

MINUTES OF SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOARD MEETING

Date: Friday 8th July 2005 at 2pm.

Location: Room GA/GB, Government Office for the South East, Bridge House, Guildford.

ATTENDEES

Chair: Andy Roberts – Government Office for the South East

Members: Baston, Cllr Jill – Regional Assembly (Southampton City Council)
Drake, Gwyn – Highways Agency
Howarth, Cllr John – Regional Assembly (Reading)
Hepburn, Ian – Regional Assembly (Environmental Partners)
King, Clive – Confederation of Passenger Transport (Arriva Buses Ltd)
Lockwood, Tim – Regional Assembly (Economic Partners)
Mills, Julie – Strategic Rail Authority
Mitchell, Cllr Keith – Regional Assembly (Oxfordshire County Council)
Wyld, Brian – Regional Assembly (Social Partners)

Officers: Bevan, Paul – South East England Regional Assembly
Cooper, David – Government Office for the South East
Hudson, Paul – SEEDA
Rose, Nigel - SEFS
Tugwell, Martin – South East England Regional Assembly

Secretary: Anthony Griffiths – Government Office for the South East

Observers: Baxter, Pat – Reading Borough Council
Coote, Philip – West Sussex Council
Lee, Steve – Surrey County Council
Tripodi, Giuseppe – South East England Regional Assembly

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Mary Balin (Regional Assembly) and John Peel (SEEDA). Andy Roberts thanked the Board for agreeing to the late change in venue caused by the previous day's London bombings.

2. Minutes from 19 May 2005 and matters arising

- 2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed, with the proviso that Page 6 would be changed to cover a misunderstanding of terminology (the reference should to be to Highway Agency schemes that are regional rather than non-core).
- 2.2 Matters arising:
- Para 3.4 - Seek views on the Board membership – agreed that this would be considered in light of announcement expected on July 18th regarding Regional Funding Allocations.
- Para 6.6 - Follow up on exclusion of Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF) from regional funding allocations - awaits DfT guidance.
- Para 7.15 – Expand Local Transport Authority membership of Board (nominated through the Regional Assembly) - as paragraph 3.4 action.
- 2.3 With the M4 J11 scheme in mind, the Ian Hepburn requested that Board avoid ad-hoc reviews in future. This was agreed, in principle, to be picked up during the Board's constitutional review.

3. Prioritisation Methodology

- 3.1 Martin Tugwell gave a short presentation - a 'stepping stone' to the final October presentation. Weaknesses identified with the policy compatibility questionnaire through the first iteration of the methodology had been discussed with the Assembly's Transport Advisory Group (TAG). A revised questionnaire had been developed and circulated to delivery agencies. Feedback on the revised questionnaire had been very good. It was accepted that there remained a need to conduct a series of sensitivity tests and the Board's views were sought on the

type and range of tests that should be undertaken. It was proposed that they should include tests for sensitivity to different assumptions in respect of the environment, the economy and safety. It also noted that the prioritised list of interventions included proposals for studies and the Board's view was sought as to whether these should be presented separately.

- 3.2 Board members offered a few comments on specific schemes:
- A24 corridor – some Board members were concerned that the importance of the proposals in addressing safety concerns may not have been given sufficient weight in the methodology;
- A27 corridor – some Board members voiced the need to ensure that the methodology gave sufficient weight to the importance of this as a corridor, and that the relationship with local proposals was taken into account.
- 3.3 Ian Hepburn felt the methodology focused on journey ambience at the expense of environmental impact, and supported the need for a sensitivity test that gave greater weight to environmental factors. Paul Hudson also supported the proposed sensitivity tests, with greater weight given to the economic dimension. Given that the Board will be asked to provide advice that involves (potentially) big decisions, Board members requested additional background information on the proposals under consideration be made available at the next meeting. The Board debated whether a minimum “pass” level should be adopted in considering whether or not a proposal should be supported. Martin Tugwell confirmed that the information collected through the questionnaire would enable the officers to provide Board members with the required background information. He confirmed that the purpose of the methodology was to present information to decision-makers on a consistent basis and that accordingly it was for the Board to determine whether or not it wished to apply a minimum threshold for proposals.
- 3.4 The Assembly members requested further information on the “value for money” variable at its next meeting.
- 3.5 The Board noted the need to recognise that scheme costs can be broken down into problem identification, feasibility study and construction costs. In this context, the timing of proposals becomes more important. Martin Tugwell commented that the real opportunity presented by the prioritisation methodology was that it

offered the potential to give greater certainty to delivery agencies that funding would be available to deliver critical infrastructure at a moment in time in the future. It also offered the opportunity to co-ordinate such decisions with investment in other key areas of infrastructure. He also suggested that the methodology would provide an evidential base for identifying the extra benefits that could be delivered by extra funding.

- 3.6 The Board agreed that the Assembly team would continue to develop the prioritisation methodology, it would provide more supporting information – particularly for the most important schemes - and that further information would be provided in respect of the value for money and deliverability aspects of the methodology.

4. Smarter Choices

- 4.1 Andy Roberts introduced this composite paper, led by David Cooper, that summarised the opportunities to change behaviour and encourage a switch in transport modes. Promoted under the heading “Smarter Choices” the paper highlighted the need for local leadership to happen, however budgetary pressures, particularly in respect of revenue investment opportunities, have served to restrict this happening. Martin Tugwell commented that the TAG had endorsed the production of a “toolkit” focusing on delivery of the mobility management framework set out in the Regional Transport Strategy and that it was envisaged that this would assist Local Transport Authorities in delivering such measures.
- 4.2 The Board gave enthusiastic support to the principle of encouraging Smarter Choices but emphasised that this would require investment from the public sector. Martin Tugwell sought clarification from the DfT of the weight Ministers would give to the very high VFM that such measures deliver in arriving at their investment priorities. The Board agreed that it would review at a later stage whether there is a need to top slice part of the regional funding allocation in order to provide dedicated funding for studies, smaller schemes and smart measures.
- 4.3 The Board was satisfied that its prioritisation methodology gave sufficient weight to Smarter Choices, and agreed to encourage local transport authorities to

feature Smarter Choices in their LTPs. Martin Tugwell will update the Board on this at the October meeting.

5. SINEI

- 5.1 David Cooper presented a paper setting out the approaches to prioritisation being developed across the country. The paper also provided a briefing for the Board on the background to the SINEI project (Surface Infrastructure of National Economic Importance). Martin Tugwell emphasised to the Board that SINEI is not a prioritisation methodology but a means of identifying the wider economic significance of some infrastructure investments. The Board was advised that the DfT is content that each region may wish to develop its own approach to prioritisation (within reason).
- 5.2 The Board supported the recommendation to continue developing prioritisation methodology for the South East region, whilst acknowledging the existence and acceptability of SINEI-based solutions in use elsewhere.

6. AOB

- 6.1 On August 20th 2005 the SRA hands its work over to the DfT Rail Group, and Julie Mills will be standing down from the RTB. The Board thanked Julie for her contribution over the past year.

7, Date, Time and venue of next meeting.

- 7.1 The next meeting will be held at 2pm on October 7th 2005 at The Institute of Materials, London.