

£155million boost for roads and transport in South Essex.

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This stretch of the A13 at Stanford-le-Hope is one of the region's roads in line for a major overhaul

WORK is set to begin on three major transport schemes in South Essex after the Government agreed to plough in £155.8m of funding.

A four-and-a-half mile stretch of the A13 between Pitsea and the Orsett Cock, in Thurrock, is to be widened to six lanes while the A127 will get an overhaul at four-pinch points.

Southend's Victoria Avenue will also get a facelift, while transport in the town will get a £7million boost.

Funding for the projects, seen as crucial to the economy in South Essex, was secured by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Government announced today that the region is to receive £442.2million of funding as part of a "Growth Deal", meaning important road improvements can begin.

A total of £49.6million will be invested in 2015/16 in the A127, a sustainable transport programme across South Essex, and an integrated transport package for Basildon – which will tweak junctions to prevent congestion.

In 2016/17 and beyond Thurrock will also see £5million investment to its cycling network, plus £7.5m to improve public transport to the London Gateway from Stanford-le-Hope and reconstruction of the A1014.

A £90million programme to widen the A13 between the Orsett Cock roundabout and Pitsea is among the schemes given the go-ahead.

DP World, which is spending £1.5billion building the London Gateway port and logistics park in Stanford-le-Hope had already pledged £10million to the scheme.

David Burch, of the Essex Chambers of Commerce said: “It’s very good news for Essex and the Thames Gateway area in particular.

“The local enterprise partnership submitted a long list of ‘asks’, but these are some of the key things asked for.

“We very much welcome them. They are certainly all things identified by businesses as potential barriers to growth.

“These are steps along the right road, if you excuse the pun, to break down those barriers and help businesses grow.”

The A127 is set for a multi-million pound revamp with four pinch points earmarked for multi-million pound overhauls to unblock traffic jams and boost the South Essex economy.

The Fairglen and Nevendon interchanges and Kent Elms and Bell junctions will all be improved over the next six years.

A new slip road connecting the A127 to the A130 at the Fairglen Interchange, between Rayleigh and Basildon, will be built, there will be extra lanes added at the Kent Elms and Bell junctions in Southend and an extra lane added to the Nevendon Interchange roundabout to Wickford.

The tricky revamp of the Fairglen Interchange, which is used by more than 70,000 vehicles a day, could cost up to £15million alone as it may need the compulsory purchase of Morbec Farm, estimated at more than £1million.

Fourth lanes could be added to the approaches in £5million overhauls of the Kent Elms and Bell junctions and the dedicated right turn feeder lanes extended to prevent waiting vehicles from blocking through-traffic.

Footbridges at both junctions would be lost to carriageway widening and replaced by “toucan” crossings, which are for pedestrians and cyclists.

A third lane could be added to the roundabout at the Nevendon Interchange, stopping traffic heading to Wickford via the A132 from backing up onto the A127, which would cost of £893,000.

At the time of going to press the SE LEP couldn’t confirm where the £49.6million would be allocated.

Southend will get a major facelift, with more £6.7million to flatten derelict office blocks blighting Victoria Avenue and £7million to improve transport in the town centre.

It is hoped the redevelopment, which is expected to include improvements to Queensway, will help create 2,000 new homes and up to 6,500 new jobs.

Peter Jones, chairman of the SE LEP, said: “This initial funding is tremendously good news for our businesses and residents – addressing years of under-funding of the south east’s transport network. It’s not only a matter of improving mobility around the area but providing links which open up major new sites for housing and business development.”

WHO IS GETTING WHAT?

- £80million towards widening the A13
- £6.7million to create a growth hub in central Southend and improve Victoria Avenue
- £49.6million towards A127 improvements, improved traffic flow in Basildon and sustainable transport across South Essex
- £7million to improve transport in central Southend
- £7.5million for an integrated transport package to improve the London Gateway from Stanford-le-Hope and reconstruction of the A1014
- £5million to improve Thurrock’s cycling network.