

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND  
REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOARD**

Date: 8 May 2006

Subject: **Review of Prioritisation Methodology**

Report of: Planning Implementation Director  
South East England Regional Assembly

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Board:

1. Notes the outcome of the review of the prioritisation methodology;
2. Agrees that proposals that are considered “single” issue proposals and “linked” proposals be highlighted in future papers considered by the Board;
3. Gives consideration to advising that part of the regional funding allocation should be redistributed to local transport authorities for the specific purpose of facilitating delivery of “smarter choice” measures;
4. Emphasises the importance of using the agreed list of overall priorities as the basis for co-ordinating the allocation of funding from Government programmes.

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**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To inform the Board of the outcome of the review of the prioritisation methodology and to seek the Board’s agreement on the way forward

**2. Background**

- 2.1 It was agreed at the Regional Transport Board meeting held on 6 January that the application of the prioritisation methodology would be reviewed prior to identifying priorities for investment in the period post 2010/11. While the Board agreed that the methodology was fit for purpose it agreed that it was appropriate to review its application in light of experience and in particular to consider questions raised by authorities in respect of a number of specific issues.

2.2 The review of the methodology was initiated by inviting members of the Transport Advisory Group and the Regional Transport Co-ordination Group to provide comments on the methodology to the secretariat. The issues raised in the responses received were grouped under three headings:

- Questions on the content of the policy compatibility questionnaire;
- Specific issues arising from the application of the methodology;
- Issues related to the co-ordination of funding programmes.

2.3 A workshop of TAG members was held in early April to discuss in greater detail the issues raised in the comments received by the secretariat. Overall the TAG concluded that:

- The overall structure of the methodology based upon the three-axis approach of value for money, deliverability and policy compatibility remains sound and fit for purpose. There is no case for major alterations to the methodology or its application;
- There is a need to refine the content of the policy compatibility questionnaire, with a particular need to ensure that the focus of the questions used are outcome-orientated;
- There is scope to introduce a limited number of weightings to a few key questions, related to different magnitudes of outcome, as part of the policy compatibility questionnaire.

2.4 The outcome of the TAG workshop was then itself discussed by the Regional Transport Co-ordination Group at its meeting on 25 April. The actions set out in this paper reflect the recommendations of the Group.

### **3. Discussion**

#### **3.1 The Policy Compatibility Questionnaire**

3.1.1 The policy compatibility questionnaire used by Local Transport Authorities to provide the information used in the prioritisation methodology has already undergone a number of iterations as part of the development work associated with the methodology. As a consequence the questions raised on this issue as part of the review process were limited in number.

3.1.2 The key concern was the need to ensure that the questions focus on collecting information that relates to the outcomes associated with the proposal being considered. Both the TAG workshop and the Regional Transport Co-ordination Group considered that there was scope to reduce the number of questions used and to refocus a number of the questions in light of experience.

3.1.3 As a consequence of these discussions a revised version of the questionnaire has been prepared. This version will be used in subsequent work on prioritising priorities for investment. It is not proposed to review the forward programme for the period to 2010/11 using the revised version of the questionnaire.

## 3.2 Application of the Prioritisation Methodology

3.2.1 A number of the comments raised as part of the review process raised questions in respect of how the prioritisation methodology is applied. In particular comments were made in respect of how it deals with “single” issue schemes (such as safety and major maintenance schemes), proposals that are “linked” in some way, the so called “small majors” and proposals relating to major policy initiatives such as growth areas.

3.2.2 In addition there remains the question of whether there is a need to consider how the Board might encourage the take up of proposals that promote “smarter choices”.

3.2.3 In light of the debates held at both the TAG workshop and the Regional Transport Co-ordination Group the following recommendations are put forward to the Board for its consideration:

- “Single” issue proposals (e.g. safety schemes and/or major maintenance) – these proposals will be included within the prioritisation methodology. The policy compatibility questionnaire will include a question that enables a local transport authority to identify potential “single” issue proposals and guidance will be given to authorities as to when this might be appropriate. In presenting the output of the prioritisation methodology the papers would identify “single issue” proposals to Board members;
- “Corridor” and/or “linked” proposals – these proposals will be included within the prioritisation methodology. The policy compatibility questionnaire will include a question that enables a local transport authority to identify linkages between proposals and guidance will be given to authorities as to when this might be appropriate. In presenting the output of the prioritisation methodology the papers would identify “linked” proposals to Board members;
- “Small (or “Local) Major” proposals – the considered view is that this is a perceived rather than actual problem. The application of the prioritisation methodology to date has shown that such schemes are as likely to be emerging as priorities for investment as any other proposal. It is not proposed to make any special provision for such proposals as part of the application of the methodology, although this will continue to be kept under review;
- Major policy initiatives – the refined version of the policy compatibility questionnaire is focused on identifying outcomes. Such an approach will

enable proposals related to major policy initiatives (such as the Government growth areas, or indeed future growth points) to emerge as priorities for investment;

3.2.4 Previous discussions by Board members have served to highlight the potential role that a co-ordinated approach to delivering “smarter choices” can potentially have a significant impact on travel behaviour. Achieving changes in travel behaviour is a key objective of the draft South East Plan and may, in some instances reduce the need for additional capacity on the transport system as a whole. However, by their very nature such measures are of a smaller scale than traditional major schemes.

3.2.5 Given the policy context set out in the draft South East Plan it may be appropriate for the Board to propose giving greater support for the delivery of “smarter choices”. The most practical way to achieve this may be for the Board to advise to the Secretary of State that a discrete proportion of the regional funding allocation should be redistributed to local transport authorities for the specific purpose of facilitating delivery of such measures.

### 3.3 Co-ordination of Funding Programmes

3.3.1 A number of comments received raised questions relating to the co-ordination of funds made available through the regional funding allocation with those available through the Community Infrastructure Fund and the Transport Innovation Fund.

3.3.2 The approach adopted by the Board to date has been to focus on identifying the priorities for investment and to consider the most appropriate funding programme as a second step in the process.

3.3.3 This approach was followed by the Board in identifying the investment priorities for the period to 2010/11 and enabled the Board to identify a number of proposals that were potential candidates for funding from programmes such as TiF as well as identifying proposals that were funded by private sector contributions.

3.3.4 Such an approach has a number of benefits. First of all it enables the Board to focus on identifying the investment required to enable the planned outcomes to be achieved. Secondly it enables guidance to be developed by the Board that can be made available to delivery agencies on where they should focus future bids for funding. Such an approach should help avoid the situation where resources are wasted making multiple bids for the same proposal.

3.3.5 Finally, it is a more effective way of ensuring that the various funding sources are indeed being aligned in terms of delivery. It is therefore proposed to use this approach in applying the prioritisation methodology.

#### **4. Conclusions**

- 4.1 The review of the prioritisation methodology has reaffirmed that the approach developed by the region is fit for purpose and provides a clear and transparent way of comparing the relative priorities of transport proposals in the region. The review has identified a number of refinements to the policy compatibility questionnaire. It has also identified a number of issues on which the Board needs to have an agreed way for handling when considering investment priorities for the period beyond 2010/11.

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