



**DRAFT REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY
PUBLIC EXAMINATION**

**WRITTEN SUBMISSION
FOR**

SESSION B: EUROPEAN AND INTER-REGIONAL CONTEXT

Question 4

Does the draft RTS adequately reflect European transport pressures and policies?

1. The region's role as the gateway to the rest of the Europe and its internationally significant infrastructure are set out in Chapter 2 of Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9). This gateway function means that the transport system in South East England plays a pivotal role in the wider transport system serving North West Europe. This role will increase in its significance due to the importance of the internal European market to the economic success of South East England and the opportunities presented by the expansion of the Community to 25 member states. Accordingly, the agenda set out at a Community level will continue to have a significant influence on the future shape and development of the region's transport system.
2. In September 2001 the European Commission published its White Paper, "European Transport Policy for 2010: Time to Decide". The White Paper identified the critical importance of ensuring that the link between economic growth and transport growth (particularly growth in car dependency) is gradually broken. It went on to highlight that the objective of shifting the balance of transport will require not only the successful implementation of the programme of transport measures set out in the document, but also requires consistent measures to be pursued in other policy areas.
3. The draft Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) makes these connections by focusing on the identification of policies and proposals that support delivery of the spatial strategy set out in RPG9. The wider remit afforded by the expansion of RPG into a Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) will provide the opportunity to refine the policy framework of the draft RTS to reflect the wider economic, social and educational issues identified by the Commission.
4. A key feature of the European Transport White Paper was the announcement of a review of the Trans European Networks (TENS) guidelines. The review is aimed in particular at introducing the concept of "motorways of the sea", improving linkages with outlying regions and the integration of the transport networks of the candidate countries. To support this focus the investment priorities for the TENS programme will lie in addressing bottlenecks and reducing peripherality.
5. The Spatial Vision for North West Europe, published in 2000 as part of an INTERREG IIC project, identified the Dover Straits and movement through/around London as being two key bottlenecks on the transport system serving North West Europe. As the gateway to the United Kingdom, and Eire, investment in the landside infrastructure supporting the operation of the region's international airports, ports and the Channel Tunnel have a trans-national significance.
6. The Regional Assembly has worked closely with Commission Officials to understand the Commission priorities set out in the White Paper, as a consequence

of which the draft RTS exhibits a strong synergy with the European agenda. In particular the identification of priority corridors, such as those associated with the Regional Frame, together with their associated investment requirements provide a strong basis for engaging constructively in the review of the TENS.

Question 5

Does the draft RTS take sufficient account of inter-regional patterns of mobility and cross-boundary issues, including the influence of London?

7. An underlying theme of RPG9, as published by the Secretary of State, is the need to develop a more polycentric structure. The development of stronger urban areas in the adjoining regions that have a greater independence from London could confer economic and social advantages. It could also reduce the scale of long distance commuting movements. While London's influence will remain strong and should not be ignored, a balance must be struck between the need for investment in transport infrastructure that supports realisation of the spatial priorities in RPG9 and transport infrastructure that provides linkages with and through London.
8. The issue of inter-regional linkages was discussed at the recent Examination in Public of the Draft London Plan. A key concern of the Regional Assembly is the apparent provision within the draft London Plan for employment growth to take place in excess of additional housing and increases in the resident workforce. This is likely to have significant implications for in and out-commuting flows with the likely consequence being an overall increase in net commuting from the South East to London. In this context delivery of key inter-regional infrastructure, such as Crossrail Line 1 and Thameslink 2000, becomes critical. Both schemes were identified as proposals of regional significance by the Secretary of State in RPG9 and the draft RTS reaffirms their importance. The Regional Assembly and the GLA are continuing to work together to develop further their understanding of the pattern of movement between the two regions.
9. The draft RTS before this Public Examination highlights that London remains a key bottleneck for rail freight movements originating from the gateway ports located along the south coast, most notably the Channel Tunnel and Dover. The draft RTS identifies the context within which the concept of a lower Thames Crossing (to the east of the existing Dartford road crossing) could provide a freight bypass for London thereby enabling existing freight paths on the heavy rail network in London to be utilised for passenger services. The provision of such a freight bypass would have the added benefit of synergy with the objective of delivering regeneration within the Thames Gateway.
10. The Thames Gateway is the largest regeneration opportunity in North West Europe and extends across three regional planning boundaries. The Regional Assembly is actively engaged in the work of the Thames Gateway Strategic Executive in ensuring that the potential of this sub-region is realised. The investment frameworks include those infrastructure requirements already identified,

however further work is required in order to understand fully the infrastructure requirements of the Government's aspirations for further growth in the Gateway.

11. The importance of the relationship with East of England and East Midlands has been highlighted through the work undertaken jointly as part of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area study and the London to South Midlands Multi-Modal Study (MMS). Both have served to highlight the importance of developing east-west transport infrastructure as an integral element of proposals for further growth in this part of the country. The proposals associated with the Milton Keynes and South Midlands area will themselves be the subject of a joint Public Examination in early 2003, however the key infrastructure proposals required to support the spatial strategy are included within the revised investment framework for Milton Keynes in the draft RTS.
12. To the west of the region the inter-regional linkage with the South West and beyond that to South Wales has been covered in two Multi-Modal Studies (MMSs); SWARMMS and the Thames Valley MMS. A key conclusion of SWARMMS was the principle of having two strategic corridors linking the South West to South East England and London, a principle that has been accepted by the Regional Assembly.
13. With the subsequent Thames Valley MMS rejecting the case for major expansion of the motorway network in the Thames Valley the case for developing the Great Western main line to Bristol/Bath/South Wales, as well as that via Westbury, becomes even more critical in terms of handling inter-regional movements. The critical bottleneck that needs to be addressed remains Reading Station and the Regional Co-ordination Group has identified this as a key regional priority. Within the South West region the improvement to the A303 corridor is consistent with the principle of having two strategic transport corridors. The need to consider in greater detail the implications of this for the A303/M3 corridor within South East England has been identified as a requirement for further work by the Highways Agency in the Regional Assembly's response to the Thames Valley MMS.
14. Movements to and from the South Hampshire sub-region have a number of important inter-regional linkages. Most significant is that between the international ports of Southampton and, to a lesser extent, Portsmouth and the West Midlands. The national significance of this corridor of movement (both road and rail) has been recognised through its identification by the Secretary of State as requiring further study. The investment frameworks in the draft RTS reflect the current situation with regards to investment needs along this corridor but will need to be refined in light of the outputs of that study. Although on a smaller scale, movements along the corridor from Bristol/Bath to South Hampshire is currently the subject of a Government funded study. Once again the investment frameworks may need to be refined in light of the outputs of that study.
15. The Regional Assembly continues to develop its working relationship with the South West Regional Assembly as part of the need to address issues of joint interest.

Question 6

Is the concept of the Regional Frame:

- i) consistent with RPG9?**
- ii) appropriate in terms of links to other regions and within the South East?**
- iii) clear in terms of implications for transport improvements and development?**

16. The discussion associated with the previous question has served to highlight the importance of the draft RTS seeking to both support the need to redress the spatial balance of the region, support a more polycentric structure and promote improved inter-regional connections, and with less reliance on movement through the over-congested super hub of London.
17. It is within this context that the draft RTS has identified four transport corridors along which a greater priority needs to be given to investment in transport infrastructure than has previously been the case. The Regional Assembly notes the comment of the Government Office in its response to the consultation that it is appropriate for the draft RTS to identify priority strategic corridors.
18. Together the four corridors constitute the Regional Frame: interlinked corridors of movement along which improvements in transport infrastructure will assist both intra and inter-regional movements, reduce the concentration of movement through London and assist in the regeneration of sub-regional priority areas identified in RPG9. Given that the Regional Frame as a concept has attracted considerable comment during the consultation it is worth considering in greater detail each corridor in turn.
19. Southern Corridor: RPG9 identifies a number of priority areas for economic regeneration along the South Coast. Although the characteristics of the coastal strip vary as one progresses along its length a unifying need is the need for investment in intra-regional linkages. This need does not arise out of an untapped need to accommodate a desire for movement from one end of the corridor to the other, rather it arises from a need for investment in the transport system that strengthens local communities and supports inward investment thereby helping to reduce the need for long distance commuting to London.
20. Giving greater priority to investment along this corridor is therefore consistent with delivery of the spatial strategy in RPG9. The South Coast Corridor MMS has considered at great length how the transport infrastructure should be developed in order to support RPG9 and the outputs from the study have been fed into the investment frameworks before this Public Examination.
21. Western Corridor: The importance of the transport corridor north from South Hampshire towards the West Midlands has been set out previously. The gateway ports of Southampton and Portsmouth have an international significance that brings with it a need to ensure that the landside infrastructure is developed to an

appropriate level. The forthcoming study into this corridor will consider in greater detail what that level of infrastructure might be.

22. Northern Corridor: Reference has already been made to the importance attached to developing improved east-west connections along the arc that sweeps from Oxford through Milton Keynes and beyond to Cambridge as part of the discussion on inter-regional connections needed to support delivery of the spatial strategy set out in RPG9. The scale of growth anticipated within this corridor is significant. By identifying this corridor as part of the Regional Frame the draft RTS provides clear guidance that greater priority needs to be given to transport infrastructure along this corridor than has previously been the case.
23. Eastern Corridor: Previous discussions as part of this session have served to highlight the importance of Dover and the Channel Tunnel. The SEAPORTS study identified that the growth in freight and passenger movements across the Dover Straits is likely to continue on a significant scale, which will in turn increase the pressure on the landside infrastructure serving to focus even greater attention on the need to address the bottleneck in infrastructure terms that is London. It is the scale of these pressures and their significance in both a national and European context that has led to the identification of this corridor as part of the Regional Frame. The investment frameworks include a number of proposals that will help address some aspects of the issues highlighted above, however the supporting statement to the draft RTS highlights a need for further study work to identify a longer-term framework for this corridor that provides an appropriate strategic context.
24. The above consideration serves to re-emphasise that the Regional Frame is both a concept and an articulation of where greater priority needs to be given to investment in transport infrastructure than has previously been the case in order to support delivery of the spatial strategy in RPG9. In this respect it provides clear guidance to delivery agencies, consistent with the requirements of PPG11. It identifies where particular inter-regional linkages that support the region's gateway function need to be strengthened. It is a long-term policy, which we expect to be relevant beyond the current RPG9 period. It is not, however, intended to override other priorities, such as improvements to the hub and spoke network, or housing schemes in growth areas. Particular schemes in the framework corridors will need to be justified on their merits, but the definition of the corridors and frames will provide a relevant policy context for those decisions.
25. Thus the precise level and standard of infrastructure provision will vary along the length of each corridor in response to the demands placed upon it as a consequence of the spatial strategy. For two corridors (the southern and northern) the outputs of recently completed studies have enabled the investment frameworks to include proposals that will enable the objective of the Regional Frame to be

realised. From this work it is clear that while priority should, and will, be given to developing the public transport networks serving each corridor, selective investment in the highway network will also form part of the overall package of investment. Further detailed studies for the western and eastern corridors will now be required.

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