

## **SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOARD**

Date: 6 January 2006

Subject: **Rail Investment**

Report of: Planning Implementation Director  
South East England Regional Assembly

### **Recommendations:**

The Board support the development of a rail prospectus that identifies the priorities for rail investment across the region and that this is promoted by the region as an input into the preparation of the High Level Output Statement.

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#### **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To seek the agreement of the Board to develop a rail prospectus for the region that will inform debates on the future role of the rail network in the region.

#### **2. Context**

- 2.1 The rail network is a key part of the region's transport system. Not only does the rail network provide a network of services that provide for movement within the region, it is critical in providing linkages with London and also caters for a significant number of movements that arise as a consequence of the region's gateway role.
- 2.2 Over the last couple of years the rail sector, firstly as the Strategic Rail Authority and more recently in the form of the Department for Transport and Network Rail, has undertaken a number of studies that have looked at the capacity and operation of the rail network. Although work on the Route Utilisation Strategies and Regional Planning Assessments has yet to be completed across the entire region, the picture emerging is one that demonstrates the extent to which the rail infrastructure is under pressure and the limitations that this places on accommodating further growth.
- 2.3 The studies also demonstrate how addressing a number of key bottlenecks at strategic points across the region could unlock the potential for the rail network to accommodate additional growth.
- 2.4 The level of planned growth set out within the South East Plan will increase the demand for movement. A key theme of the approved Regional Transport Strategy, prepared by the Assembly and issued by the Government, is the need to rebalance the use of the transport system and in particular to develop attractive alternatives to the private car. In the case of

South East England, ensuring the full potential of the rail network is realised will be critical to achieving the objective of the RTS and more importantly to supporting delivery of planned levels of growth.

### **3. The High Level Output Statement**

- 3.1 As part of the new railway structure the Government is required to produce a High Level Output Statement. The statement is the means by which the Secretary of State specifies the future shape of the railway. It provides the basis on which the Office for Rail Regulation establishes the cost of providing future rail services. Where the cost of the service specified in the High Level Output Statement exceeds the available funds from the Treasury a reconciliation would have to take place, the most likely outcome of which would be a reduction in the level of service compared with that originally specified in the High Level Output Statement.
- 3.2 The Government is about to begin work on developing the High Level Output Statement for the period 2009-2014. It is anticipated that the Government will hand this document over to the Office for Rail Regulation by the end of 2006.
- 3.3 At the same time the Government will be in the early stages of the next Spending Review that will help shape the future financial context for the railway industry.

### **4. A Rail Prospectus for the Region**

- 4.1 There is a growing evidence base emerging across the region that demonstrates the need for further investment in the rail network across the region. However there is a need to demonstrate more clearly how this investment is critical to supporting delivery of planned levels of growth, including economic growth.
- 4.2 The preparation of a rail prospectus, which draws upon the available evidence base and which sets out the case for increased investment in the rail network will provide the region with the basis for engaging proactively in the preparation of the High Level Output Statement.
- 4.3 The Board has consistently identified the importance of realising the potential of the rail network as an important dimension of its work. Supporting the preparation of the rail prospectus would enable the region to adopt a positive and proactive approach to engaging with the Government during what will be a critical process for determining the future shape of rail services across the rail network.

**Martin Tugwell**  
**Planning Implementation Director**

21 December 2005