

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

Date: 29 September 2004

Subject: **Integrated Kent Franchise**

Report of: Head of Regional Transport Planning

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Assembly joins with SEEDA to request an urgent meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport in order to stress the adverse impact that continued delays in investment decisions in respect of the IKF (including domestic services on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link) are having on delivery of the Government's aspirations for the Thames Gateway and Ashford Growth Area. Representatives for the Kent/Medway area should be invited to attend the meeting.

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**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the unsatisfactory situation with regards to the Integrated Kent Franchise, including the introduction of domestic services on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The SRA's consultation on the IKF was considered by this Committee at its meeting on 31 March. A copy of the Assembly's response to the consultation is attached as Annex I.
- 2.2 The Interregional Planning Statement for the Thames Gateway area (prepared jointly by the Regional Assembly, the GLA and the East of England Regional Assembly) reinforces the points made in the Assembly's response by identifying the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and the introduction of domestic services as one of four strategic transport projects within the Gateway area that will have the biggest impact on the capacity of the transport system to support future development. As such the project is identified as being critical to delivering the successful regeneration of the Gateway, and is of strategic as well as local significance.

**3 Progress with the IKF**

- 3.1 The Regional Assembly's response to the IKF consultation sought a commitment from the SRA to work more closely with the Assembly in the preparation of the final IKF specification. The restructuring of the rail industry outlined in the

Government's White Paper "the Future of Rail" gives the Secretary of State a more direct role in the definition of the final specification of future rail franchises.

- 3.2 In recent weeks the secretariat has begun to pick up informal indications that the Department for Transport is concerned at the estimated cost of the IKF, with the implication being that the Department is considering cutting back the level of service initially proposed. As Annex I shows this proposed level of service was itself considered seriously inadequate by both the Assembly and the local authorities. In addition, it is deeply concerning to note that the order to construct the rolling stock required to operate domestic services on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link has still not been placed with a train manufacturer, with consequent delays to the implementation timetable.

#### **4 Next Steps**

- 4.1 Delivery of the IKF, including domestic services on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, has been identified as a critical project for delivering the regeneration of the Thames Gateway and the Ashford Growth Area. In addition, the IKF has a wider impact in terms of the role it plays in supporting the regeneration of East Kent.
- 4.2 A decision on the final specification for the IKF is expected to be made shortly. It is critical that the wider economic and social issues associated with the IKF are fully taken into consideration by the Secretary of State for Transport in determining the content of the final specification. It is also essential that investment in new stock for the domestic services is committed without further delay.
- 4.3 The wider context within which a decision on the IKF specification should be taken is something in which the Regional Assembly and SEEDA have a common interest. It is therefore recommended that the Assembly works with SEEDA to pursue the concerns set out within this report with the Secretary of State for Transport as a matter of utmost urgency, and invites appropriate local authority representatives to join a delegation.

**Martin Tugwell**  
**Head of Regional Transport Planning**  
17 September 2004

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10 May 2004

Dear Colleague,

**RE: INTEGRATED KENT FRANCHISE**

The South East England Regional Assembly is the Regional Planning Body for South East England. As such it is responsible for preparing and monitoring implementation of the regional planning framework for the region. Subject to legislation currently before Parliament, the regional planning framework will shortly be placed on a statutory basis and will form part of the Development Plan.

The Assembly has been working on completing a review of the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) that forms part of the regional planning framework. The Secretary of State has recently published his proposed modifications to the draft RTS. A final version of the RTS is expected to be published in the Summer. The revised RTS provides the up to date regional framework within which the Integrated Kent Franchise (IKF) must be developed.

The Strategic Rail Authority's consultation on the IKF was considered by the Assembly's Regional Planning Committee at its meeting on 31 March. This letter constitutes the formal response of the Regional Assembly to the SRA's consultation.

The Regional Assembly welcomes the opportunity that the completion of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link provides to undertake a fundamental review of the pattern of rail services operating as part of the South East Trains franchise. The Assembly accepts that such a review may involve both additions and reductions to the existing pattern of rail services. However the Assembly draws attention to the failure of the SRA to address previously expressed concerns that the level of detail set out within the SRA's consultation material does not enable a considered view to be taken on the overall benefit of the proposals.

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The provision of domestic rail services on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link is identified as a key transport proposal in the approved regional planning framework issued by the Secretary of State, RPG9. It is also included within the revised RTS. The Secretary of State's proposed modifications to the RTS highlights that the priorities for future investment in enhancement of the rail network should be:

- To improve rail access to key international gateways
- The development of rail services that provide an alternative to orbital road movements; and
- The enhancement of services to regional hubs where this improves the overall level of accessibility.

The Regional Assembly considers that the SRA's proposals fail to take proper account of the regional framework and in particular are not consistent with the priorities identified by the Secretary of State in the proposed modifications to the RTS. In particular the Assembly considers that the consultation document gives undue weight to the requirements of the Mayor's proposals as set out in the London Plan.

Rail services operating as part of the IKF will form an important component of the transport system required in order to facilitate delivery of the spatial strategy in the eastern part of South East England. Given the seriousness of the concerns outlined above the Regional Assembly seeks a commitment from the SRA that it will more closely with the Assembly in the preparation of the final IKF specification in order to ensure that it properly reflects not just the existing regional framework but also the emerging framework of the South East Plan. The Regional Assembly seeks a further commitment from the SRA that any subsequent revision to the IKF specification in the light of operational experience will also be undertaken in close liaison with the Regional Assembly.

Particular concerns identified by the Regional Assembly that need to be given greater emphasis in the final version of the specification are the need:

- To develop the Redhill to Tonbridge corridor as part of a wider orbital route;
- To take more positively into account the requirements for freight movements; and
- To retain as a short to medium term aspiration the provision of high-speed domestic rail services serving Dover.

The Regional Assembly regrets that the SRA has failed to examine the potential for localised infrastructure improvements to be delivered as part of the IKF that would address known bottlenecks on the system where this would enable the pattern of services to be more closely aligned with the delivery of the regional framework.

