

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND
REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOARD**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 12 March 2008



Present:

Board Members

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

Officers

Martin Tugwell
Andy Mak
Detlef Golletz
James Renwick
Fiona Thorp
Pat Ayling

In Attendance

Cllr. Matthew Lock, East Sussex Council
Peter Hayward, East Sussex County Council
Iain Reeve, Surrey County Council
Jamie Robinson, Hyde Consulting
Richard Hope, Hyde Consulting

1. Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

2.1 Apologies were received from Mark Pearson and Paul Harwood.

2. Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda

2.1 There were no matters arising.

3. Highways Agency Cost Increases

3.1 Martin Tugwell reminded the Board that at the meeting in January the Board had been made aware of the interim cost estimates in relation to three of the Highways Agency schemes within the regional programme. These schemes had reached key stages within delivery but all three had reported significant cost increases. To that end, the Department for Transport were seeking the view of the Board as to whether these schemes should remain priorities for the region.

3.2 The Board were reminded of the three schemes for discussion:

i) A23 Handcross to Warninglid Widening

- ii) A21 Tonbridge to Pembury Dualling
- iii) A21 Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst Improvement

3.3 The recommendations agreed by the Board at the January meeting were:

- i) 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;
- ii) Notify the Department for Transport that the A23 Handcross to Warninglid Widening, A21 Tonbridge to Pembury Dualling and A21 Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst Improvement continue to be considered regional priorities but that there was a need to consider further the implications of the cost increases on the overall programme;
- iii) Discuss the implications of the cost increases in the Highway Agency schemes in more detail at this meeting.

3.4 The Board were informed that subsequent to the last Board meeting the secretariat had held a meeting with the Highways Agency and the DfT to explore the issues arising from the cost increases.

3.5 The Chairman expressed concern about the position in which the Board now found themselves. He explained that the Board's role is to offer advice and recommendations that enable the Department for Transport to arrive at a decision on the regional programme within the wider national context. It is for the Secretary of State to make decisions regarding funding and scheme progress. The Board had established a protocol for dealing with schemes that incur significant cost increases. The Board has agreed that it will apply this protocol to Local Transport Authority and Highways Agency schemes in a consistent way. Other Board members concurred with the Chairman's comments.

3.6 The Board considered the detailed implications of the interim cost estimates. It was **AGREED** that its advice in respect of the three HA schemes is as follows:

The A23 Handcross to Warninglid scheme:

- i) continues to be a regional priority; and
- ii) that the Highways Agency should proceed with the scheme as part of the agreed regional programme funded from the Regional Funding Allocation.

The A21 Tonbridge to Pembury scheme:

- i) continues to be a regional priority; and
- ii) that the Highways Agency should proceed with the development of the scheme.

The A21 Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst scheme:

- i) continues to be a regional priority; and
- ii) that the Highways Agency should proceed with the development of the scheme, but that the Board notes that the Department for Transport has requested that the value for money of the scheme is reassessed as a consequence of the scale of the reported increase in its cost.

3.7 The Board noted that delivery of the A23 Handcross to Warninglid scheme gave rise to significant national benefits in terms of connectivity and economic productivity. The A23 corridor is a key corridor linking the international gateway at Gatwick Airport to the South Coast sub regional area. Improved connectivity will be beneficial in terms of international competitiveness and productivity, both for regional and national economies. The Board **AGREED** to emphasis this point in its advice to the Secretary of State as it highlighted the need for additional funding to be made available to cover part of the cost increase.

3.8 The Board also reaffirmed its view that the A21 Baldslow Junction scheme continues to be a regional priority and **AGREED** that the Highways Agency should proceed with the development of that scheme.

3.9 The Board were informed that a review of the cost estimates of all Highways Agency schemes is scheduled to be completed shortly and that the outcomes of that work will be made available in due course.

4. **Date of Next Meetings**

16 May 2008	Institute of Materials, London
10 July 2008	Institute of Materials, London
23 October 2008	Institute of Materials, London

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 13.00