

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND  
REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOARD**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 24 JANUARY 2008**



Present:

Board Members

Cllr. Nick Skellett (Chairman)  
David Cooper (Substitute)  
Gwyn Drake  
Paul Harwood  
Clive King  
Joan O'Byrne  
Cllr. Tony Page  
Mark Pearson  
John Peel  
Simon Pratt  
Cllr. Cec Tallack  
Cllr. Paul Watkins

Officers

Martin Tugwell  
Andy Mak  
James Renwick  
Fiona Thorp  
Steve Baker  
Steven Edwards  
Detlef Golletz  
Pat Ayling

In Attendance

Cllr. Lt. Col. Tex Pemberton, West Sussex CC  
Cllr. Matthew Lock, East Sussex CC  
Cllr. Valerie Letheren, Buckinghamshire CC  
Cllr. Colin Raynor, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead  
Cllr. Nigel Collor, Dover District Council  
Greg Clark MP  
David Godfrey, Office of Greg Clark MP  
Neil Gibson, Buckinghamshire County Council  
Anne James, Buckinghamshire County Council  
Peter Hayward, East Sussex County Council  
Ian Lewis, Swale Borough Council  
Iain Reeve, Surrey County Council  
Mike Link, West Sussex County Council  
Gail Kenyon, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead  
Hugh Sumner, Olympic Delivery Authority  
Allan Gooch, Olympic Delivery Authority  
Stephen Jolly, Olympic Delivery Authority  
Matthew Lodge, Department for Transport  
Mark Heverin, SEEDA  
Patrick O'Sullivan, English Partnerships  
Michael May, Steer Davies Gleave  
Richard Hope, Higher Consulting  
Derek Coffee, SEFS/Transport 2000  
Jeff Cousins  
David Keen

## **1. Apologies for absence and declarations of interest**

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Susan Stuart (Government Office for the South East) – David Cooper as substitute. Apologies had also been received from Paul Lovejoy (SEEDA).

## **2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 July 2007**

- 2.1 The Minutes were **AGREED** subject to recording that Cllr. Lt Col Tex Pemberton that had raised the issue of cross London connections between London Waterloo and St Pancras International (para 6.2 of the minutes).

## **3. Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda**

- 3.1 The Board was informed that the Regional Assembly had been invited to attend an Office of Rail Regulation hearing into the proposed Track Access Option for the Crossrail project. This hearing was scheduled to take place on 1 February.

## **4. Olympic Transport Plan**

- 4.1 The Chairman introduced the discussion by expressing the concerns of both the Board, and the South East Partnership for the 2012 Games that the first Olympic Transport Plan failed to reflect the advice of the region and was overly London-centric in its focus.

- 4.2 He then introduced Hugh Sumner, Head of Transport at the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA). He invited him to make a presentation to the Board on the detail of the Olympic Transport Plan and the ODA's perspective on the role of the South East in the movement of the Olympic "family". The presentation highlighted the extent of the transport implications of the 2012 Games and the importance of providing the necessary infrastructure, both to meet the requirements of the Games and to promote a wider sustainable transport legacy. The Chairman thanked Mr. Sumner for the presentation and invited comment.

- 4.3 Cllr. Rayner (RBWM) expressed his disappointment and concern that the ODA had failed in the Transport Plan to give adequate consideration of the requirements of access to Eton Dorney, and more widely the linkage between the region and venues within central London.

- 4.4 In particular, Cllr. Rayner expressed concern about the failure to develop the detail of the access requirements beyond the indicative requirements that had been set out in the original Bid Document. He noted with some concern the continued promotion of Taplow Station as a key public transport interchange for services accessing Eton Dorney. He advised the Board that the Royal Borough was working with the Highways Agency, Buckinghamshire County Council, Slough Borough Council and South Bucks District Council to identify the access requirements with a view to presenting this to the ODA in due

course. He reiterated his authority's desire for closer working with the ODA to overcome their concerns.

- 4.5 Cllr. Letheren (BCC) supported the concerns expressed by Cllr Rayner regarding the lack of account given within the Transport Plan to ensure the transport links between the region and London were given proper recognition. She reported that progress with the proposed coachway at Junction 4 of the M40 was being made; she understood that the Highways Agency had within the previous week withdrawn their objections to the proposal.
- 4.6 Cllr Lock (ESCC) drew the Board's attention to the need to take advantage of using the 2012 Olympic Games to highlight opportunities such as those created by the construction of the 'Avenue Verte' cycle route that linked London and Paris. It was **AGREED** that a reference to this effect would be added to the draft response.
- 4.7 In response, Mr. Sumner noted that the ODA was engaged with the work of the South East Partnership through its involvement in the Transport and Infrastructure Working Group. He emphasised that the ODA budget for investment in transport infrastructure was limited. Moreover the Authority was constrained in that it was only able to invest in infrastructure that was directly linked to the delivery of the Games. However, he acknowledged that opportunities were available for the ODA to work with stakeholders to progress non-ODA funded but nonetheless important projects and that this should take place through the existing mechanisms.
- 4.8 Cllr Watkins noted that Dover District Council was bidding for the Olympic Torch to begin its 'journey' to London from the Port of Dover, and asked the Board to support their bid.

**It was AGREED that the Board:**

- i) Record its disappointment and concern that the Olympic Transport Plan fails to give adequate consideration to the importance of transport connections between the Olympic sites and the South East England region;**
- ii) Recommend to the South East Partnership that the response attached at Annex A be submitted to the Olympic Delivery Authority.**

## **5. Rail Issues**

### **5.1 South Central Franchise**

- 5.1.1 Matthew Lodge (Department for Transport) outlined the timeline for the re-letting of the South Central franchise and identified the likely key issues that would be considered in the preparation of the franchise specification. These included:
- i) issues of capacity (but not major infrastructure proposals);
  - ii) issues of frequency (building on the changes arising out of the Brighton Main Line Route Utilisation);

- iii) accessibility to stations; and
- iv) management of change (in particular handling the disruption to services arising from the delivery of Thameslink)

5.1.2 Responding to a question from John Peel it was confirmed that the Hastings to Ashford rail service forms part of the franchise. Matthew Lodge also confirmed that while the issue of extending electrification was not an issue usually considered as part of the franchising process, 'infill' schemes might be considered on their own merits.

5.1.3 Cllr Page raised a concern that train operating companies with a poor performance record were allowed to compete for new franchises. He argued that account of past performance on other franchises should be a factor taken into consideration in the assessment process. Matthew Lodge undertook to provide clarity on this issue.

**Post Meeting Note: Matthew Lodge has confirmed that;**

“The Department for Transport considers past performance as part of the accreditation phase of the procurement process. This assessment of performance is based upon the applicant’s track record across all relevant transport operations including any UK rail franchises. The DfT will consider evidence provided by the applicants and, in the case of current and recent UK rail franchises, data and analysis already held by the DfT.

“In accessing the track record of passenger service operators, the DfT will score only those variables which were in the applicant’s direct control. For example, applicants will not get credit, or be penalised, for a change in reliability which is primarily attributable to the infrastructure operator or others.”

5.1.4 It was noted that this would be the first franchise to be re-let since the Rail White Paper (“Delivering a Sustainable Railway, July 2007) was published. As such Passenger Focus would have a greater role in providing advice to Government.

5.1.5 Matthew Lodge offered to provide the Board with a copy of the draft objectives for the new franchise. It was **AGREED** that the secretariat would circulate these to Local Transport Authorities served by the South Central franchise. It was noted that the Board would have the opportunity to discuss the franchise specification at its next meeting.

**It was AGREED that the Board:**

- i) **note the issues relating to the South Central franchise as set out in the report;**
- ii) **seek views from Local Transport Authorities and other stakeholders on the draft objectives for the new franchise;**
- iii) **engage with DfT (rail) to ensure maximum alignment of the franchise specification with the South East’s spatial and economic policies.**

## 5.2 East-West Rail

- 5.2.1 Patrick O’Sullivan presented to the Board the output of the work commissioned by the East West Rail Consortium and Milton Keynes Partnership that had considered the feasibility and deliverability of the project. Both the Regional Assembly and SEEDA had made substantial contributions towards the cost of this work.
- 5.2.2 The headline message from the work was hugely encouraging; the case for re-opening the western part of the East-West rail corridor appeared to be robust. The benefit/cost ratio of the options considered suggested that the project represented good value for money. It was also noted that the cost of the Aylesbury ‘spur’ was estimated to be lower than previously thought.
- 5.2.3 The results of the work (which moves the project to GRIP3 stage) were such that the Consortium and Milton Keynes Partnership consider it appropriate to move to the next stage: GRIP4. At this point a single preferred option will be identified and taken forward to delivery.
- 5.2.4 Cllr Tallack was heartened by the results of the most recent work. He noted that the independent Panel that had conducted the Examination in Public of the draft South East Plan had identified the strategic significance of restoring rail services in support of planned growth. He also welcomed the indication that the cost of delivering the Aylesbury ‘spur’ was less than originally envisaged; he noted that this link was an important factor in ensuring that connectivity between Aylesbury and Milton Keynes.
- 5.2.5 Cllr Letheren (BCC) expressed her support for the project in principle. She noted that the issue of connectivity between Aylesbury and Milton Keynes was significant in terms of delivering the growth agenda. At a local level this was reflected by residents’ concerns about the traffic pressures along the A418 corridor. She noted the wide ranging support for the restoration of rail services but noted that this would not address all of the current pressures along the Aylesbury to Milton Keynes corridor.
- 5.2.6 Neil Gibson (Chairman of the East West Rail Consortium) advised the Board that he was confident that the funding required to take forward the GRIP4 work could be secured. He also noted that the partners were pursuing a meeting with Network Rail and DfT with a view to securing their (NR and DfT) future role with the project.

### **It was AGREED that the Board:**

- i) Note the outcome of the work undertaken by the East-West Rail Consortium;**
- ii) Re-affirm the Board’s support for the restoration of the western section of East-West rail in support of the regional policy framework set out in the draft South East Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy;**

- iii) **Confirm the Board's support for commissioning further with a view to identifying a preferred route option;**
- iv) **Offer to provide leadership, through its partners, in the development of a funding package to deliver the scheme.**

### 5.3 AirTrack

5.3.1 Iain Reeve (Chairman, AirTrack Forum) updated the Board on progress with this project which will improve access to Heathrow from the South and West. The presentation gave details regarding the proposed route, stations and service frequency.

5.3.2 He advised that BAA plc was taking forward the preparatory work associated with the Transport and Works Act; this will ultimately give permission for the scheme to be constructed. A period of consultation with stakeholders was about to begin shortly. This will aim to identify any outstanding issues and provide the opportunity to seek their resolution. Following this round of consultation, the timetable for the project is anticipated to be:

- Autumn 2008: consultation on scheme
- February 2009: submission of Transport and Works Act (TWA)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2009: Public Inquiry
- Early 2010: confirmation of TWA order
- Late 2010: Start of construction
- Early 2014: Opening of services

5.3.3 In consequence, it appears that the project will not be in operation in time for the 2012 Olympic Games, therefore alternative (interim) solutions to cater for increased movements during this period may be required.

5.3.4 Iain Reeve noted that some concerns had been raised by local residents who could be affected by both the construction and the operation of the scheme but he assured the Board that both BAA plc and the AirTrack Forum were working with the residents to ensure that their concerns are fully taken into account in the final design of the project.

#### **It was AGREED that the Board:**

- i) **would reaffirm its support for Heathrow Airtrack as being a scheme of regional significance;**
- ii) **would support the forthcoming consultation on the TWA process through its partners, in particular using the Regional Assembly's role as the statutory Regional Planning Body to promote the scheme.**

## **6. 'Towards a Sustainable Transport System'**

- 6.1 David Cooper gave a short presentation on the Department for Transport discussion document "Towards a Sustainable Transport System". This publication was the DfT's response to the Eddington and Stern Reviews.
- 6.2 The Board noted that Government funds for investment were largely committed up to 2013/14 and that the purpose of the document was therefore to prompt a debate as to what the longer-term priorities for investment should be. Cllr Skellett pointed out that, based on the Board's advice, there is an agreed regional programme for the period to 2016. Moreover he noted that the Board's work on refreshing the programme the intention was to extend this to cover the period to 2018. As such, he sought clarity as to whether the current priorities post 2013/14 would be affected by the debate arising from this publication.
- 6.3 David Cooper emphasised that the DfT were keen to enter into a dialogue with stakeholders in the region on the way forward. In that context it was AGREED that a workshop would be arranged at which there would be an opportunity for Board members to explore such issues in greater detail. This discussion would form a backdrop to the Board's more formal response at Green Paper stage, which the next meeting would consider.

**It was AGREED that a workshop for Board members would be convened within the next two months.**

## **7. Refresh of Regional Programme 2008: Revised Questionnaire**

- 7.1 Andy Mak summarised the changes to the questionnaire since the last round of prioritisation. He emphasised that this represented evolution based on experience to date with the process. The factual information on costings and timings remained, as before, the crucial element to collect and, subject to the agreement of the Board, it was anticipated that the secretariat would begin collecting information from local authorities at the beginning of March.
- 7.2 Martin Tugwell advised the Board that at its next meeting there would be an opportunity to review the current state of the region's strategic networks and to consider the results of the Annual Monitoring Report. This would enable the Board to take a view on key issues that might need to be emphasised in its refresh of the regional programme.
- 7.3 Cllr Tex Pemberton (WSSC) emphasised the importance of retaining the ability to identify single-issue projects, such as those focusing on addressing road safety issues.

**It was AGREED that the Board:**

- i) Noted the progress on the RFA refresh programme attached at Annex A;**
- ii) Approve the questionnaire attached at Annex B.**

## **8. Programme Management and Monitoring**

- 8.1 Martin Tugwell introduced this item by highlighting the key issue: the need to consider a response to the significant cost increases reported on three Highways Agency schemes - the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury; the A21 Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst; and the A23 Handcross to Warninglid improvement. The urgency of the matter arose from the fact that each scheme had reached a key stage in their development. He emphasised that the cost increases reported were only interim updates although the secretariat had been advised that they were considered to be fairly robust estimates.
- 8.2 In addition to a general concern at the scale of the cost increases, Board members expressed their concern at the timescale in which the matter needed to be considered. Members restated their concern at the delay in the release of updated information for all HA schemes.
- 8.3 Greg Clark MP addressed the meeting. He agreed that the cost increases were frustrating, and he recognised that the Board needed to ensure that all priorities are delivered. He outlined the importance of the proposals on the A21 corridor and requested the Board to continue to treat the schemes as priorities.
- 8.4 The Board confirmed that they still considered the three projects as priorities for investment. However the Board were concerned that they did not have sufficient information on which to form a judgement as to whether the implication of the cost increases on the overall programme was acceptable. In that context it was therefore **AGREED** that the Board would consider this specific issue in greater detail after the proposed workshop on 'Towards a Sustainable Transport System'.
- 8.5 Martin Tugwell advised that discussions were ongoing with GOSE, Network Rail and Reading Borough Council in respect of the timing of the Board's contribution towards the Reading Station scheme.

### **It was AGREED that the Board:**

- i) Note that the proposed A3055 Undercliffe Drive scheme had been formally withdrawn and confirm that any alternative scheme would be considered a new proposal as part of the refresh of the regional programme;**
- ii) Confirm the East Kent Access Phase 2 scheme should continue to be considered a regional priority but that it be noted that further discussion is required with the scheme promoter in order to determine the basis on which the increase in scheme cost should be shared between the RFA and the scheme promoter;**
- iii) Confirm that any increase in costs associated with schemes promoted by the Highways Agency would be considered on the same basis as schemes promoted by Local Transport Authorities;**

