

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
PLENARY MEETING**

Date: 4 March 2009

Subject: **Regional Transport Board**

Report of: Chairman of the Regional Transport Board

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Regional Assembly notes the report.

Purpose of Report:

To update the Regional Assembly on the work of the Regional Transport Board, including work underway with the Local Transport and Local Planning Authorities as part of the region's input into developing a programme of work as part of the Department for Transport's 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport System' process.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Regional Transport Board has met once since the last plenary meeting, on 16 January 2009.
- 1.2 The Board was pleased to welcome Bob Goldfield to his first meeting. He is the new SEEDA Board representative, replacing John Peel. Bob is the Chief Executive of the Port of Dover Harbour Board.

2. Delivering a Sustainable Transport System

- 2.1 We received a paper setting out the approach that the Department for Transport is taking in setting out the future policy direction for strategic national transport networks, across all modes, from 2014 onwards.
- 2.2 The consultation document (Delivering a Sustainable Transport System, or “DaSTS”) sets out the Government’s view as to the most significant strategic priorities for the transport network in England. However a major issue is that it does not clarify how this will influence future investment patterns.
- 2.3 We agreed that the document represented a ‘here and now approach’ to the identification of national transport priorities, that it failed to take account of the implications of future growth. The Board’s concerns will be reflected in the response to the consultation.
- 2.4 As a region we are required to submit our proposals for a programme of work through which we will identify the regional transport priorities for the period post-2013/14. The work at the regional level will complement that undertaken at a national level by the Department for Transport.
- 2.5 Using the evidence base that underpins the South East Plan and Regional Economic Strategy we have identified a number of strategic transport corridors for which we need to develop a long term investment strategy. These have been included in the Board’s input into the Regional Funding Advice and are:
 - London to the Kent Ports (including consideration of a Lower Thames Crossing)
 - London to South West/South Wales
 - South Coast Ports to the Midlands
- 2.6 Building on this initial advice we are now working with local authorities in the region to map the challenges facing the region as a result of growth proposals in the South East Plan and Regional Economic Strategy. We will use the output from this mapping work to identify the longer term investment priorities, in the process helping us to identify ‘gaps’ in the current programme that need to be addressed.
- 2.7 This work will be the subject of a further workshop with elected members from the Local Transport Authorities prior to the Board finalising our proposal for the work programme at our April meeting. I have been pleased to see that

the number of elected members attending our meetings has continued to increase; I believe that our January meeting saw the majority of Local Transport Authorities in attendance. This engagement in the Board's work is vital in ensuring that we develop a robust evidence base that underpins our case to Government for more investment.

3. Programme Management and Monitoring

- 3.1 As part of our input into the Regional Funding Advice we heard how 15 of the Board's investment priorities have been delivered or are in the course of being delivered; we confirmed our advice that the schemes identified in the programme for the period to 2013/14 should be treated as a commitment. As a consequence these schemes will not be the subject of further review unless there is a major change in their circumstances (e.g. a major cost increase). We supported five maintenance schemes being added to the regional transport programme for delivery before 2014.
- 3.2 We did though use the opportunity to refine our views on a number of schemes. For example, it has emerged that there is increasingly a case being made for a wider Sussex Coast Rapid Transit System of which the Brighton and Hove Rapid Transit scheme forms part. We agreed that officers should liaise with Brighton and Hove City Council on how best to deliver the RTS proposals.
- 3.3 In addition, we agreed to support a revised scheme put forward by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead that sees the original major scheme replaced by a package of smaller measures. This scheme is one of three where we are recommending that funding be transferred from the major scheme budget to the Local Transport Authority. This is one of the flexibilities available to us through the RFA process. It is only possible for schemes costing £5m or less and will help reduce the cost of bringing a scheme ready to the point of being delivered.
- 3.4 We also considered two Highways Agency projects scheduled for delivery later in the current programme.
- 3.5 The first of these, the A27 Chichester Improvement scheme, was originally prioritised by the Board at an estimated cost of £137m. It is now understood that the cost of the scheme in its current form is in excess of £200m. It is clear that the scale of this increase in the scheme cost would have a substantial impact on the rest of the programme.
- 3.6 We therefore agreed that while the need for investment to address the underlying challenges facing the A27 in and around Chichester remains there is a need to consider those needs in the wider context of delivering substantial growth elsewhere along the West Sussex coast. We reaffirmed the commitment of the Board to invest in transport infrastructure in West Sussex and agreed that the sums identified for that purpose are retained within the regional programme. We will work with West Sussex County Council, the Highways Agency and other partners to review the scale of the challenge for the transport system arising from growth in this part of the

region (taking into account recent announcements on the Shoreham Growth Point) and identify the most appropriate solutions.

- 3.7 The second HA scheme was the A27 Wilmington Improvement. Originally identified as being required to address safety issues, we agreed that there is a need to review the case for this scheme in light of recent smaller scale improvements.

4. East West Rail

- 4.1 The Board received an update on work to restore rail services on this strategically important corridor. Presentations were made by Chiltern Railways on their proposal for developing an Oxford-Aylesbury- London service, and the East West Rail Consortium on the work underway to identify a preferred scheme for the rest of the route.
- 4.2 We reaffirmed our support for the East West Rail project as a scheme which is central to delivering the objectives and outcomes of the regional policy framework, and welcomed the initiative of Chiltern Railways in also supporting their proposals.
- 4.3 The Board also agreed that we will actively pursue early implementation of the Western Section, including continued development of the funding package required to deliver the scheme.

5. South Oxfordshire Transport Package

- 5.1 We received a presentation from Cllr David Robertson, Deputy Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, on the emerging South Oxfordshire Transport Package. The proposal centres on the Didcot Growth Point, and shows how investment in transport infrastructure is central to realising wider investment opportunities at the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, Milton Park, and in Didcot itself.

6. Any Other Business

- 6.1 We heard that further meetings had been held with the preferred bidders for the new South Central franchise. Feedback from the bidders had been positive and showed the value of the Board engaging positively in the franchise process.
- 6.2 We were advised that the Mayor of London had recently published a transport strategy “direction of travel” document entitled “Way to Go2”. The Transport for London Board has requested a dialogue meeting with the Assembly which is seen as a positive move towards greater engagement.

Cllr Nick Skellett
Chairman of the Regional Transport Board

17 February 2009