

## SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS EXECUTIVE MEETING

Date: 30 September 2011

Subject: **Strategic transport update**

Report of: Cllr David Robertson, SEEC Transport Convenor



### Recommendation:

Members continue to provide feedback on key South East strategic transport issues that SEEC should aim to influence, in order to inform a discussion on next steps at SEEC's All-Member meeting on 8 November 2011.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Following my appointment as SEEC Transport Convenor, I wrote to the Leaders of all SEEC councils last month asking for input on the key strategic transport issues where SEEC can help make the case for investment in the South East.
- 1.2 SEEC members are committed to a light touch approach that does not focus on prioritisation of individual schemes, detailed technical work or involvement in projects that rightly sit with individual authorities.

## 2. Member input to date

- 2.1 To date I have received a number of detailed responses to my letter from both district and upper tier authorities across the South East. While some responses use specific local examples to illustrate their points, there are some common themes emerging around the importance of transport in growing or maintaining economic success.
- 2.2 Common themes from responses received so far include:
  - The need for **better strategic rail links** to and through the South East to support economic growth. It has been suggested that SEEC could aim to influence overall funding allocations and rail franchise decisions to support:
    - Improving access to the South East's economically underperforming areas for both passengers and freight to help attract new business development to these areas
    - Delivering greater capacity for growing commuter numbers to reduce overcrowding and give better workforce access to strong economic areas
    - Providing better passenger and freight rail access to ports and airports to help reduce road congestion.
  - The need for **road network improvements** to reduce the economic and environmental cost of congestion, for example by:
    - Reducing bottlenecks, particularly where major trunk road routes have insufficient capacity to support economic growth, housing growth or UK-wide access to the South East's ports and airports.
  - The need for investment in **alternatives to car travel**, for example:
    - Developing high quality bus networks to give access to employment markets without increasing road congestion
    - Creating strategic cycle routes to make cycling a viable alternative to travel by car or on public transport.

### **3 Next steps**

- 3.1 I aim to use a debate at the SEEC All-Member meeting on 8 November to help agree the next steps for SEEC in influencing strategic transport issues, so please send me any further views on key issues by 26 October. My contact email is [David.Robertson@Oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:David.Robertson@Oxfordshire.gov.uk)
  
- 3.2 In addition to identifying high level policy issues and making the case for investment SEEC also needs to consider how we work alongside the emerging role of LEPs in transport and the Local Transport Consortia proposals outlined by the Department for Transport (DfT) on 15 September 2011. Consultation will shortly be launched on Local Transport Consortia but initial expectations are that they will be expected to draw together a number of LEPs and their constituent local authorities to agree major transport projects.
  
- 3.3 Once the SEEC membership has agreed the focus for future work on strategic transport we will be able to draw on specialist officer support from a number of member councils to develop a plan of action.