

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND
REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOARD**

Date: 7 October 2005

Subject: **Regional Transport Board: Update**

Report of: Chief Executive, South East England Regional Assembly

Recommendation:

That the Regional Transport Board:

- i) continues to operate as a partnership board, meeting in public, for the time being as currently constituted;
 - ii) invites Network Rail to replace the Strategic Rail Authority on the Board;
 - iii) allows for the promoters of specific proposals to participate in debates relating to those proposals;
 - iv) in order to improve engagement with Local Transport Authorities specifically invites relevant elected council members to attend board meetings as observers.
-

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide an update to the Board on developments affecting its work that have taken place since the meeting held on 8 July 2005.

2. Regional Transport Board Structure

- 2.1 On 26 August 2005 the Regional Director of GOSE wrote to the Regional Assembly inviting it to take over the Chairmanship of the Regional Transport Board. The Regional Director also invited the Regional Assembly to take on the role of providing the secretarial function for the Board's activities. The Regional Assembly has accepted the invitation to take on these roles.
- 2.2 Issues have been raised at previous Board meetings in regard to constitution and membership, but it is suggested that these are deferred until the Board's input to Regional Funding Allocations process has been dealt with. It is proposed that for the moment at least the Board continues to operate as a partnership board as currently constituted. The membership of the Board is shown in Annex I.

- 2.3 Having said that, with the demise of the Strategic Rail Authority the views and advice of the operator of the national rail network is currently not directly fed into the work of the Board. Previous Board discussions have highlighted the importance of ensuring that the views of the rail industry are available to the Board. Network Rail own and operate the national rail network. In this respect it performs a similar function to that of the Highways Agency who are already a Board member. Accordingly it is proposed that an invitation be extended to Network Rail to become a member of the Board taking up the position previously occupied by the SRA.
- 2.4 The primary focus of the Board's work to date has been the development and application of a methodology that enables priorities for investment to be identified. As this work has progressed the importance has increased of ensuring opportunities are available for interested parties to be involved in the Board's work. It is therefore suggested that as well as attending to observe debates, the promoter of a specific proposal may be invited to contribute to the debate relating to that proposal.

3. Supporting Structures

- 3.1 At present the work of the Board is supported in two ways. Firstly a small group of officials meet in advance of the main Board meetings. The role of this group (known as the Regional Transport Board Officers Group) is to ensure that the administrative arrangements associated with the Board are dealt with. Membership of the Officers Group is drawn from the three regional bodies plus the Chairman of the Transport Advisory Group and a representative from the Highways Agency, rail industry and South East Forum for Sustainability.
- 3.2 The second way in which the work of the Board is supported is through the Regional Transport Co-ordination Group. The membership of this Group, which is chaired by the Chief Executive of the Assembly, comprises senior officials from all of the Local Transport Authorities, together with a representative from SEEDA, the Highways Agency, and rail industry. The role of the group is to provide a direct link between the work of the Board and each local transport authority, and to ensure that the views of the Authorities are fed into the papers prepared for the Board's consideration.
- 3.3 It is proposed that both of these groups will continue to perform their respective roles for the time being.
- 3.4 However, discussions within both groups have identified the need to give consideration as to how a higher level of engagement might be achieved between the Board and the elected members holding the transport portfolio in the region's 19 local transport authorities.
- 3.5 A range of ideas have been proposed. First and foremost is that lead elected council members are specifically informed of the Board's meetings and invited to attend as observers. In addition, the Board might consider holding an annual event for elected members and stakeholders, and/or pursuing other communications avenues such as regular e-bulletins or newsletters.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 The Regional Transport Board is a comparatively new forum, one that has already evolved noticeably since the initial pilot phase. It is likely that further refinements to the structure of the Board and the supporting arrangements may be required in light of future experience.

Paul Bevan
Chief Executive

20 September 2005

Contact: Martin Tugwell, Head of Regional Transport Planning
T: 01483-555232 E: martintugwell@southeast-ra.gov.uk