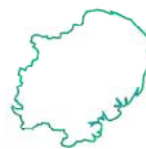


MINUTES



East of England
Regional Transport Forum

EAST OF ENGLAND REGIONAL TRANSPORT FORUM

Meeting held at 10.00am on Wednesday 17th September 2008
Council Chambers St Edmundsbury, Angel Hill

Present:

Name	Organisation
Cllr. Guy McGregor (Chair)	Suffolk County Council
Lucy Robinson	Suffolk County Council
Cllr. Tom Wootton	Bedfordshire County Council
Glenn Barcham	Bedfordshire County Council
Basil Jackson	Bedfordshire County Council
Cllr. Matthew Bradney	Cambridgeshire County Council
Graham Hughes	Cambridgeshire County Council
Paul Bird	Essex County Council
Alastair Southgate	Essex County Council
Cllr. Stuart Pile	Hertfordshire County Council
John Wood	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr. Don Worthing	Luton Borough Council
Colin Chick	Luton Borough Council
Mehmood Khan	Luton Borough Council
Cllr. Christopher How	Norfolk County Council
Paul Crick	Norfolk County Council
Trevor Gibson	Peterborough City Council
Cllr. Anna Waite	Southend Borough Council
Paul Mathieson	Southend Borough Council
Ed Vokes	Thurrock Council
Umran Nazir	DfT
Adrian Cannard	EERA
Simon Meecham	EERA
Tim Bellamy	EERA
Sheena Lamont	EERA
Mike Salter	EEDA
Tim Freathy	GO East
Michael Hargreaves	GO East
Alan Kirkdale	Highways Agency
Leo Eyles	Steer Davies Gleave - Consultants
Dominic Williams	Hewdon Consulting - Consultants
Chris Ferrary	Steer Davies Gleave - Consultants
Martin Revill	JMP - Consultants
Fiona Blackley	MRC McLean Hazel - Consultants
Peter Grimm	Suffolk County Council
Dawn Carton	Suffolk County Council
Lawrence Thurbin	Suffolk County Council

1 Apologies for Absence

1.1 Apologies were received from the following:

Name	Organisation
Cllr. Norman Hume	Essex County Council
Cllr. Wayne Fitzgerald	Peterborough City Council
Cllr. Neil Rockcliffe	Thurrock Council
John Ashley	DfT Rail
John Brown	GO East
Tim Havill	Network Rail
Chris Curtis	Network Rail

2 Minutes of RTF on the 13 June 2008

2.1 Minutes accepted.

3 Regional Economic Issues:

a) Transport Economic Evidence Study (TEES)

- 3.1 Mike Salter (EEDA) introduced the report and advised that consultants Steer Davies Gleave had been commissioned by the East of England Development Agency to carry out this study.
- 3.2 Leo Eyles (Steer Davies Gleave) gave a presentation highlighting the key outcomes from the TEES study.
- 3.3 Cllr. Tom Wotton queried whether the Minister had offered any money for the region.
- 3.4 Cllr. Anna Waite asked the consultant to elaborate on demand side measures. Leo Eyles (SDG) advised that the consultants had not tested the outcome, although work is being undertaken, and that current policy focuses on best use of existing infrastructure. Some of the urban packages, including the work undertaken by Peterborough, represent good value for money.
- 3.5 John Wood asked what will be included in the final report and whether there will be information that could be used by individual authorities? Leo Eyles indicated that information will be available to assess the economic impact of measures. Mike Salter added that the report will go down to district level and target significant transport measures.
- 3.6 Cllr. Christopher How welcomed the joined-up thinking and highlighted the need for infrastructure to support jobs and housing growth.
- 3.7 Lucy Robinson added that the report is very timely, that it needs to feed through into the RFA2 prioritisation process and that all factors need to be taken into account in justifying investment in transport.

ACTION

1. RTF welcomed the report from EEDA and presentation from Steer Davies Gleave; and
2. The TEES Study should inform the review of regional advice on the transport component of the Regional Funding Allocation process and other investment decisions.

b) Regional Infrastructure Fund

- 3.8 Mike Salter (EEDA) advised that consultants (Buchanan) had been appointed to develop a Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF) model for the East of England region.
- 3.9 Dominic Williams (Buchanan) gave a presentation on the establishment of a RIF in the East of England, including existing and emerging mechanisms, the encouraging advice in the RFA2 guidance and further work to be undertaken looking at how RIF may work.
- 3.10 Cllr. Stuart Pile asked whether the start up RIF fund could be sourced from a variety of regional funds, in order to ensure the infrastructure necessary to support the housing and economic growth agenda is implemented first. Paul Crick added that Norfolk would support this approach. Dominic Williams indicated that the regional economic allocation is the smallest and housing the largest and that the consultants were keen to look at this opportunity in more detail.
- 3.11 Cllr. Anna Waite felt that the region should be looking at job and housing growth and would welcome clarification.
- 3.12 Colin Chick advised that he was happy with the principal, although raiding the regional housing allocation to fund transport is likely to cause political pressures particularly in the unitary authorities. Cllr. Guy McGregor indicated that this was more about getting the investment first rather than through the section 106 process. Dominic Williams felt that this was an opportunity to unlock funding earlier and to recover the costs from housing and other development at a later stage.
- 3.13 Cllr. Chris Howe said that in his view this was more about integration and achieving an holistic mix. Simon Meecham added that advice had come from CLG on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and that authorities should consider how this might work within the region.
- 3.14 Lucy Robinson queried the implications and suggested the region should look for exemplar projects to see how they can be funded as part of the RFA2 prioritisation process.
- 3.15 Cllr. Anna Waite asked how exemplar projects were to be found. Lucy Robinson suggested that the officer group would conduct a peer review to highlight possible schemes.
- 3.16 Cllr. Guy McGregor stressed the need for more clarification and advice on what the region could achieve.

ACTION

3. RTF noted the report from EEDA and presentation from Buchanan; and
4. Officers to conduct a peer review to identify exemplar projects.

c) Feedback from Regional Transport Summit on 16 September 2008

- 3.17 Mike Salter (EEDA) introduced the report.

ACTION

5. RTF noted the content of the report and welcomed the opportunity to take part in the Regional Transport Summit.

4 Strategic Work Programme:

a) RFA 1 Benchmarking Study and RFA 2 Work Programme

- 4.1 Tim Bellamy (EERA) introduced the report and advised that consultants (MRC McLean Hazel/JMP) had been appointed to assist in developing the transport component of the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA2) submission for the region. In view of the work involved additional RTF meetings will need to be arranged. Reference was also made to the seven issues for consideration during the RFA2 process highlighted on page 6 of the report.
- 4.2 Cllr. Guy McGregor indicated that the RTF is a critical group in developing the transport advice to feed into the RFA2 submission.
- 4.3 Peter Grimm noted that the Minister for the East of England is attending RTF in February, when the RFA2 transport recommendations will be signed off by the Forum.
- 4.4 Cllr. Guy McGregor felt that the best approach in considering this report was for RTF to address the seven issues for consideration as highlighted on page 6 of the report.

Point 1: How the Region might define a “Committed Scheme”

- 4.5 Adrian Cannard referred to EERA Executive Committee’s decision to give priority to the A11 Fiveways to Thetford and A5-M1 Link Road projects. It was accepted that in general projects are at different stages of development and that deliverability in the short term is a key issue. It is also important for the region to have a robust approach to the definition of “committed” schemes.
- 4.6 Lucy Robinson referred to the advice in paragraph 3.2 in the report and Cllr. Anna Waite asked what this meant for individual schemes.
- 4.7 Glenn Barcham advised that RTF had a difficult task and advised against overcomplicating the process. It is important that individual scheme promoters have confidence in taking projects through preparatory procedures and the need for a regular review process was highlighted. Defining schemes as “committed” that had not been through statutory procedures was queried. Colin Chick suggested that busway projects that have TWA approval should be considered as committed.
- 4.8 Adrian Cannard indicated that the region needs to be clear about which projects fit into each of the categories set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report and hence which projects need to be subject to the refresh process.
- 4.9 Paul Bird agreed with the definition of committed projects in paragraph 3.2 (a), but felt that “approved schemes” (paragraph 3.2 (b)) also had a significant momentum. Schemes not yet approved (paragraph 3.2 (c)) might be questioned, although many of these will also have been subject to significant investment. Lucy Robinson suggested that the officer group should look at all schemes and come back to RTF with a list of committed projects.
- 4.10 Paul Mathieson referred to the contents of the original Atkins report, and in particular the red, amber, green assessments, which he suggested could be used as a starting point. Tim Bellamy responded that the region would be using the Atkins report and other information (including TEES), and stressed the importance of everyone working from the same benchmark.

Point 2: How the Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF) mechanism should be best incorporated into the RFA2 process, and how those schemes which might be eligible for RIF funding should be promoted

4.11 Tim Bellamy suggested that local authorities should indicate which projects could be supported through a RIF.

Point 3: How the Region might handle smaller scale schemes that might be of high importance yet, at least in principle have little bearing on the Region's wider objectives. For example, should the Region encourage a top-slice "challenge fund", and could this be linked to schemes that might be funded through innovative mechanisms such as the RIF?

4.12 Cllr. Guy McGregor stated that this is an important issue in terms of getting delivery back to a local level.

4.13 Cllr. Anna Waite reinforced the importance of getting local schemes that the public want. Top slicing is favoured, although the process needs to be relatively simple. The definition of small schemes was queried. Cllr. Guy McGregor indicated that the top slice sum will need to be agreed by the region and used by authorities to deliver smaller schemes.

4.14 John Wood felt that it was difficult comparing the small local major schemes with large major projects and asked what level of top slicing should be set to enable the smaller local major schemes to be implemented.

4.15 Umran Nazir added that the Yorkshire and Humberside Region had applied a graduated criteria in assessing the priority of major schemes. The DfT will consider proposals to fund smaller schemes through the RFA process and would welcome feedback on how these schemes could be assessed.

4.16 Cllr. Guy McGregor felt that the Forum was in favour of top slicing, even if there was less money for local schemes. Proposals need to be developed and brought back to RTF.

4.17 Colin Chick suggested that it might be more appropriate to use RIF to implement the smaller local major schemes. Cllr. Guy McGregor indicated that the Forum has an opportunity to allocate funding through RFA now, whereas the RIF is still some way into the future.

4.18 Graham Hughes suggested that the mechanism for top slicing and prioritising smaller major projects would need to be worked through carefully and added that with major schemes being more expensive we may not achieve many smaller schemes.

4.19 Adrian Cannard added a slight reality check in terms of what this could achieve as all major projects, including the smaller local schemes, are getting more expensive, and that top slicing the budget will not be the answer for all schemes.

4.20 Cllr. Guy McGregor stressed that as elected representatives it is important to be able to provide locally important major schemes.

Point 4: How the Region should identify and develop where future work is required to ensure the Highways Agency, Rail and Local Authority schemes are in a position to submit bids for RFA3 and beyond

4.21 Adrian Cannard indicated that the region had been given a green light to carry out studies to address future problems and hence to bring forward proposals for consideration in subsequent RFA reviews. The question is should the region allocate RFA funds to develop projects that will be implemented in RFA3 or beyond.

- 4.22 Cllr. Guy McGregor asked whether Network Rail would fund studies related to rail projects? Lucy Robinson suggested that the region should be careful as it is normal for the Highways Agency and Network Rail to develop their projects.
- 4.23 Ed Vokes expressed caution in terms of the status of emerging schemes as national or regional importance. Mike Salter indicated that the national and regional network is currently defined.
- 4.24 Cllr. Guy McGregor concluded that this issue should be treated with caution.

Point 5: How the Region might handle the option to redistribute funding between the Majors and Integrated Transport/Maintenance Block and the possible implications of undertaking such an exercise

- 4.25 Ed Vokes advised that Thurrock had huge reservations about this issue, particularly redistributing maintenance funding, and suggested that the maintenance block should be kept as planned.
- 4.26 Cllr. Stuart Pile commented that as a “floor authority” Hertfordshire gets little money through borrowing and has to top-up the funds using their own resources, so he wasn’t in favour of top-slicing the maintenance pot. Cllr Anna Waite agreed and referred to the backlog of maintenance in Southend. Cllr. Matt Bradney reinforced the need to maintain current levels of expenditure.
- 4.27 Glenn Barcham asked whether this should work in reverse, with more investment in the maintenance block to keep the network ‘alive’ rather than having new roads.
- 4.28 Tim Freathy added that this an opportunity for the region to present a story to Government about how we are managing our transport affairs, including the balance between regional and local funding and which is supported by a clear evidence base. This also needs to fit in with the national view.
- 4.29 Colin Chick indicated that the smaller authorities are effectively forced to use the IT block to carry out scheme preparation and expressed concern about top slicing as we will end up with even less resources to deliver future projects.
- 4.30 Lucy Robinson advised that the Forum should take into account what GO East is saying to us about how we present to DfT. There is no support for cutting the maintenance block and it is clear that top slicing the major scheme budget would make major schemes more difficult to develop and implement. It was suggested that the consultants and officers should give this issue some consideration. John Wood agreed with this approach.
- 4.31 Paul Mathieson indicated that some maintenance schemes can compete for funding through the RFA process and suggested that this and other asset management issues should be considered by the consultants.
- 4.32 Umran Nazir indicated that the region will need think about how maintenance funds are allocated beyond 2010/11, adding that it will be up to the region to collect relevant data for this purpose.

Point 6: Whether the Region should consider “buying” capital enhancements on the Highways Agency strategic network (national) and the rail network

- 4.33 Cllr. Guy McGregor and Cllr. Anna Waite indicated that the answer should be no.

- 4.34 Alan Kirkdale responded that the Highways Agency will be spending a considerable amount of money in the region to improve the national trunk road network and that some of the smaller scale schemes on this network, e.g. safety projects, are as difficult to fund as those on the local and regional trunk road network.

Point 7: How the Region should react to the option of virement between the housing, economic development and transport pots and how could this be done in practise

- 4.35 Lucy Robinson advised that the economic pot has already been raided. Nevertheless, the region should look at this further, particularly in relation to the housing allocations. Mike Salter added that from a RIF point of view this is a conversation worth having.
- 4.36 Cllr. Christopher How stressed the linkage between housing development and the need for transport investment.

Other Issues

- 4.37 Tim Bellamy referred to the need for additional RTF meetings. Cllr. Guy McGregor asked whether dates had been arranged for the additional meetings. Lucy Robinson responded that no dates had been established yet.
- 4.38 Peter Grimm advised that the region had been asked whether it wants the Highways Agency to produce range estimates for trunk road schemes that it wishes to consider as part of the regional refresh. Umran Nazir indicated that resources are available to carry out a limited number of assessments.

ACTION

6. RTF welcomed the report from EERA;
7. Officers to review the definition of a "Committed Scheme";
8. Officers to arrange additional RTF meetings to fit in with the RFA2 process; and
9. Officers to identify major improvements on the regional trunk road network for the purpose of enabling "range estimates" to be prepared by the Highways Agency and the projects to be assessed as part of the RFA2 review.

b) Regional Support for A507 Ridgmont Bypass

- 4.39 Cllr. Tom Wooton introduced this report, stressing that this was one of the first schemes to go through the RFA process and queried the principle of authorities coming back to RTF to ask for more money to fund major projects if they are faced with problems.
- 4.40 Following discussion, RTF agreed to refer this issue to officers for detailed consideration and to develop a protocol for dealing with cost over-runs to be considered by the Forum at a future meeting.

ACTION

10. RTF noted the report from the Bedfordshire County Council; and
11. Officers to advise on a protocol for dealing with cost over-runs and submit a further report to RTF.

5 Regional Freight Strategy

- 5.1 Sheena Lamont provided a brief update on the Regional Freight Strategy.
- 5.2 Chris Ferrary (Steer Davies Gleave) gave presentation on the draft Regional Freight Strategy for the East of England Region Implementation Action Plan: Policies, Actions and Responsibilities.
- 5.3 Glen Barcham commented that many of the actions are at a local level and expressed concern about the weight given to these in developing local strategies.

ACTION

- 12. RTF noted the report from EERA and the presentation from Steer Davies Gleave; and
- 13. Noted the content of the Implementation Action Plan: Policies, Actions and Responsibilities.

6 Review of East of England Plan and Joint Implementation Plan

- 6.1 Adrian Cannard provided a brief update on the East of England Plan and confirmed that EERA had commissioned a review to 2031. The key challenge for the region is to address how all future aspirations can be met. Local Authorities will be involved in this process with reports on options brought to RTF. EERA will be looking at the rational for establishing a new settlement in the region and asking Local Authorities to identify major locations for growth.
- 6.2 EERA had also appointed consultants to develop a Joint Implementation Plan (up to 2021) that encompassed the published East of England Plan and Regional Economic Strategy.

ACTION

- 14. RTF noted the report from EERA on the review of the East of England Plan up to 2031 and development of a Joint Implementation Plan.

7 RTF Working Arrangements

- 7.1 Peter Grimm introduced the report, referring in particular to changes arising from Local Government reform in Bedfordshire and need to invite the new unitary authorities to future RTF meetings and also the process for receiving nominations to chair RTF from April 2009. A further issue has also arisen in terms attendance at RTF.
- 7.2 John Wood advised that a councillor had seen RTF reports at RPP and asked if he could come to RTF meetings. He sought clarity from RTF on the procedures. Cllr. Guy McGregor suggested that the relevant Portfolio Holder from each authority could invite guests.
- 7.3 In response to questions from Cllr. Anna Waite, Cllr. Guy McGregor advised that RTF is not a public meeting although minutes are made public though the EERA web site.
- 7.4 Cllr. Christopher How and Cllr. Anna Waite had concerns about the issues that could be raised at RTF and about who may want to attend.
- 7.5 Cllr Guy McGregor stated that invites should extend to councillors and come through the appropriate Portfolio Holder from the same authority. Those invited to attend will come as observers and guests of the Portfolio Holder.

- 7.6 Cllr. Tom Wootton queried the Bedfordshire position and need for clarity in terms of their position. Cllr. Guy McGregor advised that the new unitary authorities (Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council) will be invited to attend future RTF meetings, initially as observers and post April 2009 as full members of RTF. Bedfordshire will continue to attend as full RTF members until the end of the financial year.
- 7.7 Guy McGregor confirmed that the role of Suffolk as chair of RTF will cease at the end of March 2009 and that the other local authorities in the East of England are being asked to submit nominations to chair the Regional Transport Forum and provide appropriate administrative support from April 2009 for a period of two years. Lucy Robinson said that the decision on the new chair would be best decided at the December RTF meeting and that in the meantime nominations should be received by mid-November.
- 7.8 In response to a question from Ed Vokes, Lucy Robinson confirmed that the chair of the supporting officer group would be the appropriate director from the same authority and hence this responsibility would also change.

ACTION

15. RTF agreed to invite representatives from Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council to future Regional Transport Forum meetings;
16. Local Transport Authorities in the East of England invited to submit nominations to chair the Regional Transport Forum and provide appropriate administrative support from April 2009 for a period of two years; and
17. Portfolio Holders can invite councillors from the same authority to Forum meetings as their guests.

8 Budget Statement

- 8.1 John Wood introduced the report and confirmed that there were sufficient funds to contribute up to £20,000 towards the RFA2 Transport Consultancy Work.

ACTION

18. RTF approved the budget statement; and
19. Approved a financial contribution of up to £20,000 towards the RFA2 Transport Consultancy Work.

9 RTF Forward Work Programme

- 9.1 Peter Grimm introduced the report and confirmed that additional RTF meetings would be arranged to accommodate the RFA2 process
- 9.2 Alastair Southgate advised that Essex plan to bring forward a paper to the next RTF meeting relating to regional support for A13 Passenger Transport Corridor.

ACTION

20. RTF noted the Forward Work Programme; and
21. A report on regional support for A13 Passenger Transport Corridor to be submitted to RTF at the next meeting.

10 Any Other Business

- 10.1 Guy McGregor queried whether the issues likely to delay implementation of the A5 - M1 Link Road (Dunstable Link Road) had been resolved. Colin Chick indicated that further studies will need to be carried out.

10.2 Peter Grimm advised that the arrangements for the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway had been finalised and details will be sent to relevant Councillors and officers

ACTION

22. Arrangements for the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway site visits on the 23 and 29 September to be circulated to relevant Councillors and officers.

11 Dates for future RTF meetings

11.1 Peter Grimm indicated that in addition to the following planned meetings, extra RTF meetings will be organised to fit in with the RFA2 process.

10:00 am Wed 3 December 2008 Council Chamber, St Edmundsbury Borough Council offices

10:00 am Mon 9 February 2009 Council Chamber, St Edmundsbury Borough Council offices

Action

23. Details of additional RTF meetings to be circulated to councillors and officers.