

**By:** Bryan Sweetland, Cabinet Member - Environment,  
Highways & Waste  
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**To:** Environment, Highways & Waste Policy Overview &  
Scrutiny Committee - 12 January 2012

**Subject:** Growth without Gridlock - Update

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Summary:** This brief report outlines progress to date on the County Council's 20 year transport delivery plan, Growth without Gridlock, and will be supplemented by a presentation.

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## **1. Introduction**

Following the recent Autumn Statement by the Government, which outlined a range of major transport proposals, it is an opportune moment to update Members on progress with the key proposals contained in the County Council's 20 year transport delivery plan, Growth without Gridlock.

## **2. Additional Thames Crossing**

Officers have been working with partners in the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) to press the DfT for increased capacity and improvements to the crossing of the Thames, one notable success being the recent announcement to postpone the increase of charges on the Dartford Crossing. Following the Government's commitment in the Comprehensive Spending Review to undertake an unbiased assessment of the three crossing options, they have now invited tenders to carry out the work which is expected to commence in February 2012 with consultation to follow in mid 2013. The County Council has secured direct representation on DfT's Stakeholder Advisory Panel. At the same time, Kent and Essex County Council have jointly commissioned consultants to identify additional economic development opportunities in the Thames Gateway that could come forward through the provision of an additional Thames crossing. The results of the work are expected in February 2012.

## **3. Operation Stack**

In response to the Operation Stack Summit in July, three low cost lorry park proposals have been developed with input from the Highways Agency and Kent Police. The next step is to complete the environmental impact assessment and prepare a planning application.

## **4. A21 Dualling Tonbridge to Pembury**

In October 2011, the County Council submitted a revised proposal that could be delivered locally by KCC for less than £70m, compared to the Highways Agency

scheme cost of £120m. The County Council is extremely disappointed that the scheme was not given the go-ahead in the recent Autumn Statement. To help build the case for the scheme, an Economic Impact Assessment is currently being carried out which will be submitted to Ministers in spring 2012.

## **5. Rail improvements for East Kent**

A new peak time high speed service to/from Deal and Sandwich, supported by the County Council, commenced in September with passenger uptake better than expected. The recent successful bid for Regional Growth Funding of £40m included allowance for Business Critical Infrastructure Grants which will support the delivery of infrastructure projects such as high speed rail enhancement on the Ashford to Ramsgate line. This will reduce rail journey times between Ramsgate and London via High Speed 1 by approximately 10 minutes. The construction of a Thanet Parkway Station was the subject of a first-round Regional Growth Fund bid in January 2011. Unfortunately the bid was unsuccessful, as it was considered by Government that the bid would not create a sufficiently large number of direct jobs within the three-year period of the Fund but the business case for the Station nevertheless remains very strong, with a Benefit-Cost Ratio of 5:1, and KCC will continue to work with Thanet District Council, Manston Airport and local businesses to identify suitable delivery opportunities.

## **6. Funding for transport infrastructure**

Throughout the past 12 months, officers have met with Ministers and officials at DfT and DCLG, to call for greater flexibilities and freedoms around funding streams and local delivery. A business case for hypothecation of funding from new revenue streams is being developed with DfT officials, alongside discussions with investment bankers to gauge market appetite for investment in strategic transport infrastructure. The Government has proposed a new system of funding major schemes beyond 2015 through Local Transport Consortia which will provide greater freedoms and decentralisation of decision making to Local Transport Authorities. Indications are that SELEP, as a Local Transport Consortium, would receive approximately £36.8m per annum for four years from April 2015, giving a total of £147.2m. The Government will consult local authorities on Local Transport Consortia in spring 2012.

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## **7. Recommendations**

Members are asked to note the progress outlined in this report.

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