

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND  
REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOARD**

Date: 26 April 2007

Subject: **Sub Regional Partnerships**

Report of: Planning Implementation Director  
South East England Regional Assembly

**It is recommended that the Board:**

1. Write to the Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership welcoming the submission of advice on prioritisation for consideration as part of the Board's work on identifying regional priorities and seeking clarification on timescales for the receipt of any such advice;
2. Write to the Milton Keynes South Midlands Inter Regional Board seeking clarification of the relationship between the proposed sub-regional transport board and the work of this Board;
3. Note the development of sub-regional partnerships in the region.

**Purpose of the Report:**

To advise the Board of the existence of sub-regional partnerships that are working on the identification of investment priorities at the sub-regional level and to set out how the Board may draw upon the advice of such groupings in providing an overview of regional priorities to the Secretary of State.

**Key Issues:**

The emergence of sub-regional partnerships that are able to provide advice on investment priorities is to be welcome, however it is important to ensure that the Board retains its role at the heart of the prioritisation process in order to provide an overview of regional priorities focused on ensuring delivering of the level of growth set out in the statutory regional documents.

## **1. The importance of the sub-regional dimension**

- 1.1 As the recent Eddington and Barker reviews reminded us, economic activity is no respecter of administrative boundaries. Both the draft South East Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy reflect the need to address key policy issues at a sub-regional level. It naturally follows that consideration of the requirement for investment in transport that is of sub-regional significance is likely to require working on a cross boundary basis.
- 1.2 Within the Government Growth Areas sub-regional working has been a key part of policy development. In more recent months the focus has begun to shift towards developing partnerships that provide a forum for the identification of investment priorities. In the Thames Gateway the Transport Advisory Sub Group is working at officer level to provide advice for consideration by the Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership. Within the Milton Keynes/South Midlands Growth Area proposals to establish a sub-regional transport board are being taken forward as a matter of some urgency.
- 1.3 Elsewhere in the region one is beginning to see the emergence of fora in which local transport authorities are working on a partnership basis to identify investment priorities. In South Hampshire the PUSH partnership is working on developing a proposal to provide a mechanism for agreeing priorities on a sub-regional basis, while the Berkshire Unitary authorities are in the process of establishing a transport forum that has the potential to identify the key transport issues on a cross boundary basis.

## **2. Engagement with the Regional Transport Board**

- 2.1 While the drivers for the formation of these partnerships vary, all share a common objective of seeking to maximise the level of investment in their particular part of the region.
- 2.2 There is considerable benefit for the Board seeking to increase the level of engagement with these partnerships. They have the potential to provide considered advice, based on a deep understanding of the challenges facing their area, which will assist the Board in advising the Secretary of State on funding priorities at the regional level.
- 2.3 As the Board and delivery agencies gain experience in developing and managing a regional programme of investment so the partnerships could provide advice on investment priorities on a sub-regional basis. The Board's decision to give an informal indication of the potential distribution of regional funding for the post 2016 period on a sub-regional basis should assist the emerging partnerships with longer term planning in their respective areas.
- 2.4 However in seeking to increase the level of engagement at the sub-regional level it is important to emphasise the Board's role in providing an overview of regional priorities for investment. The distribution of funding at the regional level will be influenced by the timing of investment proposals and the phasing of development. This reality is already reflected in the Board's advice on regional priorities for the period to 2016.

- 2.5 It is important to ensure that the Board retains its role at the heart of the process to identify advice on regional priorities in order to ensure that the allocation of the funds available is focused on delivering the level of growth set out at the regional level in statutory documents such as the draft South East Plan and Regional Economic Strategy.
- 2.6 By way of example, while the work to develop a list of investment priorities at the sub-regional level in support of the Thames Gateway is welcome, it is important that significance of the growth in the Gateway is put into context. Overall the growth in the Gateway amounts to less than 10% of the level of growth planned for the region. It is therefore essential that the needs of the Gateway are not seen to divert an inappropriate level of resources away from the rest of the region.
- 2.7 The terms of reference for the Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership Transport Advisory Sub Group explicitly state that its purpose, inter alia, is feed back views on prioritisation to relevant regional and local decision making and funding bodies. Feeding the views of the Gateway into the deliberations of the Board therefore provides the opportunity for that advice to be considered in the wider policy context and for the region to provide a considered view to the Secretary of State.
- 2.8 It is suggested that the arrangement in respect of the Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership forms the basis of working relationship that the Board might seek to develop with the proposed sub-regional transport board for the Milton Keynes/South Midlands Growth Area.
- 2.9 The PUSH authorities have been invited to brief the Board on the working arrangements at the sub-regional level at a future meeting. Developing a working arrangement with PUSH, and other local transport authority groupings at the sub-regional level that emerge in the future, would be an effective way for the Board to support delivery at the sub-regional level.

### **3. Next Steps**

- 3.1 There is a need for the Board to develop an effective working relationship with the emerging partnership working within the Thames Gateway and Milton Keynes/South Midlands Growth Areas. The overview of sub-regional priorities that such partnerships potentially provide would greatly assist the Board in arriving at its advice to the Secretary of State in respect of overall regional priorities.
- 3.2 Where such partnerships emerge amongst local transport authorities at the sub-regional level the Board should seek to develop similarly effective working relationships.

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