

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Date: 15 September 2006

Subject: **Regional Transport Board, 21 July 2006**

Report of: Chairman of the Regional Transport Board

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Committee note the report.

**Purpose of Report:**

To update the Executive Committee on the meeting of the Regional Transport Board held on 21 July 2006.

## **I. Meeting on 21 July 2006**

- I.1 Firstly the Board received a series of verbal updates following the Secretary of State's announcement on the Regional Funding Allocation. The announcement gave praise for the way in which the Board had managed the process and the level of consensus reached in the region. A number of verbal updates were then provided on key issues, including that the Secretaries of State had published their positive decision on the planning inquiry into the A3 at Hindhead. They are minded to grant approval for the scheme subject to consultation on cost increases since the inquiry. The Board was also informed about the recently published Government report into an independent review of the funding allocation process. This invited responses by the end of October this year, and will be considered at the Board's next meeting.
- I.2 The following item on the agenda considered the Transport Innovation Fund Productivity strand announcement. This announced that the gauge clearance project for the route from Southampton to the Midlands was invited to enter the final part of the process. However there was disappointment that the other two schemes in the region, Reading Station and Airtrack, were not to be taken forward in this round. The work at Reading Station is being taken forward apace by Network Rail, however without a clear statement of likely funding stream this work is likely to cease at the end of the year. The Board agreed to press the Secretary of State for a statement of commitment to address the issue, and also to galvanise support in adjoining regions. The Airtrack scheme is continuing development in conjunction with BAA and a European funding bid.
- I.3 The Board then turned to discuss the Forward Programme of Transport Priorities. Following the successful announcement and praise for the work to date, the Board now needs to turn its attention to schemes post 2011. The Board agreed additional guidance, with the aim of providing greater clarity. The Board also discussed the need to consider broad high level priorities post 2016, so as to provide an indicative strategy in future years. The Board agreed to hold a workshop prior to its meeting in October to ensure that members could provide input into the development of the process.
- I.4 Attention then turned to the Thames Gateway Investment Priorities. The Board was updated on the ongoing work to pull together an overview of priorities across the Gateway, being undertaken jointly by DCLG, London, East of England, and led by the South East England Regional Assembly. The work supplements that undertaken in each region to provide an overview for the Gateway area. The Board fully supported the work, especially in regard to the further consideration of the case for a Lower Thames Crossing.
- I.5 The Board then considered the Ports Policy Review issued by the Department for Transport. In particular the board noted that the evidence base underpinning the review confirmed that ports in the greater south east were likely to be the focus of port activity in the future. The Board agreed the response which focused on management of land side infrastructure and the Port Master Plan Approach.

- I.6 The final substantive paper before the Board considered the Rail Refranchising of West Midlands and Cross Country Services. The issues around the West Midlands franchise are limited to impacts in the far north of the region. The Board's response focused on points regarding electronic ticketing, use of expanded capacity at Milton Keynes Central, and the impact of East West Rail. Turning to Cross Country, the Board was dismayed to note the reduction in services and capacity proposed, along with the likely need for more passengers to interchange at Birmingham New Street. The Board's response focused on these issues and in particular the disappointment that the Brighton Main Line Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS) was not being implemented. This has knock on repercussions for services across the South of the Region.
- I.7 The Board then briefly considered the Scheme Progress Monitor. All of the issues had been addressed by the publication of the Regional Funding Allocation outcome, and no new issues were reported. The Highways Agency were invited to present to the Board at its next meeting on the forthcoming consultation on integrated demand management around the M25. Network Rail was also asked to present details on the Freight Route Utilisation Strategy.

**Cllr Nick Skellett**  
**Chairman of the Regional Transport Board**

14 August 2006