



MINUTES

EAST OF ENGLAND REGIONAL TRANSPORT FORUM

Meeting held at 10.00am on Friday 16 January 2009

Council Chamber, St Edmundsbury Borough Council, Bury St Edmunds

Present:

Name	Organisation
Cllr. Guy McGregor (Chair)	Suffolk County Council
Cllr. John Scott	Bedfordshire County Council
Glenn Barcham	Bedfordshire County Council
Cllr. Matthew Bradney	Cambridgeshire County Council
Graham Hughes	Cambridgeshire County Council
Paul Cook	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr. Norman Hume	Essex 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
Keith Dove	Luton Borough Council
Mike Jackson	Norfolk County Council
Cllr. Wayne Fitzgerald	Peterborough City Council
Barry Kirk	Peterborough City Council
Cllr. Anna Waite	Southend Borough Council
Paul Mathieson	Southend Borough Council
Andrew Meddle	Southend Borough Council
Lucy Robinson	Suffolk County Council
Ed Vokes	Thurrock Council
Cllr. Ken Matthews	Central Bedfordshire Council (Shadow Authority)
Umran Nazir	DfT
Michael Hargreaves	GO East
Brian Stewart	EERA
Adrian Cannard	EERA
Tim Bellamy	EERA
Mike Salter	EEDA
Alan Kirkdale	Highways Agency
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. Tom Wootton	Bedfordshire County Council
Cllr. Brian Iles	Norfolk County Council
Cllr. Neil Rockcliffe	Thurrock Council

2 Guests

2.1 The following, all members of the Regional Planning Panel, were present at RTF as guests:

Name	Organisation
Derrick Ashley (C)	Hertfordshire County Council
Roy Davis (V)	Luton Borough Council
Alan Crystall (V)	Southend Borough Council
Jon Metcalf	Hertfordshire County Council
Richard Thake	North Hertfordshire District Council

C - Chair of the Regional Planning Panel

V – Vice Chair of the Regional Planning Panel

3 Minutes of RTF on the 3 December 2008

3.1 Minutes accepted.

4 Regional Funding Allocation 2: Transport

4.1 Brian Stewart introduced this report on behalf of EERA and indicated that:

- a) The report to RTF on the 3 December together with the reports prepared by EERA and the RTF Secretariat to this meeting all raised issues of detail;
- b) Recommendation 2 on the EERA report relating to Ridgemont Bypass is important as there are limits on the level of commitment from the region; and
- c) EERA would like to go back to government with good ideas and to demonstrate the need for growth to make Government aware.

4.2 Brian Stewart also advised that the consultant's role was to develop a methodology to determine priorities. The discussion on RFA2 at this meeting will determine the transport infrastructure to be provided in the next five years and there are challenges to find new ways of trying to stretch the funding pots and to be innovative. He felt that RFA2 process has been a good one and that changes in emphasis are coming forward in the East of England Plan.

4.3 Adrian Cannard stressed the need for evidence as Government will test the strength of the schemes put forward and the need for the region to demonstrate clearly how decisions were made. He outlined the structure of the EERA report as follows:

- a) **Section 1** highlights the need for flexibility to respond to the Government's consultation on DaSTS;

- b) **Section 2** stresses the importance of exploring opportunities to stretch the major scheme funding pot and refers to the possibility of introducing a co-decision model enabling funding from the IT Block to be used to support major projects. The report indicates that the Integrated Transport Block funding is fixed up to 2010/11 and that while it would be possible to reallocate funding from the IT Block to Major Projects, this has not been included in the proposed advice up to 2013/14. The distribution of the Integrated Transport block allocations to each transport authority is also raised in the report and this will need to be explored with further advice through the RFA3 round. DfT have agreed to a 50% over commitment in the major scheme programme in any one year, provided that expenditure over the whole ten year programme is within the agreed limits;
 - c) **Section 3** addresses issues relating to local contributions and the role of a local funding mechanism. Government Guidance is clear that each local authority has to provide a 10% contribution towards the cost of major projects, although this could be higher. The schemes put forward for funding through RFA2 were generally assessed on the basis of a 10% local authority contribution. There is a danger that by not exploring and using other funding sources the region will not maximise the benefits from the RFA2 major scheme funding allocations. It is important to develop a protocol to deal with schemes that need more funding as they are developed and this will need to be reflected in RFA3;
 - d) **Section 4** indicates that the Forum had previously agreed that a number of schemes should be treated as committed;
 - e) **Section 5** addresses cost overruns relating to Ridgemont Bypass. A letter had been sent from EERA to DfT and a response from DfT is awaited. The importance of managing the programme and cost overruns was highlighted and the advice from EERA is to take a very firm line regarding any further requests for RFA to cover cost overruns;
 - f) **Section 6** sets out the proposed additional schemes to be included in the RFA2 programme up to 2013/14. These projects were previously identified as priority 1A projects in RFA1, reinforcing the consistent planning approach inherent in the advice from the region. Reference was made to the Norwich Northern Distributor Road, which is necessary precursor to delivering the proposed Norwich Rapid Transit project which has a strong policy fit. EERA will advise Government that the region has some very good projects that fit well against regional policies and objectives and that the projects included in the programme can be delivered. DfT had offered to bring forward a package of technology investment for the A12, provided the region allocated an equivalent level of funding in the post 2013/14 period RFA. EERA's position is that RFA should fund £50 million and that the remaining cost (£10m) should be sought from Essex and Suffolk. Paragraphs 6.15 to 6.19 refer to the proposed funding in the period 2014/15 to 2016/17 for three types of intervention: delivering growth; resilience & reliability and a challenge fund to support smaller schemes;
 - g) **Section 7** stresses the severe transport pressures in the region;
 - h) **Sections 8 and 9** comment on the Luton Dunstable Busway scheme.
- 4.4 Guy McGregor invited the Forum to share their **overall thoughts on the EERA report**.
- 4.5 Cllr. Ken Matthews and Cllr. John Scott indicated that they did not have any problems with the report.

- 4.6 Cllr. Stuart Pile indicated that while in general the report is welcomed, Hertfordshire is a floor authority and as such the proposal to move funding from the Integrated Transport pot is not supported.
- 4.7 Cllr. Wayne Fitzgerald and Barry Kirk expressed disappointment that a number of schemes that have a good policy fit, including cycling schemes, could not be brought forward in the proposed programme. In general, Peterborough support the proposals, but there is a need to go back to Government seeking clarity on how this process works for Unitary Authorities and how major maintenance schemes fit in the programme. These views were supported by Ed Vokes.
- 4.8 Cllr. Anna Waite agreed with the overall thrust of the report, but was concerned about the three funding pots and how these would be used. She felt strongly that across the region, an £80 million allocation is insufficient and will not enable Southend to deliver schemes in the Borough. Southend is in discussion with DfT regarding the possibility of moving funds from the Major Scheme pot into the Integrated Transport block. RIFable schemes are good for large developments but queried how this would work for smaller schemes.
- 4.9 Colin Chick indicated that the EERA report should have referred to the Luton Town Centre Transport Scheme, rather than the Luton Dunstable Busway Scheme.
- 4.10 Guy McGregor invited **comments on Section 2 of the report**, i.e. the amount of funding available.
- 4.11 Cllr. Norman Hume stressed that there is a lack of funding all round and reinforced the difficulties faced by floor authorities. He accepted that it is not possible to allocate funds based solely on growth, but he felt that Essex has had a very raw deal. We should be achieving 25% delivery and it should be a factor that is looked at. We need to deliver the need for growth, but we do generally support the report.
- 4.12 Lucy Robinson asked the Forum whether they accepted the content of paragraphs 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 and advised that the Forum will need to formally agree the split of Integrated Transport block allocations between authorities.
- 4.13 Paul Bird queried whether the region should make a claim for a greater share of the national pot. Adrian Cannard indicated that EERA will be making a strong recommendation in the RFA submission based on need, linked in part to future growth in the region.
- 4.14 Mike Jackson referred to the issue of virement and suggested that this should be kept under review. Paragraph 2.5 needs to be clarified and in his view there should not be an expectation for an authority to use their integrated transport block, although the region should support individual authorities who choose to vire part of their integrated transport block allocation to support a major scheme. Lucy Robinson agreed.
- 4.15 Cllr. Anna Waite was not keen to borrow out of other pots as the funding is needed in those pots. She agreed that the existing split of Integrated Transport block allocations between authorities should be rolled forward to 2013/14. Peter Grimm noted that Southend Borough had previously indicated at RTF that they would consider using their Integrated Transport block allocation to help fund an Essex scheme.
- 4.16 Brian Stewart advised RTF that the current arrangements where government set the Integrated Transport block allocations between authorities is coming to an end, hence advice is sought from RTF on how these allocations will be distributed in the future. He noted that a couple of local authorities have indicated that they would consider virement of funding pots and encouraged RTF to think about new ways to use other funding.

- 4.17 Guy McGregor invited comment on **Section 3 of the report**; Local contributions and the role of a forward funding mechanism.
- 4.18 Mike Salter advised that this issue, and in particular RIF, had been discussed by the EEDA board during their consideration of RFA2. He felt that the region should make RFA allocations work harder, particularly as RFA should be considered as the last port of call for funding, and the RFA advice should demonstrate that the region is investigating innovative ways of delivering schemes. He advocated retention of the RIF principle and proposed that this be included in the protocol being developed by EERA.
- 4.19 Cllr. Guy McGregor did not think the Ipswich scheme would be RIFable. Lucy Robinson advised that the Ipswich scheme is about the town centre and encouraging people out of their cars. Although other contributions are possible it is not practical to say that housing requirements are dependant on the project. Further discussion in detail is needed.
- 4.20 Cllr. Matthew Bradney indicated that the Chesterton Station scheme was not RIFable and Paul Cook advised that this had been made clear in the submission from Cambridgeshire to the consultants. Brian Stewart felt that proposed housing is linked to this proposal and hence RIF could be applied.
- 4.21 Mike Jackson suggested that the wording of RIF in the report should be more positive and suggested that the Forum should keep this under review as all authorities would want this to work.
- 4.22 John Wood indicated that the region should demonstrate a willingness to explore opportunities to extend the pot.
- 4.23 Cllr. Anna Waite questioned whether individual schemes using RIF be made to wait?
- 4.24 Adrian Cannard advised that the detail of RIF is still being explored. Although EERA will try and get contributions in the next few years, these will be limited. In practice RIF and the opportunity to grow the RFA pot for major schemes is likely to be more appropriate for RFA3.
- 4.25 Cllr. John Scott indicated that the region is a major growth area and that a flexible and innovative approach is required.
- 4.26 Peter Grimm stressed that that discussion on maximising the major scheme RFA allocation was focusing on local authority schemes and that there is a need to think about how this could be applied to regional trunk road schemes. Brian Stewart expressed caution as if we just look at schemes that the Highways Agency supports nothing else would be funded. Peter Grimm advised that Hutchinson Ports (UK) Limited is supporting trunk road schemes in Suffolk.
- 4.27 Lucy Robinson suggested that RTF should therefore support the principle of a RIF, and support the development of practical arrangements for its delivery, but at this stage it was not possible to identify RIFable schemes. RIF-ability should be included as part of the proposed protocol.
- 4.28 Guy McGregor invited **comments on Section 4 of the report**, i.e. Programme Entry Schemes and cost pressures.
- 4.29 Keith Dove referred to paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 in the EERA report and indicated that up to date information supporting the Luton Town Centre Transport scheme was set out in Appendix A to the RTF Secretariat report. He advised that the scheme had been identified by the consultants as a priority project and the reason for the additional cost followed a review of the scheme. The proposed changes to the scheme are being discussed with DfT.

- 4.30 Lucy Robinson suggested that RTF should develop a protocol to cover increased costs.
- 4.31 Colin Chick felt that there is a need to share intelligence for the benefit of all authorities.
- 4.32 Cllr. Anna Waite supported the need to share information and this needs to go in to the protocol. Southend is happy to support the Luton Town Centre scheme.
- 4.33 Alan Kirkdale indicated that lessons had been learnt from the schemes that had been implemented and supported the proposal to share information.
- 4.34 Cllr. Guy McGregor invited **comments on Section 6 of the report**, i.e. RFA2 Programme
- 4.35 Cllr. Norman Hume referred to the proposed A12 Technology Scheme and subsequent A12 package of improvements which Essex supported, but could not fund. The region needs to look at this. He stressed the very high accident rate and the need to bring forward schemes to improve the A12.
- 4.36 Barry Kirk queried whether a 10% local authority contribution applied to the A12 projects. Lucy Robinson advised that the A12 is a trunk road and as such improvements would be 100% funded.
- 4.37 Cllr. Anna Waite supported Essex as A12 improvements need to be delivered.
- 4.38 Umran Nazir DfT advised that the issue of matched funding is not negotiable, i.e. it is on a pound for pound basis. DfT will fund the A12 Technology Project on the basis that the region commits to supporting a subsequent A12 package to the same level of cost post 2013/14. These improvements will bring region and national benefits and help to stimulate the economy.
- 4.39 Cllr. Stuart Pile queried why the government had not sought advice from the region on which scheme to take forward. Cllr. Guy McGregor suggested that it would have been helpful if the DfT had initially presented their intentions to this Forum.
- 4.40 Lucy Robinson indicated that so far the region has indicated that it would match fund up to £50 million. Cllr. Norman Hume felt the region would be missing an opportunity if it did not match fund to the whole £60 million as requested by DfT. Colin Chick queried whether there were other funding opportunities and Glenn Barcham suggested that the Forum will need to know what the implications would be in terms of providing the extra £10m contribution. Adrian Cannard advised that the £10m could be taken from one of three pots, i.e. delivering growth and regeneration; resilience and reliability of the strategic transport networks; and the 'challenge fund' to support smaller schemes, but this would mean less funding available in RFA3.
- 4.41 Cllr. Wayne Fitzgerald did not support the principle of the local authority contribution and suggested that whether it is £50m or £60m it will affect schemes in RFA3.
- 4.42 Colin Chick advised that there is an opportunity to secure TEN-T funding to support these A12 projects. Cllr Anna Waite suggested that RTF should agree in principle to providing up to £60m matched funding but indicated that there would need to be some flexibility if other funding is secured.
- 4.43 Cllr. Guy McGregor advised that there were two options available to RTF:
- a) RFA to commit to £60m post 2013/14, with the additional £10m sourced from the Technology & Innovation for Resilience/Reliability pot;
 - b) RFA to match £50m with the remaining £10m being sourced from elsewhere.

- 4.44 Cllr. Stuart Pile queried the process for finalising the RFA2 submission to Government and how the region will be developed. Adrian Cannard advised that the actions recommended by RTF will be reported to the Regional Planning Panel and the RFA submission will subsequently be considered by the Regional Assembly and signed off by the Regional Partnership Group. He also advised that the Government has asked for advice from the region on how DaSTS is to be taken forward and this will be considered by RTF at future meetings.

ACTION

1. There should be a clear message from the Region, as part of the advice to Government outlining the limited funding available and the significant infrastructure deficit across the East of England. Numerous good schemes were submitted; however it has impossible to support more than a limited number;
2. The issue of virement between the different blocks covered by RFA2 should be kept under review, in order to stretch the funding pot available for transport schemes;
3. RTF recognises the need to develop the practical arrangements for the Regional Infrastructure Fund, but not recognise any schemes at present as "RIF-able" as this will need to be considered via the protocol (see item 6);
4. Luton Town Centre cost increase accepted;
5. Ridgmont Bypass cost increase accepted, but needs to be the last time significant additional fund is sought from the RFA pot;
6. RFA protocol to be established by EERA to scrutinise cost increases in the future years and assess the potential to maximise developer contributions including via a RIF-type mechanism;
7. RFA Programme (pre 2013/14) agreed;
8. RFA Programme (post 2013/14) altered to increase the A12 Scheme funding to £60m and the additional £10m from the technology and innovation funding pot. However every opportunity should be taken to find additional funds to reduce the £10m call on the RFA;
9. Schemes eligible for the "challenge fund" will have a lower entry limit of £2.5m (for unitary authorities);
10. Agree the Luton Borough Council's request for an additional £8m for the Luton Town Centre scheme;
11. Agree the additional £3.1m for 2008/09 requested for the Ridgmont Bypass, subject to DfT confirmation;
12. Agree the RFA2 transport programme advice for the pre 2013/14 period and for the post 2013/14 period, increase the allocation for the A12 scheme to £60m (from £50m) with £10m transferred from the technology and innovation funding pot (reducing this funding pot from £40m to £30m);
13. Some local authorities may wish to supplement the RFA allocated funding through use of their Integrated Transport Block, but there is not a specific virement between the blocks at the regional level and the RTF was not in favour of a co-decision model;

14. Note the fact that there are many worthwhile potential projects in the Region which have not been able to be included in the programme, endorse the action taken by the Leaders of Strategic Authorities in the East of England in writing to the Regional Minister expressing concerns about the inadequacy of resources being made available for much needed transport infrastructure and suggest to EERA that the inadequacy of the resources to match need and potential improvements should be a strong element in the response to Government.

5 RTF Working Arrangements: Chairmanship of RTF from April 2009

5.1 The Forum agreed that Southend Borough Council take over the role as chair of the Regional Transport Forum from April 2009.

5.2 Cllr Anna Waite thanked the Forum.

ACTION

15. Southend Borough Council to chair the Regional Transport Forum from April 2009 for a period of two years.

6 RTF Budget Statement

6.1 John Wood advised that there was just over £40,000 available in the RTF budget and suggested that this should be rolled forward into 2009/2010 and that officers should consider how this could be used to support the work undertaken by RTF. He advised that requests for Local Authority contributions for 2009/2010, which would remain at current levels, would be sent out in due course.

ACTION

16. Officers to present a further report setting out how the budget could be used to support the work undertaken by RTF.

7 RTF Forward Work Programme

7.1 Peter Grimm advised that the next RTF meeting on the 10 February 2009 will be held at the Athenaeum in Bury St Edmunds and that Barbara Follett MP, the Minister for the East of England, has been invited to attend. Potential agenda items included outstanding issues relating to RFA2, the Government's DaSTS initiative, Felixstowe to Nuneaton and the Olympic Delivery Programme.

7.2 Cllr. Stuart Pile queried the proposed RTF meeting on the 19 June 2009 which is close to council elections. Peter Grimm advised that the RTF secretariat would work with Southend to review this date.

ACTION

17. RTF secretariat and Southend Borough Council to review dates for future RTF meetings.

8 Any Other Business

8.1 Alan Kirkdale referred to a statement from Geoff Hoon, Secretary of State for Transport, setting out proposed investment in the transport infrastructure in the East of England aimed at supporting the economy and securing jobs.

- 8.2 Peter Grimm indicated that following correspondence and discussions involving Derrick Ashley as Chair of the Regional Planning Panel and TfL, Sir Mike Hodgkinson (as TfL Board representative of rail users in the East of England) has been invited to attend this Forum as appropriate. The aim is to ensure that transport issues across the wider South East are handled in a coherent manner.
- 8.3 Cllr. Guy McGregor indicated that the presentation from Hugh Sumner is very good and highlights a number of potential opportunities for the region.

9 Dates for future RTF meetings

10:00 am	Fri 19 June 2009	Date to be confirmed and venue to be advised
10:00 am	Fri 11 September 2009	Venue to be advised
10:00 am	Fri 4 December 2009	Venue to be advised