

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND  
REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOARD**

Date: 26 October 2007

Subject: **The South East Plan – Panel Report**

Report of: Planning Manager  
South East England Regional Assembly

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Board note the publication of the Panel's report following the Examination in Public of the draft South East Plan.

**Purpose of Report:**

To update the Group on the key issues arising from the publication of the Panel's Report published in August 2007.

**Key Issues:**

The Panel report into the South East Plan provides an endorsement of the approach underpinning the Regional Transport Strategy. This paper sets out a summary of the Panel report, and highlights a number of issues that are of relevance to the Board and its work.

## **1. Panel Report Headlines and Key Messages**

- 1.1 The independent Panel's report following the Examination in Public in to the South East Plan was published on 29 August 2007. The document runs to some 450 pages. Annex I summarises the headlines from the report; a more in-depth summary can be found on the Assembly web site<sup>1</sup>.

## **2. Regional Transport Strategy**

- 2.1 The Panel accepts that the Plan builds upon the framework previously established through the RPG9 partial review of transport policies (2004). It (again) endorses the overall Manage and Invest strategy that underpins the RTS. The focus of the Panel's recommendations therefore reflects the issues debated at the Examination in Public. The key issues that are of direct interest to this Board are set out below.

### **2.2 Mobility Management**

- 2.3.1 The Panel, acknowledging that there have been several announcements since 2004 which are relevant to demand management in the transport sector, is surprised that more changes to the transport strategy are not suggested, however it suggests further on in the report that only limited changes are in fact needed.
- 2.3.2 In terms of the debate about whether a reduction in the use of car can be achieved without addressing the 'infrastructure deficit', the Panel concludes that while there are undoubtedly some transport corridors where highway improvements are required, it is inevitable that part of the answer to worsening congestion, to growth and future movement needs, and to the challenge of climate change must be that dependency on travel by cars has to be reduced. But the Panel believes it to be unrealistic to achieve an absolute reduction during the life of the Plan.
- 2.3.3 The Panel supports the Assembly's position that demand management involves both improvements to infrastructure and behavioural change and endorses the starting point for the Manage and Invest approach, which recognises that the transport system is a resource with a finite capacity at any one point in time. It also agrees that the focus on development in urban areas and, in particular within the regional hubs, should help to promote demand management.
- 2.3.4 However, the Panel concludes that Policy T5 is too weak as it does not give appropriate guidance to the local planning authorities in terms of what actions LDDs and LTPs should take and therefore recommends a stronger introduction to the policy. It is also concerned that the measures in Policy T5 do not appear to be carried through into the individual sub-regional

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/plan/panel\\_report/summary\\_of\\_panel\\_report.pdf](http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/plan/panel_report/summary_of_panel_report.pdf)

strategies and recommend that the text to Policy T5 should say that the sub-regional strategies will indicate the likely mix of demand management measures that will be deployed in each area.

- 2.3.5 The Action Plan considered as part of Agenda Item 5a maps out a way forward for ensuring that the principle of mobility management is taken forward into delivery.
- 2.4 Freight and Intermodal Freight Interchanges
  - 2.4.1 The Panel acknowledges that further work on freight issues is being taken forward at the regional level. Whilst it recognises that the evidence base for freight has been significantly improved, it concludes that the Plan does not contain a proper freight strategy and, in particular, fails to give adequate guidance in relation to the new freight interchanges. In their view the overriding need to move freight from road to rail is not given sufficient prominence in the Plan and this need should be reflected in the region's investment priorities, and strongly supports the Assembly's efforts to encourage Government to fund appropriate schemes.
  - 2.4.2 It accepts the case presented in the former Strategic Rail Authority's Rail Freight Interchange Policy, which concluded that three to four new strategic rail freight interchanges were required in the wider South East and it endorses the need for a study (preferably joint) to identify suitable locations. The Panel suggests potential candidates for this, concluding that there seems to be both need and potential towards the north-western end of the Channel Tunnel-London corridor since the CTRL can take W9 standard containers and it intersects the M25 and recommends that this broad location be identified in the text.
- 2.5 Ports
  - 2.5.1 The critical role of ports is recognised in the Plan through its emphasis on the role of 'gateways'. The Panel supports the revision proposed by the Assembly to Policy T10, as this clarifies the role of the different types of individual port, and endorses the role of Port Masterplans. It agrees with the Assembly that, whilst a clearer national planning framework for the ports sector would help infrastructure providers to programme investment, port development is private sector led and a light touch regional steer is therefore sufficient. With regard to congestion on roads approaching ports, the Panel agrees with the Assembly that prioritisation of schemes has taken account of routes to the ports and that Policy T10 (as proposed to be amended) is a reasonable reflection of the role of the RSS in relation to ports.
  - 2.5.2 The report recognises the role that the Port of Dover plays in terms of the proportion of freight it handles compared to other ports in the region, and its importance in terms of employment and contribution to the local economy. The Panel therefore supports its gateway status in the proposed revision to Policy T10. It also supports Dover DC's view that the importance

of the strategic corridor between Dover and Thanet merits recognition as a transport “spoke” on Map T2.

### 3. Schemes of Regional Importance

- 3.1 Although the individual projects identified in the draft South East Plan are not prioritised, the Panel suggests that by implication, the 29 transport schemes classified in Annex 2 of the Implementation Plan as ‘national, inter-regional and regionally significant infrastructure’ are the most significant for the delivery of the spatial strategy.
- 3.2 In addition to these, the Panel consider that the RTS objectives in paragraph 1.11 Section D4 of the draft South East Plan give some indication of broad priorities. The Panel go on to recognise that the priorities being set via the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) process will provide a steer on some types of scheme.
- 3.3 Taking this context into account, it concludes that the following broad priorities incorporate the entire individual transport infrastructure schemes included in Annex 2 of the Implementation Plan [**Note:** a short update is provided in *italics* for each priority for the benefit of the Board; this update does not form part of the Panel’s report]
- i) London-Channel ports corridor (road/rail improvements) – *while a number of individual projects along the broad corridor are identified in the Implementation Plan, there is no overarching strategy identified for the corridor, which is also identified as a priority in the Regional Economic Strategy;*
  - ii) Midlands-south Hampshire corridor (rail freight upgrade) – *SEEDA continue to lead the region’s work on securing funding via the Transport Innovation Fund to deliver gauge enhancement along this rail corridor; an announcement on the next stage in the process is likely to be made early in the New Year;*
  - iii) East-West Rail – *the Assembly and SEEDA are both active supporters of the East-West Rail Consortium; both have contributed to the cost of the ongoing development works for the scheme; this work will be completed at the turn of the year and a report on its conclusions will be made to the next meeting of the Board;*
  - iv) Thameslink – *a national priority; a Government commitment to delivering the scheme is a key part of the Rail White Paper;*
  - v) Crossrail – *a national priority; recent Government announcements on funding arrangements for the core scheme give greater confidence that project will be delivered; powers for the core scheme continue to progress through Parliament in the form of a Hybrid Bill;*
  - vi) Other London orbital schemes – *it is unclear what proposals this specifically refers to, although the Board continues to advocate the importance of improvements to the North Downs Line as part of the development of an alternative orbital rail network;*

- vii) Other inter-regional link – *greater clarity is required as to what proposals this specifically refers to;*
- viii) Airtrack – *powers for the delivery of the scheme are currently being sought through a Transport and Works Act application submitted by BAA; both the Regional Assembly and SEEDA are active members of the Airtrack Forum supporting the proposal; the Regional Assembly have provided additional funds to the Forum to enable an assessment of the wider economic benefits of the scheme to be assessed; this will be used to support the TWA application;*
- ix) Reading Station improvement – *a key feature of the Rail White Paper; work is well underway to develop the detail of the scheme; the funding package in support of the scheme will be finalised as part of the financial settlement for the next railway control period;*
- x) Route Utilisation Strategy - Brighton Mainline, Great Western Mainline – *implementation of the Brighton Main Line RUS remains a key issue for the Board; the forthcoming re-letting of the south central franchise provides the opportunity to secure the improvements set out in the RUS; work on updating the Great Western Main Line RUS is scheduled to begin in early 2008; the Board will wish to use the policy framework set out at the regional level as the basis for its input into the process;*
- xi) Other access improvements – *clarity is required as to what proposals this specifically refers to.*

3.4 From the above it is clear that considerable progress is being made at ensuring that the priorities identified by the Panel are taken forward to delivery. The Board has an ongoing role to ensure that the pace of this work is maintained and, where possible, accelerated.

3.5 The Regional Assembly will be reviewing the framework and content of the Implementation Plan in light of the Panel's recommendations. In addition the Board's work on regional priorities will provide the opportunity to give greater clarity on the critical outcomes that need to be delivered in order to support delivery of the regional policy framework.

#### **4. Next Steps for the South East Plan**

4.1 It is anticipated that the Government will publish its response to the Panel's recommendations early in the New Year. This will be followed by a 12-week consultation period which should enable the final version of the Plan to be adopted by Government in mid-2008.

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01 October 2007

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## HEADLINES FROM THE PANEL REPORT INTO THE SOUTH EAST PLAN

- **Housing Target: 32,000 pa**

On housing numbers, the Panel concludes that the Assembly put too much weight on the consultation results and not enough to the demographic or economic needs of the region. They therefore recommend a 10% increase overall from 28,900 to 32,000 dwellings per annum. The additional housing is to be focused on the area described in the RES as the Inner South East where the Panel accepted SEEDA's argument that it is here there is greatest economic potential. Significant increases are proposed in the Central Oxfordshire, London Fringe and Western Corridor/Blackwater Valley Sub-regions.

- **Spatial Approach Endorsed**

The Panel has endorsed the spatial approach of the Plan. They support the retention of all the sub-regions and propose that the Isle of Wight Special Policy Area becomes a sub-region in its own right. The Panel recommends that Hubs should more clearly be a focus for growth. The RES Diamonds for Growth and New Growth Points are seen as important mechanisms for delivery.

- **Urban Focus**

Whilst the Panel supports the urban focus of the Plan, which is consistent with national policy, it makes it clear that this should not mean that all new development can or should be accommodated within urban areas.

- **Regional Hubs**

The Panel agrees that the hubs should be the linchpin of the spatial strategy but recommends changes to the policy to make the link between the hubs and housing development clearer.

- **Strategic Development Areas**

SDAs will be expected to accommodate a minimum of 4-5,000 new homes each and are proposed at: Fareham and north / north east of Hedge End (both are existing proposed SDAs in South Hampshire); south west and south east of Milton Keynes (both are an endorsement of the MK2031 work); south Oxford; and south Reading. The Panel proposes Green Belt reviews around Guildford, Woking and Oxford.

- **Infrastructure**

The Panel congratulates the Assembly on its 'pioneering' work on infrastructure. They support the Implementation Plan as a living document that is updated as local planning progresses. They don't agree that housing levels can be made

contingent upon the delivery of particular pieces of infrastructure but instead they encourage the Assembly to continue its work on influencing mainstream funding and to progress the Regional Infrastructure Fund.

- **Alignment**

The Panel is content that the Regional Housing Strategy is sufficiently aligned with the Plan and implies the RES will also be in alignment if:

- the housing targets are increased to 32,000;
- the additional housing is put in the areas they suggest i.e. the areas of economic potential; and
- an immediate partial review of the plan is undertaken on employment land.