

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Date: 13 June 2008

Subject: **Regional Transport Board**

Report of: Chairman of the Regional Transport Board

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Committee notes the content of this report.

Purpose of Report:

To update the Executive Committee on the work of the Regional Transport Board.

1. Board Meeting - 12 March

- 1.1 This additional meeting was arranged to enable us to consider the implications of increased costs associated with three Highways Agency schemes. The schemes in question - the A23 Handcross to Warninglid improvement, the A21 Tonbridge Bypass to Pembury improvement, and the A21 Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst - had reached critical stages but had each reported substantial cost increases.
- 1.2 We agreed to convey our disappointment that the combined increase in the cost of the schemes amounted to £140m. Unless additional funding is made available to the region the inevitable implication is that the delivery of much needed investment in infrastructure will be delayed elsewhere in the region.
- 1.3 Notwithstanding that concern, we reaffirmed that all three projects continued to be regional priorities and advised the Secretary of State that she should instruct the HA to continue with their development. In so doing we noted that the A21 Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst improvement is to be the subject of a Department for Transport value for money assessment.
- 1.4 In addition, we also reaffirmed that the A21 Baldslow Junction remains a regional priority and that work should also continue to progress on this scheme.

2. Board Meeting - 16 May

- 2.1 We welcomed John Aspinall, the newly appointed Regional Director for the Highways Agency in the South East to his first meeting of the Board. Mr. Aspinall takes over from Gwyn Drake. The meeting was Mark Pearson's last one as a representative from the economic partners.
- 2.2 Community Infrastructure Fund - round 2
 - 2.2.1 The Community Infrastructure Fund provides additional funding to invest in transport infrastructure that enables housing and other development. The fund is operated jointly by DfT and CLG and is open to local authorities in established Growth Areas and Growth Points. It is also potentially open to proposals related to the delivery of eco-towns. Some £200m of funding over the next three years is available.
 - 2.2.2 In keeping with the approach adopted for the RFA, the region is asked to advise on proposals put forward for consideration for funding.
 - 2.2.3 We heard that there had been 27 expressions of interest put forward by Local Authorities in our region. Of these we recommended that 15 schemes - amounting to just over £120m of investment - should be considered as priorities for funding. Although this represents a significant proportion of the funding available nationally we believe that it is a reflection of the needs of the region. Equally important we believe it reflects the ability of our local authorities to deliver investment on the ground if the funding is made available.
- 2.3 Regional Infrastructure Fund
 - 2.3.1 In addition to supporting in principle the draft framework for the governance and accountability of the Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF) we were able to identify a contribution of £25m (over the next three years) to be made available through the RIF; this compliments the £10m already identified by SEEDA.

2.4 Programme Management and Monitoring

- 2.4.1 We heard that our recommendation to bring forward the RFA contribution to the Reading Station improvements had been accepted by the Secretary of State. We also heard that she had accepted our advice in respect of the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury, A21 Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst and the A23 Handcross to Warninglid projects.
- 2.4.2 On the latter issue, while the Secretary of State was sympathetic to the Board's concerns regarding the scale of the cost increases she made it clear that there were no additional funds available. However, she noted that she was confident that the regional programme could absorb the increases and still remain affordable - subject to 'over-programming'.
- 2.4.3 In order to assist us with the management of the overall programme we have agreed that in future it is appropriate to over-programme by 15%. This does not mean that additional proposals will be brought into the programme, rather it provides us with the flexibility to ensure that we take up the full funding available in any one year.

2.5 South Central Franchise

- 2.5.1 Following on from our earlier discussion regarding the forthcoming re-letting of the South Central franchise, we have identified the issues that we believe need to be included within the franchise specification. Our approach has been to take the policy framework set out in the South East Plan and Regional Economic Strategy and to put that into a series of requirements that need to form part of the future franchise.

2.6 Regional Bus and Coach Network

- 2.6.1 We had an update on the work undertaken to date in analysing the requirements and opportunities to develop regional bus and coach services. We agreed a programme of future work, including focusing on priority corridors and closer working with agencies concerned with bus operations and highways. We are already beginning to see the practical outcomes of this work with one of the CIF bids supported by the Board being to deliver an improved inter-urban coach service between Oxford and Aylesbury.

2.7 Mobility Management

- 2.7.1 Following our earlier discussion of this subject, we received an update on the progress being made on the four work packages designed to take this agenda forward in the region. We were pleased to note the progress being made with the development of a guide to assist local authorities in identifying transport requirements for Local Development Frameworks. We were also pleased to note the work that had gone into identifying the funding opportunities to deliver mobility management/smarter choice measures.

Cllr Nick Skellett
Chairman of the Regional Transport Board

30 May 2008

Contact: Andy Mak, Planning Manager
Tel: 01483 555215
Email: andymak@southeast-ra.gov.uk