KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

KENT TRANSPORT BOARD MEETING

Notes of a meeting of the Kent Transport Board Meeting held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 10 March 2009.

PRESENT:-

Ashford Borough Council	-	Cllr Mr M Burgess
Canterbury City Council	-	Cllr Mr M Patterson
Dartford Borough Council	-	Cllr Mr A Martin
Dover District Council	-	Cllr Mr N J Collor
Gravesham Borough Council	-	Cllr W Dyke
Kent County Council	-	Mr S Carey Mr D Daley Mr C Hibberd Mr J Muckle Mr A Poole Mr T Robinson Mrs E Tweed
Maidstone Borough Council	-	Cllr M Robertson
Sevenoaks District Council	-	Cllr Mrs J Davison
Shepway District Council	-	Cllr Mr G Bunting
Tonbridge and Malling District Council	-	Cllr Mr B Lukar
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	-	Cllr Mr R Weeden
Kent Association of Local Councils	-	Cllr Mr N Whitburn Cllr Mr J Wilson

OFFICERS: Mr Geoff Mee, Director of Integrated Transport Strategy, Caroline Bruce, Interim Director of Kent Highways Services, Mr M Sutch, Head of Planning and Transport Strategy and Mr G Mills, Democratic Services.

Apologies:

Cllr Mr Dearden (Shepway District Council), Cllr Mrs N Salway (Kent Association of Local Councils), Cllr Mr M Balfour (Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council), Mrs P Stockell (Kent County Council) and Mr Norton

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UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Kent Highway Services Tracker Survey - Presentation

(1) A copy of the presentation made by Caroline Bruce in respect of this item is appended to these notes.

(2) During the course of discussion, Members of the Board raised a number of issues to which Caroline Bruce responded. These included matters relating to the maintenance of C class and other minor roads, street lighting and the need for there to be a transparent and well publicised mechanism enabling local residents to report problems and to track progress. It was also said that there was a perception that the operation of "PIPKIN" meant there was more of a focus on urban areas to the detriment of roads in rural areas.

(3) During the course of discussion, Mr Hibberd said that he believed one way forward would be to make better use of the Joint Transport Board in looking at these issues in more detail. He therefore asked Members of the Board to collectively look at how these matters are fed into the JTBs in their area and to see if there was any improvements which could be made in the way that this was undertaken. Councillor Bunting said that with his JTB there was a space on the agenda specifically to allow Members to raise issues of concern, such as those which had been identified during the course of discussion on this item. However, he said that he had yet to meet the East Kent Highways engineer and if the JTBs were to have any real teeth and meaning then they had to be attended by senior staff from Kent Highways Services. Councillor Weeden said that district members did appreciate the work of officers but he agreed that the JTBs needed to be better used in looking at the range of issues which had been mentioned during the course of discussion on this item.

(4) Following further discussion, Mr Hibberd emphasised his view that he believed the JTBs were ideally placed to consider in detail issues such as street lighting, drainage and maintenance of the local network so collectively elected Members needed to look at how these matters were being fed into the JTB process and if any improvements were needed and there needed to be ongoing discussions between KCC and district colleagues in order to ensure that matters of this nature could be added to the JTB agendas and that the appropriate officers were attending meetings to ensure that such matters could be fully debated, with appropriate officers in attendance in order to answer Members' questions.

(5) Following further discussion, the Board noted the report and good progress which was being made in public perception of the Highway Service and the work being undertaken in order to understand more closely the concerns of Members and Parish/Town Councils as demonstrated through the survey.

2. Integrated Transport Strategy

(Presentation by Mr Geoff Mee, Director of Integrated Transport Strategy)

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(1) A copy of the presentation made by Mr Mee is attached for ease of reference to these Minutes.

(2) Following his presentation, Members of the Board spoke about a range of issues which they believed needed to be addressed through the Integrated Transport Strategy. Amongst these was improving rural transport networks and the need to look at developing community-led transport solutions. It was said that as part of the strategy bus services needed to be integrated into that of the railways in order to both support and enhance these services. In answer to a question regarding creating a rail link from North Kent down into Maidstone and onto the Tonbridge and Redhill line to link into Gatwick, Mr Mee said that whilst such a link was desirable, the problem was persuading the train operating companies to put in place such an undertaking. However, the Council continued to put pressure on the operating companies to create a Medway Valley line.

(3) In answer to a question regarding the Lower Thames crossing, Mr Mee said that it was high unlikely in the foreseeable future that the tolls on the Dartford Crossing would be taken out and indeed it may well that the £40 million approximately generated every year could be hypothecated to pay for the construction of a Lower Thames crossing. In answer to a question regarding getting more freight transferred onto the rail network, Mr Mee said that part of the work which was being undertaken was to look at developing a freight strategy and to identify preferred road routes through the County. A freight strategy would be contained within the Integrated Transport Strategy which would be available for consultation within the near future and the aim of publishing a final document in the Autumn. With regard to the construction of a new Lower Thames crossing itself, Mr Mee said that he had expected that the Department of Transport would make an announcement regarding the need for an additional crossing in the near future. The Department have said that it views this scheme as a priority but the issue is where exactly it would be built and therefore where it would be connected into the road network. In reply to a question about the provision of Park and Ride services, Mr Mee said that such services had a very significant part to play in providing an Integrated Transport Strategy and it was essential that the County Council worked with its district partners in order to provide a network of Park and Ride facilities which were attractive in terms of location and price and to encourage maximum use.

(4) Following a further discussion, Members of the Board thanked Mr Mee for his presentation and partners were invited to forward any further views they may have direct through to Mr Mee.

3. Rail Services Update

(1) Mr Mick Sutch presented a report providing Members of the Board with an update on proposals by South Eastern relating to future peak service levels from all stations after the High Speed Train services are introduced from 13 December 2009. South Eastern has also produced a revised before and after journey times with the High Speed services. This report therefore covered the key issues of peak service levels and detailed the provision of service level information of South Eastern had posted on its website. Mr Sutch also commented on the journey time savings on CTRL based on South Eastern revised timetables. These show that after 13 December there will be significant greater_reductions in off-peak journey times from some stations particularly from Dover and Folkestone, with Dover now predicted to be 64 minutes from St Pancras and Folkestone Central and West being 52 and 49 minutes respectively. In the peak periods trains from Dover and

Thanet would join together at Ashford in the morning and split in the evening peak which would add some 7 to 11 minutes to these shortest times. Mr Sutch's report also commented on the fact that within the South Eastern franchise, passengers in Kent and East Sussex generally are experiencing higher fare increases than the Government-set average of RPI plus 3% and this was due to the London factor. Mr Sutch added that passengers on the High Speed services from December would be subjected to additional premium fares on top of the escalating existing levels of fares. The levels of these premiums were still under discussion between the Department of Transport and South Eastern, but supplements of some 10-30% above fares on the classic services has been indicated in the past

(2) In response to questions from Members, Mr Sutch said that the County Council was backing Maidstone Borough Council and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council on the fact that services on the Maidstone line were inadequate and that services through Maidstone needed to be significantly improved. The County Council was also lobbying South Eastern on the provision of services from Maidstone to Ebbsfleet. The issue of parking charges at railway stations was also raised and Mr Sutch said that this was an issue which the County Council would be looking at. On the point it was said that South Eastern's parking policy at its stations was encouraging people to drive further to find cheaper parking and this was having a knock-on effect in terms of increasing traffic in and around smaller rural stations.

(3) Following further discussion, the Board noted the report.

4. Any Other Business

(1) The Board agreed that in future its meetings should start at 10.00 am and the Darent Room should only be used if the Council Chamber was not available.

(2) A report on the Ashford Station Travel Plan would be submitted to the next meeting.

5. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be held in or around the end of September – beginning of October.

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