

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND PARTNERSHIP BOARD
STRATEGY BOARD**

Date: 17 September 2009
Subject: **Regional Transport Board**
Report of: Chairman of the Board

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Strategy Board note the report.

Purpose of Report

To update the Strategy Board on the work of the Regional Transport Board.

Key Issues:

The Regional Transport Board met on the 24 July; it is scheduled to meet again on 23 October. The October meeting will be preceded by a member workshop; this will provide the Board with the opportunity to discuss with Local Transport Authority portfolio holders the implications of the Government's response to the RFA submission in greater detail and to begin the task set by the Partnership Board to identify potential implications for delivery.

1. Background

1.1 The work of the Board continues to be focused around two key areas of work:

- Programme Management and Monitoring – working with Local Transport Authorities and the Highways Agency to ensure that the agreed programme of investment to 2013/14 is delivered to time and to budget;
- Delivering a Sustainable Transport System (DaSTS) – being responsible for commissioning and overseeing the regional DaSTS work programme; ensuring that the linkages are made between the regional and national work programmes.

2. Programme Management and Monitoring

2.1 The Government's response to the Regional Funding Advice submission has approved the region's advice on investment priorities for transport. The more detailed response from the Department for Transport (DfT) sets out the need for the region in future to clearly report that it has considered affordability across the regional programme before accepting increased scheme costs, or when supporting prioritised schemes moving to the next stage in formal processes.

2.2 Specific issues relating to prioritised schemes considered by the Board on behalf of the region were:

- East Kent Access Phase 2 – a cost increase in the scheme; the region's support was reaffirmed; the Department for Transport formally announced approval to start works at the end of August;
- Bexhill-Hastings Link Road and A21 Baldslow Junction – the Board reaffirmed the region's support for these schemes in advance of their consideration by Ministers to move to the next formal stage in their delivery.

2.3 It is clear that the public sector finances will experience considerable pressure in the short and medium term. However there remains a tendency for schemes to slip in terms of delivery and to increase in cost. The Partnership Board has asked each of the delivery boards to consider the implications of the RFA response on the regional programme.

2.4 I have therefore asked that the RTB begin a more detailed debate on the issues for the current programme with the Local Transport Authority portfolio holders. We have therefore arranged for a member workshop to be held in advance of the next Board meeting to which the members will be invited.

2.5 Other programme issues considered by the Board were:

- Gatwick Airport Station – there is a need to remove the capacity bottleneck at this station in order to enable improved services to operate on the Brighton Main Line; the Board is championing the need to use the programmed work to renew the track and signals as an opportunity to deliver the increased capacity. This issue is on-going;

- Reading Station – the region is already contributing funds to enable improvements to the local road network that form part of the larger station improvement. The Board expressed the region's support for ensuring that the current improvements enable further improvements to the pedestrian facilities to be delivered at minimal cost and disruption. Correspondence subsequently received from Network Rail and the regulator ORR, indicates that this is indeed the case.

3. Delivering a Sustainable Transport System

- 3.1 The Board will receive regular updates on progress with the regional DaSTS work programme in its role of managing the programme on behalf of the region.
- 3.2 We heard that following the submission of the draft work programme to the DfT at the end of June, the 'green light' had been given for the region's top two priorities; the need to develop a delivery strategy for the West Sussex Coast, and work associated with the development of proposals in the PUSH sub-region. Discussions are on-going with DfT officials about the detail of the remaining proposals for work, although initial indications are promising.
- 3.3 The Board will 'sign-off' the briefs for each piece of work commissioned. The detail of each brief will be developed in discussion with the relevant sub-regional/local partners; this is consistent with the desire to use the DaSTS work programme to invest in developing the capacity and capability at the sub-regional/local level.
- 3.4 A key milestone in the DaSTS work programme is the Interim Report that the region needs to submit by the end of April 2010. This report will need to be agreed by the Strategy Board before it is submitted. Arrangements are being put in hand to enable the RTB to develop its advice in time for the Strategy Board to consider the Interim Report at its meeting in late March 2010.
- 3.5 At our meeting on 23 October we will review the progress to date with commissioning the regional work programme and consider the linkages with the national work programme.

4. Other Key Issues

- 4.1 Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategies are key documents in shaping the longer-term development of the rail network. The RTB has always taken a pro-active interest in these documents, looking to ensure that the proposals support delivery of the agreed regional policy framework; the South East Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy.
- 4.2 At our meeting in July we considered draft responses to both the Kent RUS and the Sussex RUS. In responding to both we highlighted that more needs to be done to ensure that the appraisal methodology gives greater account as to the role that rail investment can play in delivering wider policy objectives. This is something that we will continue to pursue with the DfT who are ultimately responsible for setting out the appraisal framework used.

- 4.3 More specifically the Board expressed its concern at the proposal to reduce the level of service to Hastings in the medium term, considering that this was not consistent with the regional priority given to regenerating this part of the coastal area.
- 4.4 The next RUS to be considered by the Board will be the Great Western RUS. This was published at the beginning of September for consultation; we will agree a response on behalf of the region at our meeting on 23 October.

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3 September 2009

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