

REGIONAL TRANSPORT FORUM – 15 January 2007

REGIONAL RAIL STUDY

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1. Purpose

To inform members of the Forum regarding the completion of the consultant's study report and outline the proposed way forward.

2. Background

At its meeting on 13 April 2006 the Forum agreed to the commissioning of a study to look at rail potential in the region. An outline of the study was agreed by the Forum at its meeting on 7 June and consultants, Atkins, were appointed in August. The consultant made a presentation at the last Forum meeting on 12 October outlining progress to date and seeking members input to the final stage of the report. Following the last meeting comments raised by members and officers were discussed in detail with the consultant and the steering group. The consultant submitted a revised draft of the final report for consideration by officers of all the Forum authority's through the EEDET Strategic Transport Group in December. Following a few minor amendments the consultant provided the final report which is appended to this report.

3. The Consultant's Report

The study took account of relevant data and analysis on the role of rail in the region, current performance issues and the anticipated key changes in the land use pattern of the region as set out in the EIP Panel's recommendations. This work is considered in the context of nine study sub areas related to rail corridors in the region and the key areas of change in spatial planning. The second stage of the study used a SWOT analysis to identify strategic solutions to meet the future demands. These solutions are set out as high level recommendations rather than specific infrastructure or operational interventions.

Three key capacity schemes of regional importance have been identified:-

- Thameslink upgrade
- Felixstowe to Nuneaton Phase II freight upgrade
- Enhanced rail capacity to Stansted Airport

Key improvements are required in the connectivity and attractiveness of the rail network across the region, particularly in the north. Improvement in accessibility to stations is needed and improvements to cross border freight provision are highlighted.

The strategic solutions identified in the report are not prioritised but have been set out in broad timescales to assist in recognising whether measures are short, medium, or long term.

4. Way forward

The study was commissioned to assist the Forum in considering the modifications to the East of England Plan and to provide a useful tool for working with relevant organisations on future rail issues in the region. The proposed modifications to the East of England Plan were published in December 2006 and the consultation period runs to March 2007. The final report by Atkins considered the EIP Panel's recommendations but was not able to take account of the modifications. The Steering Group have asked Atkins to submit a costed proposal for further work to provide a supplement to the final report to consider the impact of the modifications on their recommendations. Progress on this will be reported orally to the meeting. The report can also be used to develop the strategic solutions into a more detailed set of schemes and interventions. This would be done in collaboration with the rail industry who have to date had limited direct involvement in the study work.