

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND
REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOARD**

Date: 13 July 2007

Subject: **Thames Gateway Sub-Regional Priorities**

Report of: Regional Planner
South East England Regional Assembly

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Board note the progress made to date on the application of the prioritisation process to the Thames Gateway;

Purpose of Report:

To update the Board on the work underway to arrive at a prioritised list of transport schemes that will facilitate delivery in the Thames Gateway.

Key Issues:

The Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership initiated a programme of work in autumn 2006 to develop an approach that would enable investment priorities to be identified where additional resources to be made available.

The Assembly has acted as professional lead in this process that is being overseen by a transport sub-group of the main Strategic Partnership. The approach that is emerging as the preferred way forward is based on the prioritisation processes used in the East of England and South East England regions.

1. Background

- 1.1 In July 2006 the Board was advised of a programme of work initiated by the Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership (TGSP) designed to provide an evidence base for targeting resources at investment in transport infrastructure that will facilitate delivery of the Gateway aspirations.
- 1.2 This work is being conducted on a pan-Gateway basis, involving representatives of the three regions involved (Greater London, East of England and South East England). The focus of the work is on identifying and prioritising those schemes which will deliver growth.
- 1.3 It is acknowledged that the prioritisation of RFA funds is undertaken at a regional level. The current work therefore provides the opportunity to promote and prioritise smaller scale schemes that bring added value and which are capable of being delivered in the short to medium term.
- 1.4 Were additional funds to be made available for investment in the Gateway – for example through an extension of the Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF) and/or Growth Area Fund (GAF) processes – the work of the TGSP would provide an evidence base for its allocation. The issue of funding is a matter being considered as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR).
- 1.5 Notwithstanding the fact that there is no guarantee of additional resources the approach being followed by the TGSP provides the opportunity to identify and prioritise potential schemes. Such an approach can better inform the allocation of existing resources available through both the RFA and at a local level through the Local Transport Plan.
- 1.6 A number of challenges have arisen during this process:
 - At a process level, the fact that two prioritisation methodologies exist (South East, and East of England) and political considerations, may influence the choice of methodology (or hybrid methodology) used;
 - The need to ensure that the process is aligned with regional decision making mechanisms and is not a process divorced from the Regional Transport Board;
 - The need to formulate high level objectives that reflect the spatial strategy in each region but which provide a coherent framework for the Gateway; and
 - The need to ensure that the spatial distribution of investment priorities reflects identified needs.

2. Progress Report

- 2.1 Over the past few months the Transport Advisory Sub Group of the TGSP has undertaken a review of the information that needs to be collected to enable the prioritisation of potential schemes. It has also considered and developed a prioritisation methodology that can be applied consistently

across the Gateway, addressing the issues identified at para 1.6 above. It is likely that an approach based largely on the process associated with our prioritisation tool will be used to process the information collected using a modified form of the prioritisation questionnaire.

- 2.2 The content of the revised questionnaire reflects the fact that the scale of scheme being considered is smaller and reflects sub-regional, as opposed to regional or national policy objectives.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 Once the questionnaire is agreed in its final form by the TGSP, we will work with individual local authorities to collect the required information. This is likely to involve some additional efforts over and above the regional prioritisation exercise on the part of Medway Council and Kent County Council to complete the pro-formas but the Assembly will provide support to them in this process.
- 3.2 The Terms of Reference for the Transport Advisory Sub Group explicitly state that the outcome of this work will provide advice to the regional and local decision makers. It is therefore anticipated that the outcome of the prioritisation work at the sub-regional level will be reported to the Board at its meeting in October. The Board will be invited to comment on the outcome and its view will then be feed into the TGSP.
- 3.3 Although the focus of this work is the Thames Gateway, it demonstrates that it is possible to refine the regional approach to enable its application at the sub-regional level. Thus it is possible to develop an approach that enables the linkage between investment in transport infrastructure and the delivery of sub-regional objectives to be more explicit. In so doing it has the potential to enhance the evidence base in support of particular schemes. It also has the potential for sub-regional areas (such as South Hampshire, who are making a presentation to the Board elsewhere on this agenda) to provide advice to the Board on a consistent basis.

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