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Title of meeting:	Cabinet Member for Transport decision meeting
Subject:	Solent Future Transport Zone
Date of meeting:	29 th February 2024
Report by:	Felicity Tidbury, Assistant Director - Economy, Planning and Transport
Report Author:	Gareth James, Transport Strategy Team Leader
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Cabinet Member for Transport
Wards affected:	All

1. Purpose of report

1.1. To provide a progress update on the Solent Future Transport Zone (FTZ) programme.

2. Background

2.1. In March 2020, Solent Transport was awarded £28.8m of funding from the Department for Transport's (DfT's) Future Transport Zones (FTZ) programme to implement a programme of trials of innovative approaches to transport across the Solent area, from 2020/21 to 2023/24.

2.2. The programme was to be implemented by a programme team, partly employed centrally by Solent Transport but also with delivery of projects in different localities supported by locally embedded staff within the participating local authorities. Significant elements of some projects were to be delivered by the University of Southampton and the University of Portsmouth.

2.3. The FTZ programme sought to address issues relating to high car dependency, traffic congestion, low productivity, poor air quality, low physical activity levels and poor public health, and impacts of movement of goods by road projects.

2.4. The projects outlined to address these issues were focused on two overarching themes:

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Theme 1: Personal Mobility: providing new modes of travel, and developing new, complementary means of planning and paying for journeys, strengthening, and deepening the use of sustainable modes.

Theme 2: Sustainable Urban Logistics: developing innovative approaches to address impacts of freight & logistics in urban environments.

- 2.5. The DfT subsequently announced the possibility for FTZ local authorities to run rental e-scooter trials as part of the transport restart response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following a review of areas of the Solent FTZ which may have been impacted by the pandemic, notably Liftshare, Solent Transport undertook work with the DfT to enable the reallocation of circa £900k from areas of the FTZ programme to provide a subsidised set of rental e-scooter trials across the region.
- 2.6. Acknowledging the impact of the pandemic on the earlier part of the FTZ programme, the DfT approved Solent Transport's request for an extension of one year (from June 2024 to June 2025) on the basis that it could be delivered in line with the original budget allocation. This extension has provided additional time for the programme to meet key objectives, including delivery of a comprehensive Monitoring & Evaluation strategy, and opportunities for projects to be self-sustaining beyond the FTZ period.

3. Project updates

Theme 1 – Personal mobility

Mobility as a Service (MaaS) app, Breeze

- 3.1. The initial procurement process to select MaaS technology partners began in 2020 and concluded in mid-2021 with the selection of Trafi as the lead product developer. Once selected, the project entered a period where the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) was defined and agreed, with work starting on the initial BETA version of the app.
- 3.2. Early versions were provided to the core project team to test, and the financial back office was progressed, but risks of undertaking a full launch of the app were identified and it was decided to adopt a staged release. This meant release the BETA app to a small, controlled group of university students and project team members (~200 users) to identify any glitches and update the app accordingly.
- 3.3. The final item required to release the BETA app was the Breeze brand itself. This was designed in collaboration with the Solent Transport, University of Portsmouth, University of Southampton, and Solent Transport's marketing partner Ubiquity, based on extensive market research. This enabled the first version of the Breeze app to be made available in app stores in November 2021.

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- 3.4. Breeze subsequently went through a staged release, opening to council employees, public first adopters, and then the wider public but without any marketing. Basic marketing activities commenced in late 2023 and will increase throughout 2024, supported by several trial incentives.
- 3.5. Since the first BETA app was released in November 2021, many services and features have been added, including:
 - Selected products from Xelabus, First Bus, Stagecoach, and Go South Coast
 - Rail and waterborne travel: Hovertravel and National Rail
 - Micromobility – Voi and Beryl PAYG
 - Car club: Enterprise Car Club
- 3.6. Breeze also includes a journey planner and active trip guidance, features that are being continuously improved over the life of the project.
- 3.7. The number of Breeze users has grown steadily in line with expectations and is now approaching 20,000, with approximately 2,500 new users joining every month.
- 3.8. Breeze will continue to develop with the addition of further products, safety features, accessibility features, payment methods, and validation token technology.

Rental e-scooter trial

- 3.9. Portsmouth's rental e-scooter trial launched in March 2021 and is operated by Voi, who were selected following an open procurement and who also operate the Southampton scheme. The Isle of Wight scheme is operated by Beryl.
- 3.10. Portsmouth City Council has approved extensions to its rental e-scooter trial on four occasions in accordance with the DfT's extensions of the trial at a national level. The most recent such approval, for a 2-year extension to May 2026, was granted at the [Cabinet Member for Transport Decision Meeting on 30 January 2024](#).
- 3.11. A key reason the rental e-scooter trial was extended is the evidence that it supports the ambitions of Portsmouth's adopted Transport Strategy 2021-2038, particularly Policy C. The council's most recent survey (September 2022) indicated 54% of Voi rental e-scooter trips would otherwise have been made by car or taxi. Voi's latest survey was carried out more recently in December 2023 and puts this figure at 38%, which remains high by comparison to other schemes in the UK and around the world. Based on Voi's mode shift survey data, it is estimated the trial had removed more than 400,000 car trips from Portsmouth's roads by December 2023.
- 3.12. A summary of key statistics for the Portsmouth rental e-scooter trial since launch (March 2021 to December 2023) is set out below:
 - o Unique users: 81,097

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- Total distance travelled: 2,388,304 km
- Total rides: 959,682
- Average ride time: 12.9 minutes
- Average distance travelled: 2.5 km
- Parking compliance: 96%
- Car trips replaced: 422,605
- PM2.5 saved: 31 kg

3.13. Analysis Solent Transport commissioned by TRL, an independent transport research centre, has indicated a general downward trend in rental e-scooter accident rates¹ in Portsmouth since the trial began, with the accident rate in every month from April 2022 to March 2023 being lower than in the corresponding month the previous year.

Beryl Bikes by Breeze

3.14. Portsmouth's bike share scheme launched in October 2022 and is operated by Beryl, who were selected following an open procurement and who also operate the Southampton and Isle of Wight schemes.

3.15. Whilst bike share ridership has grown steadily during the first year of operation, revenue from rides is lower than that required to generate a commercially viable scheme. The situation is consistent across all Beryl schemes in the Solent area, and it has therefore been decided to procure a sole micromobility operator for all existing micromobility schemes (bikes and rental e-scooters) from summer 2024 onwards as approved at the [Cabinet Member for Transport Decision Meeting on 30 January 2024](#).

3.16. A summary of key statistics for the Portsmouth bike share scheme since launch (October 2022 to December 2023) is set out below:

- Unique users: 9,447
- Total distance travelled: 119,451 km
- Total rides: 49,738
- Average ride time: 19 minutes
- Average distance travelled: 2.43 km
- Parking compliance: 96%

Mobility credits

3.17. Mobility credits projects, sometimes referred to as "Universal Basic Mobility", provide credit to eligible residents to use on transport services. They often promote more sustainable transport modes, reducing the need to have access to a private vehicle. The mobility credits scheme that forms part of the FTZ programme was designed to evaluate the way eligible residents in the Solent region would travel if they had more financial freedom to do so.

¹ [Solent-FTZ-E-scooter-Trial-Factsheet-Summer-2023.pdf \(solent-transport.com\)](#)

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- 3.18. A key objective of the project is to understand what impacts mobility credits have on participants, such as improving access to employment and education, and influencing travel behaviour.
- 3.19. The Solent mobility credits project provides £50 of travel credit each month for 12 months to residents aged under 30 and in receipt of council tax support.
- 3.20. It launched on 1 December 2023 in Havant Borough, and expanded to cover Portsmouth, Southampton, and the Isle of Wight on 1 February 2024. Of the 296 applications from eligible residents in Portsmouth, 226 have become mobility credits participants, having registered an account with the Breeze app and received their first £50 of mobility credit on 1 February 2024.
- 3.21. Participants can use their mobility credit to purchase all travel products and services available in the Breeze app.
- 3.22. In addition to a baseline survey at the point of application, participants will be required to complete two further feedback surveys during the 12-month trial, and a final post-intervention survey two months after the end of the trial.

Dynamic Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT)

- 3.23. Pilots of existing schemes on the Isle of Wight and in Southampton are underway in phase one and involve applying DDRT technology and operating principles to two existing Community Transport providers – SCIA Dial-a-Ride and FYT Bus.
- 3.24. DDRT for Portsmouth will be a shared transport service which runs to a timetable using taxis, private hire vehicles or minibuses. It can be more economic than a conventional bus, as journeys only run when they are booked.
- 3.25. It will be open to the public, with fares like local buses. It is 'dynamic' because journeys may be booked even after the journey has started.
- 3.26. The Portsmouth scheme is being developed to follow in phase two in 2024, with Portsmouth City Council also securing funding through the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for two pilot schemes, which should start in early 2024. These schemes will be complementary to the FTZ-funded DDRT trial as detailed in section 3.31 below.
- 3.27. The first BSIP-funded pilot is a citywide scheme to provide public transport links to unserved areas of the city, connecting residents with the conventional bus network or taking them direct to destinations such as Ocean Retail Park, and addressing the travel needs of residents isolated by geography, age, mobility, or income.

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- 3.28. These DDRT pilots are not intended to replace taxi and private hire provision in the city but will build on the old dial-a-ride model and best practice nationwide. This will include promoting a service which is open to all and not seen as limited to sections of the community, which often undermines the sustainability of such schemes. The vehicle will be clearly branded, telling people where it is going and that it is for them.
- 3.29. An assessment of likely demand and proposed routes has been evaluated with input from Age UK Portsmouth, Sheltered Housing managers, councillors, and representatives of organisations advocating for those with disabilities.
- 3.30. A second pilot will look to provide a taxi-share service for Port Solent, likely to link with the X4 bus route, Tesco, North Harbour Tesco Cosham. Taxi-share operates to a timetable and has fares similar to local buses, but only runs when a journey is booked.
- 3.31. A survey of Port Solent residents was undertaken. with responses received from 138 residents. Two thirds of whom said that they would probably or definitely use such as service to get to the X4 bus service on Southampton Road, visit Tesco or go into Cosham to catch the train or other buses or use local shops.
- 3.32. Respondents said the most popular time to use the service would be between 9am and midday. Seven businesses also responded to the survey, and it is likely that the proposed service would operate from 9am to 2pm to cater for the lunchtime trade. The pilot could be extended or adapted according to usage.
- 3.33. So that people can book by smartphone app and telephone, the service will use a back office booking system provided by Padam Mobility. A discovery exercise is underway between Trafi (the Breeze app developer) and Padam Mobility to work towards integrating DDRT into the Breeze app.

Solent Go enhancements

- 3.34. The FTZ has facilitated the creation of the new 'Saver 5' ticket and there is an aspiration to develop further new products.
- 3.35. All products are being integrated into the Breeze app to make buying and using tickets even easier.
- 3.36. Solent Transport are working to make new bus tickets in Portsmouth available through Solent Go to especially help families, groups, and young people.

Breeze for Business

- 3.37. Following the pandemic when it was determined that Liftshare was no longer a viable project, funding was reallocated from the FTZ programme to a new initiative, Breeze for Business.

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- 3.38. Breeze for Business is a business engagement project, which, aims to engage with large trip-generating sites in the Solent area with the purpose of enabling them to promote Breeze to their staff, visitors, customers, and others associated with their organisations. Through this engagement, Solent Transport and its local authority partners are seeking to influence travel behaviour change. By promoting the use of Breeze, organisations can help staff, visitors and customers choose more sustainable transport options, while also helping to achieve their sustainability goals.
- 3.39. The Breeze for Business dedicated webpage went live in June 2023, hosting a suite of digital materials and toolkits to help businesses promote Breeze. The materials on the Breeze for Business webpage are free to download and are available to all businesses at this link: <https://breezeuk.app/breeze-for-business/>
- 3.40. Solent Transport are actively supporting around 46 priority organisations, including 16 in Portsmouth, to develop their engagement plans for the promotion of Breeze to their staff and visitors. Options to deliver bespoke corporate features and services for a subset of those organisations are also being explored with transport engagement staff from the participating authorities.

Theme 2 – Sustainable urban logistics

Drones for medical logistics

- 3.41. This project aims to research how Uncrewed Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), or “drones”, could be used to facilitate medical logistics in the Solent area, and trial UAV deliveries of time-sensitive and regulated medical samples Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) for the benefit of the NHS and to improve the quality of life of the residents of the Solent area.
- 3.42. Solent Transport and its delivery partners have identified locations to take off and land drones, allowing finalisation of the Airspace Change Proposal to submit to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to allow further flying trials in 2024.
- 3.43. A review has been undertaken of the capabilities of commercially available drones, with regular reviews planned annually to inform the type of drones used in the FTZ trial.
- 3.44. Solent Transport is also negotiating a partnership with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary and Thames Valley Police Drones Team to collaborate on flying activity and share data throughout the project.
- 3.45. Project partners have tested dropping bespoke medical packaging from a drone at different heights up to 400ft to test how well it protects the medicines inside.

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- 3.46. The FTZ trial will provide a greater understanding of how drones could be integrated into the NHS supply chain and what processes might be required to facilitate this.
- 3.47. Hospitals could get test results and give vital medicines to patients more quickly which, ultimately, saves lives. Moving some NHS logistics off the road and into the sky could also help reduce congestion and improve air quality.
- 3.48. Long-term, it is hoped the local skills and knowledge developed through this project can enable the Solent area to be a centre of excellence in this emerging sector.

Micro consolidation

- 3.49. This project will trial "micro consolidation" hubs in Portsmouth and Winchester from summer 2024, delivering goods to private homes and businesses more efficiently by consolidating parcels into a single hub from which the "last mile" of the journey to the destination address can be completed by lower emission modes such as cargo bikes. These projects are designed to trial their potential to reduce the large and growing number of goods vehicles circulating in Portsmouth and other cities nationwide.
- 3.50. In Portsmouth, a longlist of approximately 50 potential sites was evaluated through data analysis, site visits, and input from Solent Transport's academic partners.
- 3.51. The Bridge Shopping Centre and Cascades Shopping Centre emerged as the most suitable, scoring highest against a set of criteria agreed by the project team and the council. The criteria were categorised as follows:
 - Availability
 - Social / environmental impacts
 - Parking spaces
 - External access
 - Highway capacity
 - Payment / hours
 - Internal operations
 - Utilities
 - Security
 - Visibility
 - Density
- 3.52. The planning requirements for both shortlisted sites are being investigated, while engagement with operators is underway to seek feedback on the sites and operating model to ensure it is a commercially attractive proposition.
- 3.53. While the Cascades site is located inside the Clean Air Zone and the Bridge Shopping Centre is located outside it, operators will be required to ensure all their vehicles are compliant with the council's Clean Air Zone standards regardless of the site selected.

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3.54. A report is planned to be brought to the Cabinet Member for Transport with further details of the site and operator selection process.

Macro consolidation

3.55. Macro consolidation projects are designed to reduce overall delivery trips into urban centres by consolidating goods on to fewer vehicles.

3.56. There is an existing Sustainable Distribution Centre (SDC) in Southampton, operated by Meachers Global Logistics on behalf of Southampton City Council.

3.57. The FTZ project team has reviewed the existing use cases of the Southampton's SDC to understand current consolidation activity and inform recommendations for further trials and in the Solent region, for example deliveries to the University of Southampton halls of residence.

3.58. The possibility of using existing local authority courier vehicles and routes to undertake additional pick-up and drop-off activity for local NHS trusts is being explored, aiming to reduce the overall numbers of vehicles on the road.

3.59. While no macro consolidation trials are planned for Portsmouth as part of the FTZ programme, FTZ-affiliated researchers at the University of Portsmouth are preparing a theoretical study that could be used to inform future macro consolidation in the city.

4. Next steps

4.1. The Solent FTZ programme and associated funding is scheduled to end on 30th June 2025. Monitoring and evaluation of the programme will continue for the duration of the programme with a full report brought to a Cabinet Member for Transport meeting on completion.

4.2. In the interim, the council is working with Solent Transport to understand how some projects within the FTZ programme (for example, the bike share scheme) might continue beyond June 2025 and be incorporated into "business as usual" for the council, noting any resource implications. In principle, all projects that continue after that date will need to be self-sustaining, so commerciality is being carefully reviewed across the programme to inform future recommendations.

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Signed by (Director)

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Solent Future Transport Zone	TT 29 Oct 20 - Solent Future Transport Zone report.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)
Portsmouth Micromobility Operations	Micromobility Operations Transport Committee Report FINAL.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)
E-Scooter Trial Factsheet, Summer 2023	Solent-FTZ-E-scooter-Trial-Factsheet-Summer-2023.pdf (solent-transport.com)