility Credits Trial	) <i>In review</i>	) These two projects were postponed as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, and are being reviewed later in 2021 to see how they may be taken forward, especially in light of the development and launch of the MaaS platform.
1	Lift Sharing Incentive	)	
1 & 2	LMH (Local Mobility Hubs) and Interchanges	<i>In Progress and feasibility</i>	Solent have undertaken significant research and developed a detailed Solent Transport Mobility Hub guide and area evaluation tool that provide insight to the likely success of a mobility hub if situated in specific areas. The two most feasible sites are now undertaking detailed assessments. Other local initiatives are currently being taken forward on a case-by-case basis.
2	Micro Consolidation and Macro Consolidation	) <i>In progress: governance established</i>	There has been significant difficulty in obtaining a permanent resource for this work. Progress for these two projects over the initial 12 months has been impeded by the impact of Covid-19, which reduced the practical manpower and other resources needed to deliver projects, and made planning more difficult due to the rapidly changing flows of goods and services, with the boom in home deliveries resulting from several lockdowns, along with limited deliveries to hospitality and office locations. Despite this, eight Work Packages have been identified (five for Micro Consolidation, two for Macro Consolidation, and a joint data package), which will begin in Autumn 2021, once University staff are recruited. For Micro Consolidation, work includes identifying and engaging businesses which could take up trials in Southampton, Portsmouth and other locations, and the need to upskill local authority staff on sustainable freight management for longer-term delivery; and for Macro Consolidation, further development of the Southampton Sustainable Delivery Centre, and consideration of new macro consolidation options for the wider Solent Region.
2	Drones for medical Logistics (i.e. Uncrewed Aerial Vehicles or UAVs)	<i>In progress: trials ongoing</i>	Covid-response trials were conducted during 2020, involving the supply of medicines and hospital goods across Solent water using fixed-wing UAVs supplied by Windracers. Significant lessons were learnt from this that moved the Solent project on and advanced UK drone aviation significantly. This included recommendations relating to safety (airworthiness certification, dangerous goods licensing and packaging crash protection); the operational requirements resulting from drone design and integration of drones with traditional logistics activity; and the complexity of NHS procurement activity by separate

			<p>departments and surgeries, and the challenges posed by this.</p> <p>A further 11 Work Packages have now been identified for this project, including early trials using Vertical Take-off and Landing (VTOL) drones to ensure the work packages encompass any challenges by the previous fixed-wing trials. Work also includes development and design of “Class Lima” airspace for low-risk regions (to address the requirement for Temporary Danger Areas for individual UAVs), the development of an Uncrewed Traffic Management System (UTM) for the Solent Region, and examination of the impact of vibrations on medicines and specific handling requirements for dangerous goods. A further trial is planned for the Autumn of 2021.</p>
1 & 2	MarComms (Marketing and Communications)	<i>In progress: activities well under way</i>	<p>This work stream cuts across all the Solent FTZ programme/project activities, for which a strategic MarComms framework to support the desired behaviour change was developed in early 2021.</p> <p>A preliminary analysis of travel behaviours (and propensities for travel) by population segment across the region was conducted in February 2021, the implications for which were elucidated to the project teams, including the potential for adopting future mobility trials, the opportunities for change, the communications channels to deploy, and local implications (or understanding the nuances) for each local authority area. Following this, an external agent (Ubiquity) was appointed to assist with progressing the MarComms activities, and for supporting the projects in delivering their expected outcomes.</p> <p>Marcomms support for e-scooters, drone logistics and MaaS are all in progress. These involve, but are not limited to, pitching press releases, responding to media activity in line with the key messages of each project, coordinating the marcomms activities of partners and stakeholders, analysing the effectiveness of campaigns and delivering marketing activities to increase awareness of Theme 1 activities in particular.</p>
-	Solent FTZ Programme (summary)		<p>As might be expected of any 4-year major programme, the initial year has focused on setting up governance and establishing stakeholder groups, as well as the mobilisation of the individual projects, although good progress has already been made on the e-Scooter trials, and in developing the MaaS project within Theme 1 and for the initial 2020 drones pilot conducted for Theme 2, as well as in the development of an overarching MarComms framework and supporting activities. The expected major</p>

		<p>outcomes/impacts from these projects and how they will be evaluated are listed separately in the evolving Outcome Matrix, which has been referred to previously. Progress against this Matrix will be provided in future Annual Reports, and a summary of the approach to “baselining” (or how comparisons/progress against desired outcomes will be made year-on-side) is provided in Section 3. In addition, the M&amp;E for the Programme includes elements of process (as well as impact) evaluation, for which the early lessons learned during 2020-21 are summarised in Section 4. In addition, it should be noted that nearly all the interim staff who helped to initiate the projects have now been replaced with more permanent (fixed term) staff, with all the remaining roles recruited or deployed over the summer of 2021, apart from the replacement Theme 2 Lead, which is still outstanding. However, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) covering the Theme 2 projects between Solent Transport and the two Universities has recently been signed. This complements the MOU for the Theme 1 projects, which was signed at the end of 2020. A data sharing agreement between the four local authorities that form Solent Transport (i.e. Hampshire County Council (HCC), Isle of Wight Council (IoWC), Portsmouth City Council (PCC) and Southampton City Council (SCC)) is being finalised, along with a general “data transfer agreement” between the four authorities and the two Universities, which has been agreed in principle, and enables the Universities to act as data processing agents on behalf of Solent Transport for M&amp;E purposes. Solent Transport have also set up a DPS (Dynamic Purchasing System) with Portsmouth City Council which covers all FTZ work and will be of great benefit to the project.</p>
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By their nature, the Solent FTZ trials/projects continue to progress and/or evolve. Further information about these projects are available from Tim Forrester, the Solent FTZ Programme Manager, and Chris Hillcoat and Ian Wainwright, the current Theme 1 and Theme 2 Projects Leads respectively. It is expected that further coordination development of the Theme 2 projects will be necessary over the next year, in particular for the development of the freight consolidation trials, to help inform national policies, which in turn would benefit Solent FTZ.

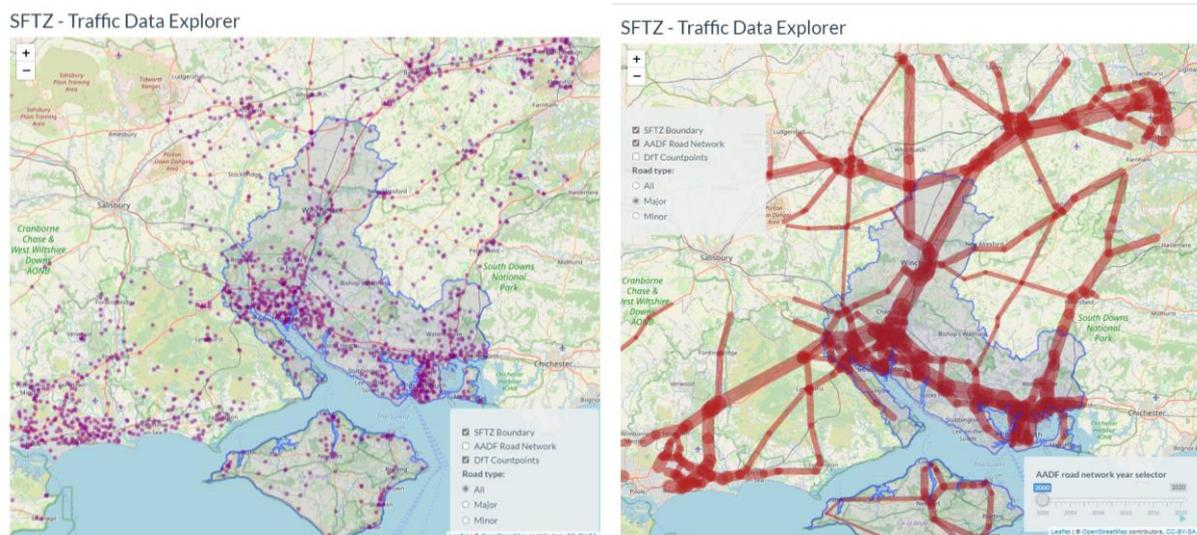
### **3. Approach to “Baselining”<sup>3</sup>**

At the Solent FTZ Programme level, M&E has a focus on policy research, as suggested by the DfT, although the evaluation approach is both “top-down”, and “bottom-up” from the projects (see evaluation framework). Data has started to be collected, and will be analysed to assess the effectiveness of the FTZ interventions’ design, implementation and outcomes, whether the associated costs and benefits were as anticipated, and whether they had any other consequences.

In terms of robustness, our general starting point for evaluating the major projects is at Level 3<sup>4</sup>, i.e. before-and-after comparisons for a treatment group versus a control group using “difference-in-differences” analysis, which reflects the transport industry norm (or general best practice). In some cases, it may be possible to conduct quasi-random comparisons based on exposure rates for treatment and control groups, i.e. analysis at Level 4, but the planning for this is still being worked through with the projects, with MaaS research surveys being possible candidates. For the smaller projects, Level 2 or even Level 1, i.e. simple before-and-after comparisons, may suffice - recognising the trade-off between costs and benefits involved.

As well as looking at outcome (or longer term impact) evaluation, we are also looking at how well the FTZ interventions are implemented, or “process evaluation”, and will follow the Guidance given by NatCen (and the DfT), starting with the early lessons learned - see Section 4.

In terms of Programme data collection and analysis, a tool is being developed by the University of Southampton to aggregate, visualise and report on the DfT traffic statistics for the Solent Transport region<sup>5</sup>, based on local authority boundaries - see Figure 1.



**Figure 1 - Solent FTZ “Traffic Data Explorer”, showing the region boundary (in blue), and: (left hand diagram) all the DfT count points, and (right hand diagram) the major road links**

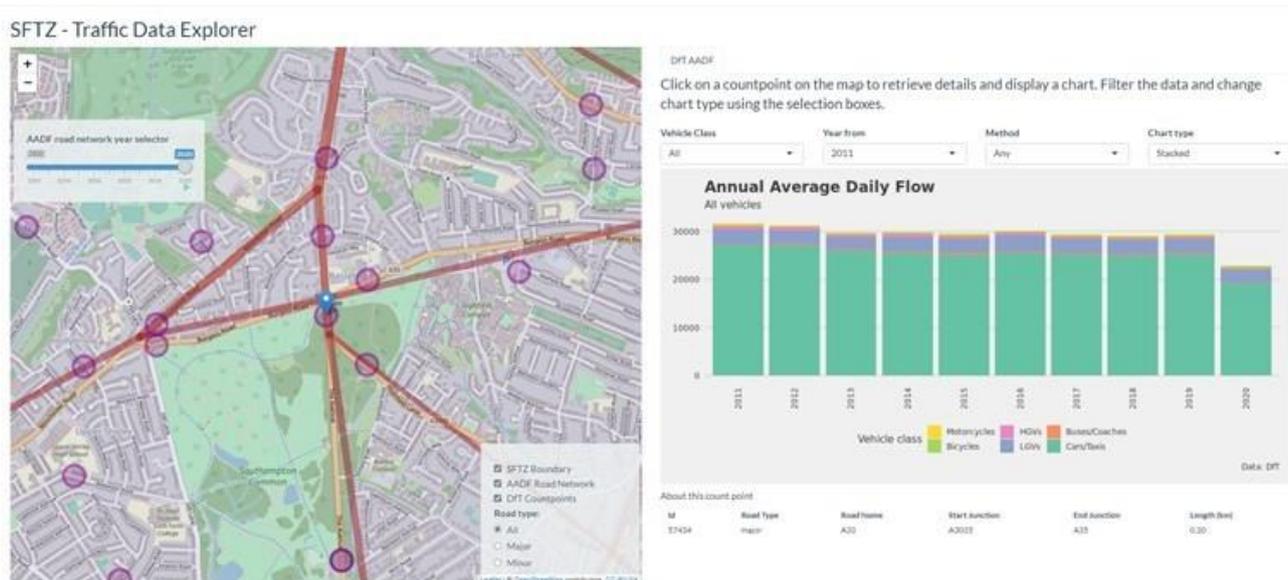
<sup>3</sup> This term is used for convenience only, as longitudinal studies typically require year-on-year comparisons over time, therefore implying the use of a baseline period or index.

<sup>4</sup> Methodology adapted by the What Works Centre from the Maryland Scientific Methods Scale, and as used to evaluate the Solent LSTF “Carbon Case Study”, 2012-15.

<sup>5</sup> Please note this tool is still in development, and will be presented to the Solent Transport project team later this year.

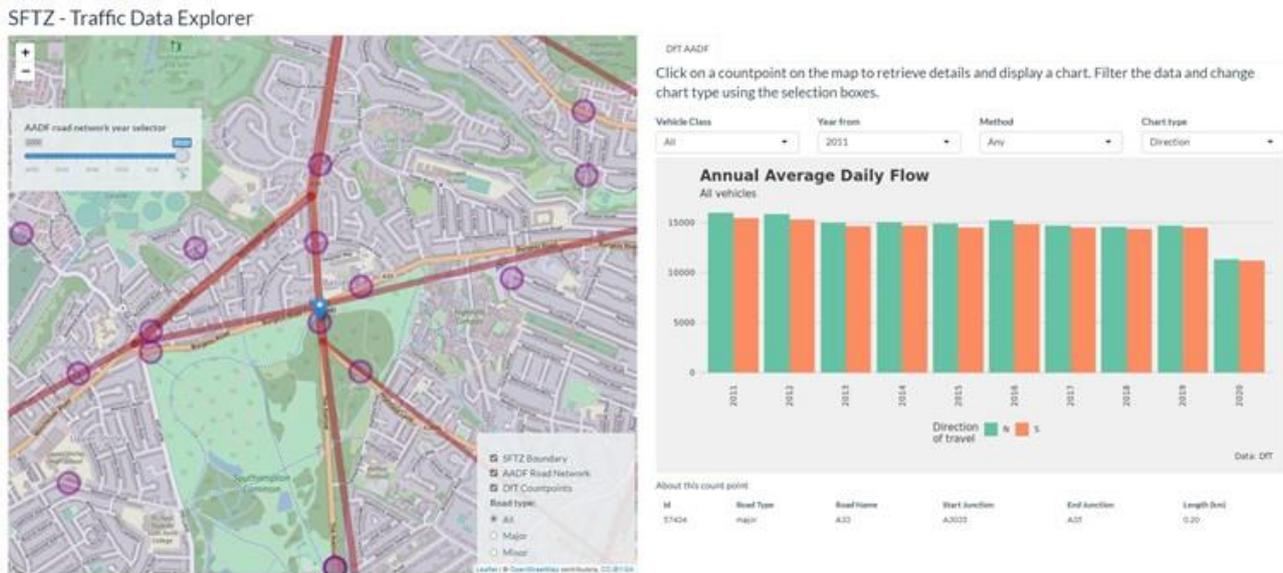
Unlike the tools provided by the DfT, this “Traffic Data Explorer” focuses only on the count points and road links in the Solent FTZ region. It also contains data for the nearby Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) area, as well as those in the Borough of Basingstoke and Deane (BDB), which should enable wider comparisons to be made across different regions/areas. The BCP area (and wider Dorset region) was chosen as a potential control group for difference-in-difference comparisons over time, as it is subject to Transforming Cities Funding (TCF) but do not have any FTZ schemes. Similarly the BDB area, which is smaller, but still in Hampshire, was chosen as another possible control, as we are aware it is subject to Local Enterprise Partnership traffic initiatives in and around its town centre area over the next few years, but is not subject to any FTZ (or TCF) funding. However, it should be noted that the effectiveness of these potential Level 3 (intervention versus control) comparisons across different regions/areas will not be known until further down the line, so at this point we are just compiling/monitoring the data necessary to provide these comparisons.

The Traffic Data Explorer is therefore designed to provide aggregate and point-specific analysis of traffic trends across the Solent FTZ region. For example, Figure 2 shows the average daily traffic flows at a major count point on the A33 (The Avenue) in Southampton between 2011 and 2020.



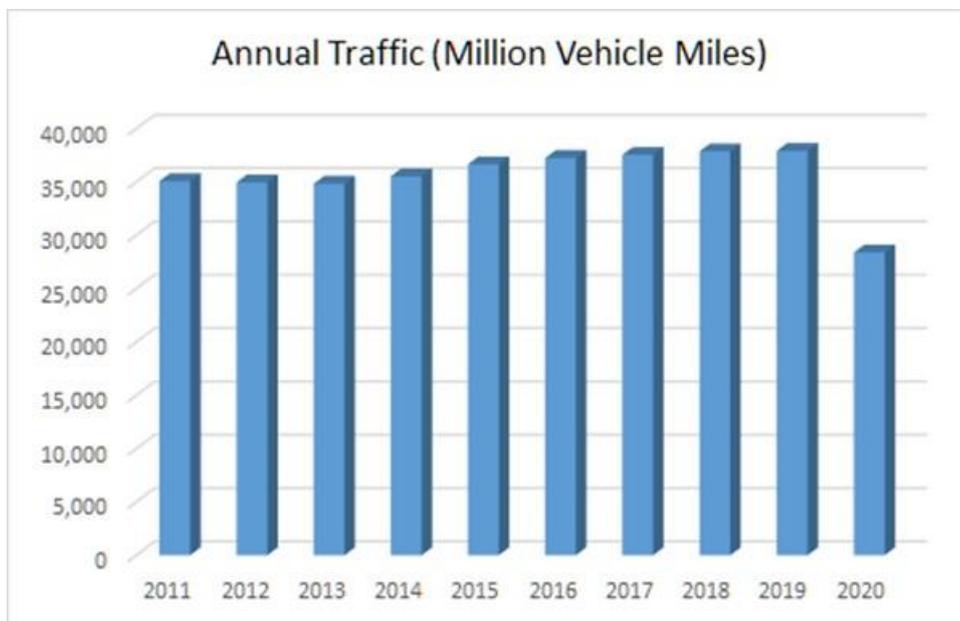
**Figure 2 - Traffic Data Explorer, showing annual average daily traffic flow over time (right diagram) for a count point on the A33 (The Avenue) in Southampton (left diagram, pin in blue)**

Note this data is typically annualised, i.e. presented as an annual average daily flow (AADF), so can provide good year-on-year comparisons of changes in traffic trends. For most of the major road count points, this data can also be broken down by vehicle class (as shown in Figure 2), including cars/taxi's, HGVs/LGVs, and buses/coaches, so has the potential to differentiate between freight and private car use, which will be useful for the separate Theme 1 and 2 comparisons/analyses. The data can also be separated between the North/South, and East/West bound traffic flows - see Figure 3, so can potentially provide more directional analysis where required.



**Figure 3 - Traffic Data Explorer, showing North (N) and South (S) bound traffic flows over time for the same count point on the A33 (The Avenue) in Southampton**

Figure 4 shows the total annual traffic, aggregated in million vehicle miles, across all the road count points in the Solent FTZ region, between 2011 and 2020. This includes all the DfT-reported major and minor roads in the region, and is derived by calculating the average daily vehicle flows (AADF) by the link length at each count point, and then 365 (the number of days in a year).



**Figure 4 - Total Annual Traffic for the Solent FTZ Region between 2011 and 2020**

Figure 4 shows a marked reduction in the number of miles travelled in the region from 2019 to 2020, representing over 25%, which are a direct consequence of Covid-19 and the associated national lockdowns which restricted both personal and goods travel, and prior to the implementation of any FTZ trials, other than the small, initial e-Scooter trial on the Isle of Wight at the end of 2020.

At this stage however, it is too early to establish whether overall 2021 traffic levels will (or have) returned to those from pre-Covid (or 2019) levels. Given, there may be many factors that influence current traffic levels, it may be necessary to apply a “rolling baseline” or evolving comparison model to establish the counterfactuals for comparing the effects of the different Solent FTZ projects.

In addition to the DfT statistics, other benchmarking data for “baseline” tracking and analysis is being collected from the local authorities using the regional real-time traffic data provided through Drakewell. These are collected from different count points, and provide a greater level of granularity, including potential hourly reporting for intra-day analysis (as oppose to using average daily flows). However, this data is limited only to some areas in the Solent FTZ region, including Portsmouth and Southampton, and it may not be possible to provide wider comparisons with other (control) areas such as BCP or Dorset (as this data is collected via a separate source). An initial analysis of this Drakewell data, comparing the pre- and post-Covid traffic volumes using the DfT recommended methodology<sup>6</sup>, was reported on in early 2021 (and is available separately on request). Further data analysis will be reported on in the next Annual Report to be produced in September 2022, and will include 2021 versus 2020 (as well as 2020 versus 2019) comparisons.

As well as looking at multi-modal traffic data, we are also investigating the potential to review bus operator usage in the region, for example through the ticketing database provided by Unicard, one of the supplier consortium partners on the MaaS project. However, this is subject to further data sharing agreement, although the University of Southampton is looking to establish a partnership with Unicard to develop a richer database for reporting and future-scenario planning potentially (the initiation of which is sponsored by the Solent FTZ Theme 1 Lead). Irrespective of this, we are also continuing to monitor bus and train usage in Portsmouth, Southampton and wider Hampshire, based on annual data provided by the DfT. We are also reviewing similar walking and cycling statistics provided by the DfT, e.g. via Sport England, to assist in the assessment of people’s changes in travel behaviour. However, we are not planning to conduct large-scale user surveys across the region, such as collecting regular travel diaries, as more in-depth travel-behaviour analysis should be targeted to the projects/interventions. These are therefore being discussed as part of the development of the projects’ M&E, e.g. in the surveys and focus groups being planned for MaaS, which will include richer qualitative information (as well as quantitative) data collection. In addition, given that the Theme 2 Consolidation projects will be examining/trialling changes in specific geographies, some specific 'before and after' assessments in designated areas and streets will be conducted to monitor and evaluate the outcome of specific trials. Since there are many unknowns in what has changed in terms of freight traffic by commodity, a top-down approach to the data analysis may suggest massive changes that are likely to be 'red-herrings' at the local level, and which requires further unpacking. Local sampling and further impact assessments will therefore be conducted by these projects.

Overall, this data collection and analysis, and the Traffic Data Explorer, form part of a wider evaluation framework (referred to earlier), which includes logic mapping for each major project, a process which is still ongoing, to improve the understanding of casual chains, and in particular to assess whether causal attribution is possible, and to understand the behavioural mechanisms related to changes in attitudes and intentions. The focus of the Programme M&E team activity over the past

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<sup>6</sup> Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-use-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic>

8 months has therefore been on assisting the project managers in the mobilisation of their projects, including helping them to understand the wider evaluation framework (including the guidance from NatCen/DfT), and the importance of building in M&E processes (and the associated data collection needed) into their project planning. Over the next year, the Programme M&E team will work with the project teams to further develop the evaluation framework, including a review of other relevant approaches (such as realist evaluation techniques and transtheoretical models) which might be appropriate, and also assess whether there are synergies and overlaps of the FTZ interventions with other major projects such as TCF. We will also continue to adopt the DfT-recommended comparison approach for monitoring the wider effects of Covid-19 on transport use and modal change during 2021 (as referred to above). We expect the picture to be more complex from mid-2021, as all lockdowns are lifted and gradually more people return to the office, and our challenge continues to be separating out the effects of the FTZ interventions from those of extraneous factors, including other major projects occurring at the same time, as well as the impact of Covid-19.

Having said this, and as referred to earlier, the focus of the Programme M&E is on policy research. While the impact evaluation (referred to above) is important, NatCen and the DfT have made clear that one of the key objectives of funding the FTZ programmes is to explore or trial future and innovative transport interventions, without fear of failure. The lessons learned while conducting these trials are therefore critical, whether the schemes are ultimately deemed a success or not in outcome/impact terms, as this information can help to inform future policy, and the potential for deploying these future transport technologies/innovation. Some of the early lessons learned during the mobilisation phase of the Solent FTZ Programme, or during 2020-21, are therefore given in Section 4.

#### **4. Lessons Learned from the Mobilisation Phase**

Overall, the programme has worked well so far, and good progress has been made on most of the projects, particularly the major ones. In terms of specific lessons learned:

- **Governance, leadership and stakeholder engagement**

Governance, leadership and stakeholder engagement has generally been excellent from the start, and credit for this should be given to the overall programme sponsor and the Senior Transport Planner involved (both from Solent Transport), as well as the Interim Programme Manager, who were instrumental in setting up the Steering Group and Programme Board, as well as ensuring appropriate representation from the four constituent local authority regions that are involved in the Solent region (a Programme Organisation chart is available on request). Further project-level boards has since been established, e.g. for MaaS and Solent Go, designed to oversee the delivery of the individual projects.

In addition, the Programme Manager (current and former interim) have worked with the University of Southampton to engage NatCen (and the DfT) at various levels, to coordinate the evaluation between the National and the Solent local FTZ Programmes, and a good working relationship has now been established.

- **Personnel/capacity, Procurement, and impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic**

However, contract approval (e.g. in signing MOUs) between the commissioning authority for Solent and the Universities have been delayed due to a shortage of legal expertise/resources from both sides, which has led to some delays in staff being deployed as originally planned. This shortage was due to pressures brought on both organisations by the Covid-19 Pandemic and associated lockdowns.

Similar issues arose for recruitment, and in other central supporting functions, such as procurement. For example, the ability to replace interim staff with more permanent ones while still following due process (and therefore the overall recruitment process) took longer than expected, inevitably leading to delays, and sometimes gaps, especially where the interim staff had come to the end of their contracts.

While some of these personnel/capacity issues continue to persist, it should be noted during "peak Covid" (circa March to September 2020), local authority decision-making capacity and staff capacity was often diverted to address Covid-related issues and items. This sometimes worked to the Programme's advantage (e.g. for the Drone trial), but also meant getting the governance approved and in place took longer than expected. Overall, because of Covid, the initial year of FTZ has generally attracted less attention and less decision maker/senior officer time and input than if it had been launched in, say, 2019, which presented a further challenge.

However, these impacts on personnel and capacity could not reasonably have been foreseen at the time of the FTZ bid proposals, and it should be recognised that 2020 marked a generational shift in how and when people could work, e.g. due to the closure of schools and/or need for isolation, as well as changes in travel behaviour due to imposed lockdowns, need for social distancing, and shifted government policies that encouraged physical activity (rather than people always staying at home). Being candid, the consequences of some of these delays may not be felt until further down the line, and it may be necessary for the programme/projects to rebase or even curtail some activities, without impacting on the original main objective to innovate and learn lessons from this (referred to above). In addition, Atkins was commissioned to undertake a review of the Programme at an early stage, which was submitted to (and agreed by) the DfT, and has proven to be valuable in informing the initial alterations to the programme/profile for some of the projects (for example in fast-tracking the MaaS and e-scooters trials, while deferring or reviewing e.g. DDRT).

- **Timeframes**

The early MarComms work suggest we need to keep planning flexible, with built-in adaptability for shifting timeframes, given the impact of Covid-19 has been wide-ranging in affecting not only people's travel patterns, with many working from home (or not at all), but also where people are now choosing to live (i.e. shifting demographics), and where they holiday (at least in the short term).

Given these uncertainties, for the Theme 2 projects, the need for flexibility has been embedded into the projects themselves. There is a need for the team to remain focused on the wider programme outcomes, and not be too prescriptive of the precise outputs at this stage. As a result (and also relevant to planning), they did not initially allocate precise amounts of funding to specific trials, and the plan is to start industry engagement shortly to 'harvest' practical and measurable solutions.

- **Planning of resources/budget**

Having a multi-disciplinary team that can and have adapted to changing circumstance has provided significant resilience to the delivery of the programme. The dedicated Theme Leads have effectively and efficiently managed and mitigated issues arising, while FTZ team members embedded in local authorities have added real value by offering direct support and creating effective local buy-in. The resource planning approach is consistently under review to ensure the Programme has the correct level of resource and skillsets required to deliver against agreed objectives.

The experience of e-scooter resource requirement provides a valuable benchmark for the bike share project. The importance of having planned resource from legal, procurement and highway licencing teams from the outset has been a valuable lesson to facilitate rapid deployment of this project.

Budget planning is in line with the profile submitted within the bid and as externally approved. It remains an area that is actively and robustly monitored by the Programme/project managers to ensure they are delivering on their commitments in alignment with the funding agreement.

- **Barriers to planning and implementation and how these have been overcome**

One of the reasons for postponing the launch of the Bike/e-bike Share project was due to a shortage of bikes and associated equipment. This was made worse by the earlier and stricter lockdown policies imposed in China, where much of the basic components for bikes (and especially e-bikes) are made. Demand also outstripped supply in the UK as a consequence of local and national lockdowns last year (and into this year), as physical activity was encouraged, and cycling became more popular. A decision was therefore made to postpone the launch until late Spring/Summer 2022. However, discussions have been ongoing with potential suppliers, to assess the ongoing viability of supply (and what suppliers could commit to), and the new timetable currently looks realistic.

It should also be noted that e-bikes can have an electronic control unit inside them, which is sometimes used to restrict their speed, as well as to collect operation information, such as miles travelled. At the time of writing, there continues to be a global shortage on micro-chips, and this could also continue to affect future supply. Therefore, other authorities planning to launch similar large scale/wide area schemes should conduct further due diligence of potential suppliers during the procurement phase, to ensure they have the realistic capacity to source the bikes, and/or that this can be done within reasonable time frames.

- **Responses to other challenges (internal and external)**

There have been several other lessons learned during this early phase of the Programme. These include:

1. Ensuring sufficient support for procurement to make the process easier. For example, while the DPS took some time to set up, this framework agreement has since made it easier than most public sector procurement, in the opinion of the Programme/project managers. Like most local authorities, there is generally insufficient staff working in procurement roles.
2. Recruitment and availability of suitably skilled and experienced staff for some posts has been a challenge; in particular the Theme 2 Freight/Logistics Lead post and the Monitoring/Evaluation lead post. Relatively few candidates appear to exist to fill these roles with suitable public sector experience and at affordable rates (given there is high competition for their skills). This could be an indication of a skills gap in these areas in the public sector. This would be particularly problematic for local authorities looking to implement initiatives to decarbonise freight (which will be increasingly important in future).

Some of the Solent FTZ projects have added scope/activities around training and widening skills/knowledge/experience in some of these fields, to try and tackle this apparent deficit.

3. It is important to put data sharing and finance sharing agreements in place in order to pay suppliers through whichever LTA holds the contract, as the Programme/projects require close inter-working among all four local authorities that form the Solent FTZ region.

In addition, the emergency responses associated with Covid-19 has prompted several active travel interventions in the region. In some ways, these rapid trials of some complimentary measures such as additional cycling infrastructure (which was expected to be delivered over a longer timescale via the local TCF programmes) have supported/complimented the early FTZ initiatives such as the e-scooter trials. However, these Emergency Active Travel Fund (and associated) schemes also sometimes became politically contentious (cf. the Low Traffic Neighbourhood ones in London), absorbing bandwidth and capacity away from FTZ schemes, and in some cases may have generated some risks to the longer term, more permanent implementation of some TCF projects. Whilst this does not significantly undermine the trials that the Solent FTZ Programme is delivering, there are some linkages to TCF and related programmes which have become more complex to handle as a consequence.

- [Lessons Learned from the Covid-19 Response Drone Trial](#)

As well as the general programme/project lessons learned above, the Drone Logistics trial in 2020 provided further lessons learned and valuable information for taking this project forward. A full report on this was published earlier this year, a copy of which has been sent to NatCen/DfT.

## **Acknowledgements**

The contributions of Hampshire County Council, Isle of Wight Council, Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council, University of Portsmouth and University of Southampton, as well as all the Solent Future Transport Zone team members in producing this report is grateful acknowledged.