

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND
REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOARD**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 8 MAY 2006

Present:

Board Members

Cllr Nick Skellett (Chairman)
Cllr Jill Baston
Cllr John Haworth
Cllr Mary Ballin
Tim Lockwood
Pam Palmer
Nigel Rose
John Peel
Andy Roberts
Gwyn Drake

Officers

Martin Tugwell
Paul Hudson
Lesley van Dijk
Andy Barton
Andy Mak
Pat Ayling

Media

Mark Hansford, New Civil Engineering

In Attendance

Greg Clarke MP
Claire Harris, House of Commons
Cllr Matthew Lock, East Sussex CC
Cllr Tex Pemberton, West Sussex CC
Pat Baxter, Reading Borough Council
Derek Waller
Reggie Tricker, University of West of
England
Charles Mackonochie, Colts Hill Parish
Council
Bob Wilkins, West Sussex CC
Peter Mann, Oxfordshire CC

1. Apologies and Substitutions

1.1 Apologies were received from Paul Bevan.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 January 2006

2.1 There were no comments on the minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2006.

The Minutes were AGREED.

3. Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda

3.1 It was confirmed that the paper summarising how the prioritisation methodology was applied had been circulated to members of the RTB and

portfolio holders in each of the Local Transport Authorities. It was also confirmed that a copy of this paper is available is available on the Assembly's website.

- 3.2 John Peel commented that the time he had spent with the Assembly secretariat understanding how the prioritisation methodology operated had been very informative. Board members expressed a desire to have a briefing from the Secretariat on the application of the prioritisation methodology.

It was AGREED that the Secretariat would arrange for a briefing of Board members on the application of the prioritisation methodology in advance of the next of the Board meeting.

4. Scheme Progress Monitor

- 4.1 The Board agreed to take this item earlier in the agenda to enable Greg Clarke MP to address the Board in advance of submitting a parliamentary question on the RFA process.
- 4.2 The Board was advised that there had been no response from the Government to the region's advice on Regional Funding Allocations. It was reported that a meeting had taken place at official level with representatives from central Government departments. The meeting had been arranged in order to seek clarification on a number of issues associated with the region's submission. The region's representatives (from the Assembly, SEEDA and GOSE) had been left with the impression that overall the submission had been well received.
- 4.3 The Board expressed its concern that further delay in the publication of the Government's response would result in delay with the delivery of regional priorities; delay that was likely to result in additional costs being incurred. The Regional Transport Co-ordination Group had identified a number of schemes for which there was a concern that the delay in a Government response was giving rise to problems with delivery, specifically:
- M4 Junction 11 – a number of statutory processes were time limited and those limits would be reached within a matter of weeks. The RTB had offered a view on the importance of this proposal in summer 2005. The absence of a clear decision by Government could potentially cause a substantial delay in this much needed scheme;
 - A21 corridor schemes – the absence of a Government response meant that delivery agencies were unclear as to which schemes should be progressed towards delivery. Initial indications were that schemes along this corridor (identified as regional priorities in the RFA submission) may already be incurring delays in their delivery programmes;
 - A2 corridor schemes – it was noted that the HA was currently undertaking a review of costs for proposals on this corridor; the practical implication of this might be for individual schemes to incur delay in their delivery programme;
 - Milton Keynes Public Transport - concern was expressed that the DfT contribution towards this scheme had yet to be confirmed.

- 4.4 It was agreed that the Board had a key role on behalf of the region to monitor progress with the development and delivery of schemes identified as regional priorities. The Regional Transport Co-ordination Group will provide the Board with advice on where progress was a concern in order to enable it to perform this role.

It was AGREED that the Board would:

- i) Write to the Secretary of State as a matter of urgency stressing the need for a resolution to the current hiatus on the M4 Junction 11 scheme emphasising the time critical nature of the situation.**
- ii) Highlight the need for an early response to the RFA submission in order to remove uncertainty with for promoters of schemes.**
- iii) 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.**

5. Regional Funding Allocations

- 5.1 Paul Hudson informed the Board that the Regional Development Agency had been requested to give advice to the Department for Transport in respect of the criteria that might be used to identify schemes suitable for funding through the Transport Innovation Fund (TiF). Although the focus of the request was with regard to the criteria to be used, the submission from SEEDA, in keeping with those from other RDAs, had also identified potential projects. Paul Hudson drew attention to the fact that the submission from SEEDA had drawn upon the Board's work on the prioritisation.
- 5.2 It was confirmed that SEEDA's submission had identified the following proposals:
- Reading Station – to increase platform capacity within the station area thereby removing a significant bottleneck on the main rail corridor linking London/South East with the South West and Wales;
 - Southampton to West Midlands Freight Upgrade – to increase the gauge clearance along this corridor thereby enabling the next generation of 9'6" containers to be transported on standard wagons;
 - Airtrack – to take forward the proposal to the next stage in its development, including the work required to take the proposal through a TWA process.
- 5.3 In responding to questions from Board members Paul Hudson confirmed that while the submission from SEEDA did not explicitly include the A3 at Hindhead as a priority for TiF, it included a reference as to the potential of this scheme to deliver productivity benefits. The Board expressed some disappointment that the potential of the A3 scheme to be funded via TiF had not been given greater prominence by SEEDA.

- 5.4 The Board was advised that an initial decision from Ministers on the schemes put forward by SEEDA would be taken by the end of July.
- 5.5 Cllr Mary Ballin noted that while Airtrack should be supported as a regional priority for investment it was important to ensure that the Board's support was not taken as indicating support in principle for additional housing development over and above that identified in the draft South East Plan.
- 5.6 Cllr John Haworth advised the Board that the latest business case for the capacity enhancement at Reading Station had been handed over to Network Rail at the end of March. Initial indications were that the scheme was gaining considerable support within Network Rail and that the TiF was being viewed as a positive way of moving the proposal forward.

It was AGREED that the Chairman would write to the Department for Transport expressing the Board's support for the schemes put forward by SEEDA for funding through the TiF

It was AGREED that the letter from the Chairman would draw attention to the potential to fund the A3 at Hindhead from the TiF.

6. Regional Prioritisation – Forward Programme

- 6.1 Identifying Priorities for the period beyond 2010/11
 - 6.1.1 The Board considered this paper which mapped out the process to be followed in developing the Board's advice to Government on priorities for investment in the period post 2010/11.

The Board AGREE to note the report

- 6.2 Review of Prioritisation Methodology
 - 6.2.1 Subsequent to the Board's decision at its previous meeting, a review of the practical experience gained in applying the prioritisation methodology had been undertaken. The views of the delivery agencies had been sought as part of this process and the issues raised in their responses had been the subject of debate at both the Transport Advisory Group and the Regional Transport Co-ordination Group.
 - 6.2.2 The consensus was that the principles underpinning the questionnaire remained sound but that the wording used in the policy compatibility questionnaire should be refined to ensure that the questions focus on collecting information relating to the outcome delivered by individual schemes. There was also a consensus that the overall number of questions should be reduced, while acknowledging the importance of ensuring that there was sufficient scope to enable the relative priority of schemes to emerge.
 - 6.2.3 The Board endorsed the proposal that delivery agencies be asked to identify situations where proposed schemes were "linked" in some way in order that

this information could be taken into consideration by the Board as part of its decision making process. Such an approach had taken by the Board in identifying the investment priorities for the period to 2010/11, most notably the relationship between the Baldslow Junction improvements and The Board welcomed the fact that this approach would also enable cross border/inter regional schemes to be brought to its attention.

- 6.2.4 The Board endorsed the proposal that schemes that had been specifically developed in response to safety concerns needed to be identified separately.
- 6.2.5 The Board was advised that a number of local transport authorities had identified a concern that the benefit of so-called “small majors” – those schemes that cost in the region of between £5m-£15m – might not be properly reflected within the prioritisation process. An analysis of the work on prioritisation so far tended to suggest that this concern was more a perceived as opposed to real issue. A review of the results showed that a number of smaller “major schemes” had emerged as high priorities. This tended to suggest that the scale of the scheme was immaterial and a scheme would emerge as priority for investment on its own merits. The Board agreed that it would keep this issue under review as work on prioritisation progressed.
- 6.2.6 Board members requested that they be provided with summaries of the Appraisal Summary Tables (ASTs) where their view is being sought on relative priorities.

It was AGREED that the Board:

- i) Note the outcome of the review of the prioritisation methodology;**
- ii) Agree that proposals that are considered “single” issue proposals and “linked” proposals are highlighted in future papers considered by the Board and that a check on cross-border schemes should also be carried out;**
- iv) Give consideration to advising that part of the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) should be redistributed to local transport authorities for the specific purpose of facilitating delivery of “smarter choice” measures**
- v) Emphasis on the importance of using the agreed list of overall priorities as the basis for co-ordinating the allocation of funding from Government.**

6.3 Identification of Spatial Priorities

- 6.3.1 The Board discussed the extent to which it should provide guidance to delivery agencies on potential spatial priorities for the allocation of funds available as part of the Regional Funding Allocation. The Board noted the reference to spatial priorities within the RFA submission to Government but

were clear that these had been included in the document in the context of how an additional 10% of funds might be allocated.

- 6.3.2 The Board was clear that the identification of spatial priorities would emerge through the information collected through the prioritisation questionnaire, especially now that the focus of the policy compatibility questions was on the outcome delivered by a specific scheme.

It was AGREED that the Board would consider the spatial distribution of priorities for investment using the output from the prioritisation methodology.

7. Major Scheme Funding – Consultation Response

- 7.1 The Department for Transport had recently published a consultation document relating to the funding of major schemes. The consultation had been considered by the Regional Transport Co-ordination Group (RTCG) who had identified a number of key issues arising from the proposals set out in the document; specifically:
- Concern that the requirement for scheme promoters to fund at least 10% of the total cost may disadvantage smaller authorities, particularly Unitary Authorities and may preclude proposals coming forward that would be essential to support planned growth;
 - Concern that the reference to seeking a higher contribution in those instances where a scheme has wider benefits may create delays in scheme delivery;
 - Support for the proposed changes to the funding of preparatory costs;
 - Support for the proposed arrangements for the allocation of risk in instances where scheme costs exceeded the original estimate;
 - The importance of emphasising to Government its role in providing a clear and stable policy context within which specific proposals are developed, reflecting the fact that changes in policy emphasis during the development of a proposal can increase scheme cost and lead to delay in delivery.
- 7.2 In endorsing the issues identified as being the ones to include in the Board's response the meeting stressed the importance of Government making timely decisions and providing a more stable policy environment in which major schemes can be developed.

It was AGREED that the Regional Transport Board would respond to the consultation, highlighting:

- 1. The practical difficulties that local transport authorities are likely to have in raising the minimum 10% contribution, particularly for smaller authorities;**
- 2. The potential risk that the development of infrastructure proposals may be thwarted putting at risk delivery of planned levels of development;**

3. **Support for the proposal to provide a more secure funding base for scheme preparation costs;**
4. **The importance of providing local transport authorities with a consistent policy context within which major proposals are developed;**

8. Items for Information

- 8.1 The Board was advised that development of the brief for the preparation of the Rail Prospectus was progressing and consultants would be commissioned shortly.
- 8.2 The work on developing a Mobility Management toolkit had not progressed as quickly as had originally been envisaged due to the need to focus on the work associated with prioritisation. Resources were now available to take this work forward.
- 8.3 The Regional Assembly had agreed a draft response to the DfT's consultation on the proposal to extend the Mayor's powers over the specification of rail services. The East of England had similar concerns relating to the proposals set out in the consultation document. The opportunity to agree a joint response between the two Assemblies was being pursued.
- 8.4 The Government was expected to publish its review of the National Ports Policy framework shortly. A period of public consultation would follow. It was proposed to bring a substantive report on this subject to the next meeting of the Board.

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1 The Board noted the receipt of a submission to the Chairman of the Board from Sussex Enterprise in respect of the A27 corridor.
- 9.2 The Board recorded its heartfelt thanks to Andy Roberts and Paul Hudson, both of whom were moving to new roles: Andy Roberts with Surrey County Council, Paul Hudson with the newly formed DCLG. The Chairman highlighted Andy Roberts key role in the original pilot phase of the RTB and his support for the development of the Board as a partnership Board chaired by the Assembly. Paul Hudson had been a key member of the SEEDA team from its earliest days and had been instrumental in achieving considerable progress in delivering economic growth, particularly within the growth areas. The Chairman wished them both well in their new roles.

10. Dates of Future Meetings

21 July 2006
27 October 2006