

Introduction

This document represents Surrey County Council's response to TR020005 AS-121 ([Accounting for Covid-19 in Transport Modelling](#)). Although the results of the post-Covid forecast shows a lower level of baseline traffic than previously forecast in the DCO Application, the impact of the GAL NRP traffic on the network is now proportionally greater. Indeed, as there is now less baseline congestion in this post-Covid forecast, car travel is more attractive, resulting in a lower public transport mode share. Crucially, it shows that in 2032, GAL is not able to meet the mode share targets set out in the SACs for both passengers and staff. SCC agrees with TR020005 AS-121 para 6.5.10 that the SAC should not be changed but is concerned that despite failing to meet targets in 2032, no further mitigation is proposed.

Impacts

SCC notes that the modelling has been updated in several aspects in addition to reflecting post-Covid growth forecasts (TR020005 AS-121). This modelling has been reviewed for Deadline 2 and the following text summarises the differences between the DCO Application modelling and the Covid-19 sensitivity test; with key changes in impacts by mode also reported.

Changes to the highway assumptions:

- A number of strategic schemes have been updated or removed from the COVID sensitivity test:
 - Lower Thames Crossing – removed
 - A27 Arundel Bypass – added
 - M25 J10-16 Smart Motorway Programme – removed
 - Local highway schemes including the Cheals Roundabout scheme (Crawley), North West Horley Development, and signals at A26/ B2192 junction (Lewes) – reviewed and minor assumption changes applied.

Impact of changes to highways assumptions:

- Lower background demand and therefore less baseline congestion in this post-Covid forecast results in car travel becoming more attractive and consequently results in a lower public transport mode share.
- The impact of airport traffic is similar to those shown in the DCO Application, with the main increases in traffic forecast to be on the M23 Spur and M23 both north and south of Junction 9, with small increases on the M25 and small increases on the local roads near Gatwick, such as the A217.
- Figure 15 shows there are a number of local roads to the west of the Airport and in Horley that experienced reductions in AADT in the Application, that now show small increases in AADT in the sensitivity test (para 6.6.15).
- Updates to the assumptions around where traffic loads onto the network for the North West Horley development lead to localised rerouting in this area impacting flows routing along the A217.
- SCC are concerned about increased traffic at the A217/Meath Green Lane in Horley and Effingham Road/Copthorne Bank in Copthorne and despite these increases, no mitigation is proposed.

Changes to the rail assumptions:

- The post-Covid 2023 rail timetable adopted using the latest Network Rail CIF file.

Impact of changes to rail assumptions

- The 24-hour number of passenger trips, kilometres and hours in the sensitivity tests are on average 15% lower across all four modelled years compared to the DCO Application.

- There is an increase in rail volume due to the impact of the Project, especially on the Brighton Main Line north of Gatwick, where there is an increase of about 450 passengers travelling towards London and 750 passengers travelling away from London in the AM and in the PM period an increase of around 400 passengers travelling towards London and 530 passengers travelling away from London. However, this impact is not as large as the Application scenario.
- The sensitivity test generally shows that crowding on trains will be less severe than previously forecast.

Changes to the bus/coach assumptions:

- Removal of Gatwick Flyer routes (which stopped in 2019) and the adjustment of coach frequencies to relate to air passenger numbers in 2023.

Impact of changes to bus/coach assumptions

- There are minimal changes in demand for these modes and thus only a small change in overall bus/coach mode share.

Implications

For both the future baseline and NRP scenarios, the sensitivity tests show a small reduction in the public transport mode shares driven primarily by reduced congestion on the road network and potentially also a result of the post-Covid rail timetable. As a result, the public transport mode share for air passengers is lower than estimated in the Application and Table 32 and Table 33 of TR020005 AS-121 shows that in 2032, GAL is not able to meet the mode share targets set out in the SACs for both passengers and staff.

This demonstrates the sensitivity of the model to both relatively small changes to background highway demand that has manifested itself in reduced journey times by car and small changes in the rail timetable. Both of these changes have conspired to result in greater use of car as the mode of access to the airport and reduced public transport mode share. It suggests the fine margins at which the surface access strategy was set to achieve the public transport mode shares reported in the application, adding to the uncertainty over the forecasts and potential impacts. SCC has long asked for other sensitivity tests to be undertaken such that the impacts of not meeting the mode share SAC can be understood.

Furthermore, this post-Covid sensitivity test has raised a number of issues that may well play out in reality should the Annual Monitoring Report produced as part of SAC Commitment 16 show similar results. SCC would now like to understand how GAL would respond in such circumstances, as the absence of a Green Controlled Growth approach such as that proposed at Luton Airport, means that growth could continue unabated yet the mitigation remains undefined and the impacts on our network understated.