

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Date: 10 January 2001

Subject: **Transport 2010 – Identification of National Road Schemes**

Report of: Head of Regional Transport Planning

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the South East England Regional Assembly advise the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions that the following improvement schemes are added to the targeted list of improvements:

1. M40 Junction 4/A404 – Handy Cross
2. A23 Handcross to Warninglid Improvement
3. A2 Lydden (B2060) to Dover Improvement

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**I Background**

- 1.1 In July 2000 the Government published “Transport 2010 : the 10 Year Plan”. The 10 Year Plan set out a substantial increase in investment in transport infrastructure aimed at delivering a modern, safe and high quality integrated transport network.
- 1.2 In September 2000 the Government Office for the South East wrote to SERPLAN in its capacity as the Regional Planning Body seeking its cooperation in a piece of work that would explore whether there existed the opportunity for early progress to be made in addressing problems on the trunk road network without prejudice to the developing work on the regional transport strategy or current and future multi-modal studies.

- 1.3 The aim of this piece of work was to identify schemes that could be recommended to the Secretary of State for inclusion within the Government's targeted programme of investment schemes.
- 1.4 In view of the need for this work to reflect the on-going work to develop the Regional Transport Strategy, it was subsequently agreed that the Regional Assembly would take the lead in providing advice to the Secretary of State, ensuring in the process that SERPLAN and other key regional partners, including SEEDA, were closely involved throughout.
- 1.5 The Secretary of State has asked for advice from the Regional Planning Bodies to be available by mid-January 2001.

## **2 Assessment Criteria and Process**

- 2.1 The assessment criteria identified by the Government Office for the South East within which the Regional Assembly has had to operate were designed to ensure that the schemes identified:
  - have to be consistent with the emerging Regional Transport Strategy;
  - have to be capable of being taken forward quickly (suggesting a high degree of consensus as to the preferred way forward);
  - must not prejudice the outcome of current or future multi modal studies;
  - must provide appropriate solutions to problems meriting priority attention.
- 2.2 The Government Office for the South East acknowledged the tight timescale for this piece of work at the outset. In order to assist in the process the Highways Agency were commissioned to prepare advice on the nature and extent of problems on the core network that would enable potential schemes consistent with the assessment criteria to be identified for further consideration. The Regional Assembly received this advice only on 6 December 2000.
- 2.3 In addition the Assembly secretariat sought the views of the local highway authorities and SEEDA in order that they could be fed into the assessment process.

## **3 Regional Assembly Recommendations**

- 3.1 In terms of the original Targeted Programme of Improvements announced in July 1998 a significant number of the schemes included lay within the south east region. In addition the programme of multi-modal studies announced at the same time covered a significant proportion of the remaining trunk road network in the region
- 3.2 Within the assessment criteria set out for this work the scope to include additional schemes in the Government's Targeted Programme of Investment is extremely limited.

- 3.3 It is therefore proposed that the Regional Assembly advises the Secretary of State add the following schemes to his programme of investment:
- 3.4 **M40 Junction 4/A404 – Handy Cross:** The traffic related problems at this key junction have been the subject of a Highways Agency led study in partnership with representatives from the relevant local authorities. Consultants employed by the Highways Agency undertook the work and the content of the final report is in the process of being considered by Ministers.
- 3.5 The final report of the study identified a package of improvements to this junction that would need to be taken forward by the Highways Agency on behalf of the Government. These measures were in turn supported by more local transport measures to be implemented by the local authorities.
- 3.6 The package of improvements attracted support from all the key stakeholders. Removal of this bottleneck on the strategic network would be consistent with the objectives of Regional Planning Guidance. In addition the Regional Economic Strategy makes specific reference as to the need to deliver an improvement to the junction. It is therefore the Regional Assembly's recommendation that a commitment to the implementation of the full package of measures be undertaken as part of this review. This commitment should include the provision of additional capital and revenue monies to the local authorities in order to enable them to deliver the supporting local transport measures.
- 3.7 A related issue arising from the consideration of problems associated with the Handy Cross junction is the performance and operation of the Bisham Roundabout. Although it is unlikely that any future proposal associated with this junction will be of national significance, the A404 between the M40 and M4 corridors is of regional significance and the Regional Assembly would encourage the Highways Agency to undertake a review of this junction as a priority.
- 3.8 **A23 Handcross to Warninglid Improvement:** This scheme, for which a preferred route is already identified, involves widening of the existing road, with limited realignment of the carriageway where necessary in order to meet modern design standards. At the time of the Roads Review the need to consider the safety issues associated with this section of the highway network were clearly identified. Subsequent work associated with the development of the Gatwick Area Transport Strategy has continued to highlight local authority concerns at the sub-standard nature of this section and the implications that this has for overall safety.
- 3.9 The proposed scheme would be consistent with the advice in Regional Planning Guidance to make best use of current infrastructure and improving overall levels of safety. In addition it would be consistent with the objective of improving connections between the south coast regeneration area and the more economically successful areas of the region identified in the Regional Economic Strategy.
- 3.10 Although the proposed scheme does have an impact on an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the emphasis on an on-line solution reduces the nature of this

impact to an existing transport corridor. Accordingly it is the Regional Assembly's advice that work is set in hand to progress the development of this scheme through those processes.

- 3.11 **A2 Lydden (B2060) to Dover Improvement:** this scheme covers the only remaining section of single carriageway on the direct route between Dover and London. Although the majority of cross Channel traffic use the M20 corridor as its means of access, the A2 corridor remains a strategic link to a key strategic port within the south east region. The scheme is likely to comprise on-line widening to dual carriageway standard utilising as much as possible of the existing carriageway. Previous proposals have attracted strong support locally.
- 3.12 Again the proposed scheme does have an impact on an AONB. The emphasis on an on-line solution, coupled with the importance attached to improving access to the strategically important port of Dover, are consistent with the advice in Regional Planning Guidance to make best use of current infrastructure. In addition this is an area for priority regeneration identified in the Regional Planning Guidance and is consistent with the objective set out in the Regional Economic Strategy. It is therefore the Regional Assembly's advice that work is set in hand to progress the development of this scheme through those processes.

#### **4 Next Steps**

- 4.1 Given the timescale within which the Regional Assembly's advice needs to be passed onto the Secretary of State it will not be possible to present this Committee's recommendations to the Assembly Plenary at its meeting on 14 February 2001. It is therefore proposed that this Committee's recommendation be considered by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 19 January 2001 for formal approval on behalf of the Regional Assembly.

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21 December 2000