

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND
REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOARD**

Date: 8 May 2006

Subject: **Scheme Progress Monitor**

Report of: Planning Implementation Director
South East England Regional Assembly

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Board:

1. Write to the Secretary of State as a matter of urgency stressing the need for a resolution to the current hiatus with the proposal, emphasising the time critical nature of the situation;
2. Highlight the need for an early response to the RFA submission in order to remove uncertainty with regards to proposals being promoted by the Highways Agency;
3. Emphasise the importance of the Highways Agency completing their review of costs of proposals on the A2 corridor at the earliest opportunity;
4. Liaise with Milton Keynes with a view to identifying the extent to which the Board may assist in enabling the public transport access improvements to be delivered.

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update the Board on progress with the delivery of proposals identified in the forward programme and to draw attention to issues requiring attention.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Regional Funding Allocation submission by the region included a forward programme of investment for the period to 2010/11. Part of the Board's work is to monitor progress with the delivery of the forward programme on behalf of the region. In particular it is important that the Board highlights where delays are occurring in terms of delivery and identifies action that needs to be undertaken to address these delays. The approach adopted in this monitoring report and subsequent reports of this kind will be to report by exception – i.e.

proposals will only be referred where there is an issue requiring the Board's attention.

3 Issues Arising From Scheme Monitor

- 3.1 Central Milton Keynes Public Transport Access Improvements – this proposal is identified as a commitment within the forward programme. It is an integral element of the infrastructure required to support delivery of planned growth within the Milton Keynes urban area. Progress with the proposal is currently being frustrated by delays as a result of the funding from central Government not coming forward as quickly anticipated.
- 3.2 A2 Bean-Cobham Widening Phase 2 and A2/A282 Dartford Improvement – these proposals are identified as commitments within the forward programme. It is understood that both proposals are the subject of cost reviews by the Highways Agency and that as a consequence it is anticipated that there will be a delay in the programme for both proposals.
- 3.3 M4 Junction 11/Mere oak – a proposal identified in the forward programme as a commitment. The Board was requested in summer 2005 to give urgent consideration as to the merits of this proposal. The urgency was driven by the fact that the statutory notices associated with the proposal are time limited. It is understood that the validity of the notices is about to expire and that in the absence of an urgent decision by Government on the funding package for the proposal the opportunity to commence work on this much needed improvement will be lost in the short term.
- 3.4 A21 Tonbridge Bypass to Pembury Dualling, A21 Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst Bypass and A23 Handcross to Warninglid Widening – all three proposals are being promoted by the Highways Agency and are shown in the forward programme as potential new starts in 2010/11. It is understood that further progress with the development of these proposals is dependent upon the response by Government to the region's advice on transport priorities.

4 Proposed Actions

- 4.1 The most critical issue requiring the Board's attention is that of M4 Junction 11/Mere oak. It is recommended that the Board write as a matter of urgency to the Secretary of State stressing the need for a resolution to the current hiatus and restating the Board's support for this proposal being delivered.
- 4.2 The situation with regards to the proposals on the A21 corridor and A23 serves to re-emphasise the importance of the Government responding quickly to the region's advice on transport priorities. A prolonged silence from the Government in response to the region's January submission will undoubtedly have an impact on the timing of the delivery of the proposals. The Board may wish to pursue with Ministers the need for a clear response to the RFA submission at the earliest possible opportunity.

- 4.3 The cost reviews associated with the schemes on the A2 corridor in Kent are likely to have an impact on their delivery. The Board should support the Highways Agency in completing their work at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.4 The situation with regards to the delivery of Central Milton Keynes public transport proposal needs to be resolved at the earliest opportunity. The secretariat should be requested to liaise with the proposals promoters, Milton Keynes, with a view to identifying the extent to which the Board may assist in resolving the current situation.

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