

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND  
REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOARD**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 21 JULY 2006**

Present:

Board Members

Cllr Nick Skellett (Chairman)  
Cllr Jill Baston  
Cllr John Howarth  
Mark Pearson  
Pam Palmer  
Nigel Rose  
John Peel  
Gwyn Drake  
Simon Pratt  
Clive King  
Paul Plummer  
Ian Coates

Officers

Paul Bevan  
Martin Tugwell  
Paul Lovejoy  
Andy Barton  
Andy Mak  
Pat Ayling  
David Cooper  
Lesley van Dijk

Media

In Attendance

Cllr Matthew Lock, East Sussex CC  
Pat Baxter, Reading Borough Council  
Reggie Tricker, University of West of England  
Cllr. Valerie Letheren, Buckinghamshire CC  
Cllr. Jonathan Glen, Hampshire CC  
Andy Renaut, Brighton and Hove Council  
Peter Hayward, East Sussex CC

**1. Election of Chairman**

- 1.1 Cllr Nick Skellett was re-elected to the position of Chairman of the Regional Transport Board.

**2. Apologies and Substitutions**

- 2.1 Apologies were received from Cllr. Mrs Mary Ballin.
- 2.2 The Chairman noted that the meeting would be the last one attended by Nigel Rose. The Board thanked Nigel for his hard work on behalf of the Board and wished him well for the future. The Board welcomed Nigel's replacement on the Board, Simon Pratt.
- 2.3 The Chairman also welcomed Mark Pearson, Ian Coates and Paul Plummer to their first meeting of the Board.

### **3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 May 2006**

- 3.1 It was noted that Cllr Howarth's name was incorrectly spelt on the minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2006.

**The Minutes were AGREED subject to this change.**

### **4. Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda**

- 4.1 The Highways Agency informed the Board that the Secretary of State had recently announced proposals to take forward the concept of Integrated Demand Management as part of the work on the M25. This announcement arose from the recommendations of the ORBIT Multi Modal Study and would involve the Highways Agency and local highway authorities working together with a view to ensuring that the benefits of the improved capacity on the M25 were "locked-in".

**It was AGREED that the Highways Agency would undertake a full briefing to the Board at the next meeting in October.**

### **5. Funding for Regional Priorities**

#### **5.1 Regional Funding Allocation**

- 5.1.1 The report setting out the contents of the recent announcement on the transport element of the Regional Funding Allocation was noted.
- 5.1.2 The Assembly's Planning Implementation Director advised the Board that the Secretaries of State had recently published their response to the Planning Inquiry into the proposals to improve the A3 at Hindhead. He reported that the Secretaries of State were minded to approve the proposal but that the decision letter highlighted an increase in the cost of the scheme from £240m at the time of the Public Inquiry to £370m. He noted that the RFA submission in January had assumed that the cost of the scheme would be £320m.
- 5.1.3 The Secretaries of State had announced that they were asking the Highways Agency to seek views on the increased cost. The Planning Implementation Director advised that there were two issues for the Board. Firstly, the Board needed to take a view as to whether it wished to re-emphasise its support for the scheme. Secondly, the Board needed to seek clarification from Government that it (the Government) would manage any additional cost incurred over and above that identified at the time of the RFA submission.
- 5.1.4 The Planning Implementation Director advised the Board that the Department for Transport had published the outcome of an independent review of the Regional Funding Allocations exercise. This report includes recommendations to the Department for Transport on how the operation of future rounds may be enhanced in light of the experience gained this time round.

- 5.1.5 The Department had subsequently formally invited views on the RFA process to date. Closing date for comments is the end of October and this will form the subject of a paper to the next meeting of the Board.
- 5.1.6 The Planning Implementation Director advised the Board that Brighton and Hove Council had now submitted the business case for the proposed Rapid Transit scheme. He noted that the proposal is one that can be implemented at short notice and advised that the Board should encourage the Department to consider the business case as a matter of priority so that it was ready to take advantage of any opportunity to begin earlier than currently programmed were funding to become available.

**It was AGREED that the Regional Transport Board:**

- i) Welcome the acceptance of the region's advice in respect of transport priorities for the period to 2010/11;**
  - ii) Notes the Government's recognition of and support for the process adopted in identifying transport priorities;**
  - iii) Welcomes the intention of Government to seek further formal advice on regional transport priorities within the next two years;**
  - iv) Notes that the Secretary of State's approval of the A421 Bedford to Milton Keynes proposal in his response to the East of England's Advice is subject to South East England prioritising the remaining part of this inter-regional proposal as part of its programme for the period beyond 2010/11;**
  - v) Restates its support for the proposed improvement to the A3 at Hindhead;**
  - vi) Seek clarification from the Secretary of State with regard to how the increase in the scheme cost for the A3 at Hindhead is to be managed;**
  - vii) Advise the Department for Transport of the need to consider the business case for the Brighton and Hove Rapid Transit scheme as a priority.**
- 5.2 Transport Innovation Fund
- 5.2.1 The report regarding the Secretary of State's announcement on the Transport Innovation Fund (TiF) was noted. The Board expressed its continued support for the Southampton to West Midlands Gauge clearance project and supported SEEDA's role in leading the work to develop the business case for the scheme in conjunction with key partners.
- 5.2.2 The Board expressed its disappointment that the proposals for TiF funding to support Reading Station Improvement and AirTrack. On the matter of

Reading Station the Planning Implementation Director updated the Board on the outcome of the recent Reading Station Partnership Board meeting.

- 5.2.3 Network Rail has built upon the previous work undertaken by the Reading Station Partnership Board and is in a position whereby the combined re-signalling/improvement scheme could commence in 2008 and be completed by December 2010. In order for this programme to be achieved Network Rail will need to commit resources to the design work in the autumn. However in order to make this commitment Network Rail will require an indication that the proposed works will be funded.
- 5.2.4 Subsequent to the announcement on TiF it appears that the DfT are expecting to consider improvements in capacity for passenger services as part of the High Level Output Statement. Network Rail have indicated that they consider the need to remove the bottleneck as an issue that must be addressed in the period covered by the HLOS (2009-2014). The timescale associated with the HLOS is such that confirmation of the funding regime for 2009-2014 is unlikely until 2008. The implication is that if the region relies on the HLOS process a delay in securing delivery of the improvement at Reading Station would be inevitable.
- 5.2.5 The Reading Station Partnership Board agreed that a two-pronged approach is required in order to help move things forward. Firstly, there is a need to seek confirmation from the Secretary of State that he acknowledges the constraint that the bottleneck at Reading Station has on rail performance and that he therefore accepts the need to remove this bottleneck in the period 2009-2014. Secondly, there is a need to mobilise support for removing the bottleneck amongst colleagues in adjoining regions.
- 5.2.6 The meeting was advised that local MPs on the rail corridor from Reading to London had requested a meeting with the Secretary of State to emphasise the importance of removing the bottleneck for the economy

**It was AGREED that the Board:**

- i) **Notes the ongoing work to develop the business case for the Southampton to West Midlands Freight Gauge clearance project and requests that it is kept advised of further progress.**
- ii) **Urgently requests the Secretary of State for Transport to confirm that significant improvements of capacity and performance will be required to remove the bottleneck in the Reading Station area of the Great Western Main Line, and that such a requirement will be included within the High Level Output Specification which is currently in development by his Department. Such a statement is required in order to provide Network Rail with sufficient confidence to continue developing the detailed design work that enables the scheme to be delivered by December 2010.**

- iii) **Write to the Regional Planning and Development Agencies in the South West and the West Midlands, and the Welsh Assembly Government, to request their support for the requirement to address the bottleneck at Reading, which has national implications for performance and capacity of the rail network.**

## **6. Regional Prioritisation – Identifying Priorities for the period beyond 2010/11**

- 6.1 Following the successful response in the RFA to the advice given by the Board for the period up to 2010/11, attention needs to turn to identifying those from 2011 onwards. The Planning Implementation Director reported to the Board on the discussions that had taken place at the Regional Transport Board Co-ordination Group meeting.
- 6.2 The Board emphasised that there was a need to emphasise to Local Transport Authorities and other delivery agencies that when identifying proposals for inclusion in the next stage of prioritisation they should:
- Ensure that the information submitted is consistent with the content of the investment frameworks for each South East Plan sub-regional strategy, and vice-versa.
  - Provide as much information as possible on the nature of the proposal being put forward for prioritisation. It is acknowledged that for proposals in the medium to long term it will only be possible at this stage to identify the existence of a problem or issue that needs to be addressed.
  - Critically review the scope of proposals to ensure that they focus on achieving the maximum benefit within the likely funding framework.
  - Ensure that proposals put forward pay due regard to the available headroom for the RFA from 2010/11 to 2015/16.
  - That all major proposals are put forward irrespective of intended funding stream to ensure that a full regional programme can be developed which takes into account the fact that there are other funding streams in addition to the RFA but which emphasises the importance of these being co-ordinated towards agreed regional objectives.
- 6.3 Ongoing liaison with Local Transport Authorities and other delivery agencies will take place to ensure these points are effectively communicated.
- 6.4 The Board agreed with the proposition that in considering the priorities for the period to 2015/16 there would be a need to consider potential priorities for the entire period covered by the South East Plan – i.e. to 2026.
- 6.5 In parallel, Assembly Officers are continuing to examine mechanisms of how to promote smarter choices by working with task groups to specifically

identify methods for achievement. This work will be reported to the Board at its next meeting.

**The Board AGREED to:**

- i) Draw to the attention of Local Transport Authorities and other delivery agencies the potential headroom available within the indicative Regional Funding Allocation to enable new proposals to be added to the forward programme;**
- ii) Emphasise to Local Transport Authorities and other delivery agencies the need to ensure that proposals put forward for consideration as part of the work on prioritisation are consistent with the investment frameworks associated with the sub regional strategies, and vice versa;**
- iii) Request the Regional Transport Co-ordination Group to develop an initial set of longer term funding assumptions covering the period beyond 2015/16;**
- iv) Emphasise to Local Transport Authorities and other delivery agencies the importance of identifying all potential investment requirements for inclusion within the prioritisation work, irrespective of potential funding source;**
- v) Draw to the attention of Local Transport Authorities and other delivery agencies the importance of putting forward proposals that reflect the likely level of funding available.**
- vi) Hold a workshop prior to the next meeting of the Board at which emerging issues arising from the work on prioritisation might be considered.**

**7. Thames Gateway – Investment Priorities**

7.1 Following a meeting of the Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership held in May, a transport sub-group of the Partnership is being established.

7.2 As part of a renewed interest in transport priorities amongst the Strategic Partnership the three regions (led by the South East England Regional Assembly) are pulling together an overview of existing transport priorities in the Gateway. This work is being undertaken in partnership with DCLG (Thames Gateway Strategy Division), London and the East of England. A draft list of transport priorities was in the course of preparation. It was emphasised that this work built upon and did not replace, the work on prioritisation undertaken in individual regions.

7.3 The Board emphasised the importance of initiating the study work required to examine the issues associated with a potential Lower Thames Crossing. It was acknowledged that this would need to look at all the issues, including the potential environmental implications.

**It was AGREED that:**

- i) The Board note the progress made by the Regional Planning Bodies in identifying transport investment priorities across the Thames Gateway**
- ii) The Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership be made aware of the Board's support for work to be commissioned that examines the issues associated with the Lower Thames Crossing.**

## **8. National Ports Review – Consultation Response**

- 8.1 The Board discussed the draft response to the consultation. It noted that the evidence base underpinning the document supported the view that the ports in the Greater South East (GSE) will continue to have a key strategic role for the UK in the future.
- 8.2 The Board agreed that while the emphasis on the need to produce Master Plans should be on the gateway ports, it may be appropriate for other ports to adopt such an approach where it is appropriate.
- 8.3 Paul Plummer advised the Board of the work that is underway as part of the development of the national Freight Route Utilisation Strategy. He commented that this was relevant to the debate on the provision of landside infrastructure in support of ports.

**It was AGREED that the Regional Transport Board:**

- i) Supports the National Ports Policy Review response as annexed to the report.**
- ii) Invite Network Rail to give a presentation at the October meeting on the Freight RUS.**

## **9. Rail Franchises – Consultation Response to West Midlands and Cross Country Franchises**

- 9.1 Cross Country Franchise.
  - 9.1.1 The Board felt that an overriding concern was the lack of delivery to date of the Brighton Main Line RUS. The consultation document highlights that the proposed cessation of the Reading to Brighton services are, in part, predicated on the additional services contained in the Greater Western and South West Franchises. The Board is aware that unless the Brighton Main Line RUS is delivered, there is a very real risk that some, if not all of these proposed services cannot be brought about due to capacity issues on the main line.

- 9.1.2 The Board also considered that the constraint imposed on the franchise by the bottleneck at Reading Station was not fully recognised in the consultation document.

**It was AGREED that the Board urges the Department for Transport to include within the specification of the Cross Country franchise:**

- i) the need for the operator to improve interchange facilities at key stations, specifically Reading, Redhill and Gatwick in lieu of direct services serving Brighton;**
- ii) The need to implement the recommendations of the Brighton Main Line Route Utilisation Strategy as a matter of urgency, including enabling a regular 30 minutes service between Reading and Gatwick.**
- iii) Recognition of the need to remove the existing capacity constraint at Reading Station in order to enable the growth potential of inter-regional services to be realised.**

## 9.2 West Midlands Franchise.

- 9.2.1 The Board agreed that it was disappointing that the franchise makes little use or reference of the additional capacity created by the Community Infrastructure Fund investments at Milton Keynes Central, apart from the potential to serve Bedford in the future. The final specification must set out clearly how the additional capacity at Milton Keynes Central will be used to provide additional services which support the planned levels of growth.
- 9.2.2 It was also agreed that the importance of East West Rail to the delivery of the MKSM Growth Area is not sufficiently reflected in the franchise as currently drafted. The final specification should reflect the progression of the scheme, the ongoing work and the importance of train and infrastructure operators becoming fully engaged in the next stages of work.
- 9.2.3 The Board also noted that the approach to electronic ticketing taken in the South West Franchise was not being taken with regard to these services. The Board agreed that the DfT should be urged to adopt a similar approach, if not for the entire area, at least as far as that served by the current Silverlink franchise.

**It was AGREED that the Board urges the Department for Transport to include within the specification of the West Midlands franchise:**

- i) Details of how the additional capacity at Milton Keynes Central station will be used to support planned levels of growth;**

- ii) **The need for the operator to be fully engaged in the development of the East West Rail proposal;**
- iii) **The extension of electronic ticketing (i.e. Oyster) to all services previously operated as part of the Silverlink franchise.**

## **10. Scheme Progress Monitor**

- 10.1 It was noted that all of the issues reported in the scheme monitor had been addressed by the publication of the RFA and other ongoing work.

## **11. Items for Information**

- 11.1 There were no items for information.

## **12. Date of Next Meeting**

27 October 2006