

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Date: 12 October 2001

Subject: **European Transport White Paper**

Report of: Head of Regional Transport Planning

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Regional Assembly work with the European Commission officials to ensure that the key issues for the South East Region are taken fully into account in implementing the measures set out in the White Paper and through the review of the TENs guidelines.

1 Background

- 1.1 In September the European Commission published its Transport White Paper, the aim of which is to set the scene for a sustainable transport policy at a Community level for the next ten years. In doing so it builds upon the framework set out in the Commission's first Transport White Paper published in December 1992.
- 1.2 The White Paper proposes some 60 specific measures to be taken at Community level under the Common Transport Policy. It includes an action programme for the period to 2010 with milestones, notably the monitoring exercises and mid-term review in 2005 that will check whether the targets identified are being attained or whether adjustments are required.
- 1.3 The White Paper acknowledges that a number of the measures identified are matters that are more appropriate for National or Regional decision making forums. The purpose this paper is to summarise the key issues that have an implication for the work of the Regional Assembly in its role as Regional Planning Body.

2 Overview of the White Paper

- 2.1 The White Paper begins with a review of the performance of the Common Transport Policy to date and an assessment of its strengths

and weaknesses. The guiding principle of the 1992 White Paper was the opening up of the transport market. The Commission considers that this objective has been generally achieved with the notable exception of the rail sector. Air travel in particular is highlighted as a sector whose rapid growth is attributed in part to the opening up of the market to wider competition.

2.2 The new White Paper however notes that there remain distortions to competition resulting from a lack of fiscal and social harmonisation within the internal market. This has in turn led to a number of headaches associated with the transport network such as:

- unequal growth in the share of individual modes of transport;
- congestion on the main road and rail routes, in towns and at airports;
- harmful effects on the quality of the environment and public health, in particular the heavy toll of road accidents.

2.3 The guiding principle of the White Paper is the need to gradually break the link between economic growth and transport growth in order to achieve a more sustainable use of transport throughout the internal market. The measures and action programme set out therein comprises a series of measures ranging from pricing to revitalising alternative modes of transport to road and targeted investment in the Trans European Network.

2.4 The White Paper suggests that through this integrated approach it will be possible to shift the balance between transport modes such that by 2010 they will be at the levels observed in 1998. It is recognised that this aim is ambitious, however it is suggested that by implementing the measures set out in the White Paper there will be a marked break in the link between transport growth and economic growth without there being a need to restrict the mobility of people and goods.

2.5 The document continues by highlighting that the objective of shifting the balance of transport will require not only the successful implementation of the programme of transport measures, but also require consistent measures to be taken at National or Local level in the context of other policy areas, including the need for:

- economic policy to take account of factors that contribute to increasing demand for transport services;
- urban and land use planning policy to avoid unnecessary increases in the need for mobility;

- social and educational policy to encourage better organisation of working patterns and school hours;
- urban transport policy in major conurbations to strike a balance between modernisation of public services and a more rational use of the private car;
- budget and fiscal policy to achieve full internalisation of external costs, in particular environmental costs;
- competition policy to ensure the full opening up of the market but not at the cost of poorer quality public services; and
- transport research policy to ensure consistency across the Community at all levels.

3 Issues for the Regional Assembly

- 3.1 The White Paper states that the comprehensive review of the guidelines for the Trans European Networks, scheduled for publication in 2004, will take into account responses to its content.
- 3.2 A number of the measures identified within the White Paper will have an implication for the development of the transport network serving the South East of England, and are set out in paragraphs 3.3 to 3.15
- 3.3 The renewal of the rail network is identified as being the key to achieving the rebalance of modal share. In particular the potential of the network to be developed to support long distance passenger and rail movements is identified as a major opportunity.
- 3.4 Freight movements in particular are seen as an important market to target. The White Paper paints a vision of a rail network in 2010 that offers rail freight services operating at an average speed of 80 kph, four times the current average. This vision will be delivered initially through the promotion of the Trans European Rail Freight Network, and latterly the allocation of efficient train paths for freight movements, including potentially the development of strategic rail routes that give priority to freight.
- 3.5 For passenger movements the White Paper proposes further measures to open up the internal market to ensure that the network of high speed rail lines developing across the Community realises its full potential. The need to reduce the environmental impact of rail routes is also acknowledged, with proposals for round table discussions with the railway industry to examine ways in which air pollution and noise pollution can be reduced.

- 3.6 The development of the rail network is linked to two other sectors of the transport network - short sea shipping and air.
- 3.7 The White Paper proposes the development of the short sea shipping network in the form of veritable "motorways of the sea". For the South East of England the suggestion that shipping routes between the United Kingdom and France as being potentially one instance where a choice will need to be made as to which routes should be identified and developed, is of particular relevance. Furthermore, it is noted that priority should be given at a National level to ports that have a good connection to inland transport services. For the United Kingdom applying the principle of modal re-balance this suggests that ports with a good rail connection (or the potential for one) might have an advantage. The need to develop links that foster integration between sea, inland waterways and rail is highlighted as being the biggest "missing link" in the transport network.
- 3.8 The White Paper includes a proposal for a new Community Programme, called Marco Polo. This programme will support intermodal initiatives and alternatives to road transport during their start up phase where these will support "motorways of the sea" that have been identified through Member states and accepted for inclusion as part of the TENs. The Regional Assembly, through its work on the RTS, may wish to engage in the discussion at a National level on the identification of "motorways of the sea" where this would support the implementation of the RTS by unlocking additional resources for the region.
- 3.9 Whilst the White Paper accepts that there will be a need for some additional airport capacity, it notes that the opportunities to promote the construction of new airports will be limited. The development of complementary inter-modal links between rail and air services is highlighted as a major opportunity to make more efficient use of both sectors of the transport network. A vision is painted wherein a network of high speed rail services to the major hub airports are complemented by smaller airports in the regions providing more local air services.
- 3.10 With publication of the Government's study into regional air services in the South East expected early in the New Year, and a White Paper on Aviation promised by the Government later in 2002, the issue of airport capacity and access to airports is likely to be a key issue for the RTS. Engagement in the discussion on the future of this sector of the transport network at a European and National level is likely to be the focus for the Regional Assembly.
- 3.11 As with the rail sector, future growth in the air sector is predicated on the basis that noise and emissions arising from air movements will be reduced. In this context it is notable that the Commission will continue to press the case for the taxation of aviation kerosene.

- 3.12 The road sector is not ignored within the White Paper. As part of the emphasis on putting the user at the heart of transport policy, the White Paper notes that road safety is a prime concern of users. The United Kingdom together with Sweden is identified as being an exemplar in terms of what is achievable in terms of accident reduction. It is largely in this context that the Commission has adopted a target of reducing by half the number of road deaths across the Community by 2010.
- 3.13 The White Paper treads a delicate line with regards taxation. It notes that the benefits of a high quality accessible transport network to society and transport users should be reflected in the price users pay, but without affecting access to a good quality, continuous service throughout the Community. However the White Paper does not propose additional taxes for transport users. Rather it proposes that the thrust of Community action should be to replace existing transport system taxes with more effective instruments for integrating infrastructure costs and external costs. In other words it is not so much the overall level of taxes that needs to change significantly, but rather their structure. In this context the Commission plans to propose a framework directive in 2002 to establish the principles of infrastructure charging and a pricing structure for all modes of transport.
- 3.14 Although taxation is a matter for National debate, the Regional Assembly is remitted through its role to develop the RTS to set the context within which charging might be considered as part of a comprehensive approach to the management of the region's transport network. In this context proposals in the area of charging may have an implication for the Regional Assembly.
- 3.15 In order to reduce the environmental impact of the transport network the White Paper makes a number of cross-references to the European Green Paper on the security of energy supply. This includes an objective for road transport that substitute fuels should replace 20% of conventional fuels by 2020. The RTS provides the framework for transport investment in the period to 2016 and in that context it may be appropriate to consider as part of the work currently underway to examine the scope for policies and proposals to be included that will support this objective.

4 Review of the TEN Guidelines

- 4.1 A key feature of the White Paper is the announcement of a two-stage review of the Trans European Networks guidelines.
- 4.2 The first stage of the review, in 2001, will aim at a limited adaptation of the existing guidelines with the aim of concentrating on the elimination of bottlenecks on the routes already identified.

- 4.3 The second stage of the review, in 2004, will involve a more extensive revision of the guidelines. Reference has already been made to the fact that the revision will take into account reactions to the White Paper. This part of the review will also be aimed at introducing the concept of "motorways of the sea", developing airport capacity, improving linkages with outlying regions and integrating the networks of the candidate countries.
- 4.4 As the gateway to the United Kingdom the South East region is likely to be crucially affected by any proposed modification to the guidelines and the Regional Assembly should seek to influence the revision of the guidelines as part of its programme of work associated with the development of the RTS.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The transport network in the South East plays a pivotal role in the transport network of the North West Europe area. Its efficient operation is crucial if the White Paper's objective of shifting the balance between transport modes is to be delivered.
- 5.2 The agenda set by the Transport White Paper will have a significant influence on the future shape and development of the region's transport network. It is therefore recommended that the Regional Assembly actively work with the Commission officials to ensure that the key issues for the South East Region are taken fully into account in implementing the measures set out in the White Paper and through the review of the TENs guidelines.

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1 October 2001