

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
PLENARY MEETING**

Date: 5 March 2008

Subject: **Regional Transport Board**

Report of: Chairman of the Regional Transport Board

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Assembly note the report.

Purpose of Report:

To report on the activities of the Regional Transport Board.

Key Issues:

The Board has met once since the last plenary meeting. At our January meeting we agreed a robust regional response to the first Olympic Transport Plan, and resolved to continue to support the work underway to develop the East-West Rail and Heathrow AirTrack rail projects, both of regional significance.

We approved the latest iteration of the project information questionnaire that will be used as part of the 'refresh' of regional transport priorities.

We also considered the implications of substantial increases in the cost of the A23 Handcross to Warninglid, A21 Tonbridge to Pembury and A21 Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst projects. While confirming our desire to continue to support all three projects in principle, there is a need to consider in greater detail the implication of the cost increases for the rest of the regional programme.

I. Meeting on 24 January 2008

I.1 Olympic Transport Plan

I.1.1 We received a presentation from Hugh Sumner, the Director of Transport at the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA), on the scope and content of the first Olympic Transport Plan, published in October 2007. Mr. Sumner emphasised the need for the ODA to focus its work on delivering the access improvements required to support the main Olympic activities but acknowledged the need for the ODA to work ever more closely with the South East on transport delivery.

I.1.2 Board members and portfolio holders from Local Transport Authorities reiterated our concerns that the current Transport Plan does not give sufficient weight to the transport linkages to/from London. We agreed that a robust response to the ODA was necessary and that this needed to be channelled through the South East Partnership for the 2012 Games. Subsequent to the Board meeting the ODA have requested a further meeting at official level to discuss the region's concerns further.

I.2 Rail Issues

I.2.1 The Board heard the process outlined for the re-letting of the South Central franchise. We are developing our input into the process in partnership with the Local Transport Authorities and there will be a further opportunity to discuss this important franchise at our next meeting.

I.2.2 The East-West Rail and Heathrow AirTrack rail projects are of regional and inter-regional importance. Support from the Board members, most notably the Assembly and SEEDA, has enabled work on both projects to progress. Our meeting heard progress reports on both schemes and the Board reaffirmed its support for both projects. Partner partners will continue to work closely with the local authority led consortium promoting both projects.

I.3 Towards a Sustainable Transport System

I.3.1 The Government Office gave a short presentation on the key points in the Government's recently published discussion document 'Towards a Sustainable Transport System: Supporting Economic Growth in a Low Carbon World'. We have a particular interest in understanding how the five overall objectives identified by Government for transport relate to regionally identified priorities.

I.3.2 Government is proposing to publish a Green Paper as part of the next stage in developing its thinking. In order for us to develop our thinking to feed into this work, Board members will discuss the issues in a workshop later this month.

I.4 Refresh of Regional Programme 2008: Revised Questionnaire

I.4.1 Members will be aware of the pioneering work that the Board has undertaken on prioritisation. This will be used to underpin a refresh of our

advice on transport priorities later this year, work that will in turn feed into the region's second round of advice on Regional Funding Allocations. The first stage in this process is to collect up to date information in individual projects from local authorities across the region. We are using an updated version of the previous questionnaire and the Assembly secretariat recently wrote to all authorities inviting them to submit updated information. This process is also the opportunity for new proposals to be submitted for consideration by the Board.

1.5 Programme Management and Monitoring

1.5.1 Our meeting demonstrated the need for Government to provide us with updated information on the scheme costs of Highways Agency projects. We have been made aware of substantial increases in costs of the A23 Handcross to Warninglid, and A21 Tonbridge to Pembury and A21 Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst projects. In total the increases amount to approximately £140 million (the equivalent of one year's Regional Funding Allocation for transport).

1.5.2 While the Board was keen to continue its support in principle for all three projects this cannot be unconditional given the scale of the cost increase and the potential implication this would have for the rest of the programme were it to be funded entirely from within the region's RFA. The secretariat is discussing this issue in greater detail with the DfT as a matter of urgency and the Board will consider the issue again at a short additional meeting on 12 March.

1.6 European Commission Green Paper: Towards a New Culture for Urban Mobility

1.6.1 The Board has agreed a response to this consultation. The response sets out our work on implementing measures that will support behavioural change. A substantive update on this topic will be before the Board at its meeting in May.

2. Dialogue Meeting: Network Rail 24 January 2008

2.1 Immediately following the Board meeting, we reconvened at Network Rail's Euston Station headquarters for a dialogue meeting with a number of their senior team. This provided a useful opportunity, in an informal forum, for us to explore in greater detail how best we can work with them to realise the potential of the region's rail network to support the delivery of the South East Plan. We debated the impact of the forthcoming Network Rail Strategic Business Plan on our region and, in more general terms, the implications of the Rail White Paper of summer 2007. Finally, we were delighted to complete our day by taking part in a guided tour of St Pancras International station, an exciting experience for all concerned!

Cllr Nick Skellett
Chairman of the Regional Transport Board

18 February 2008