

Report to: Executive Board - Friday 27th September 2002

DRAFT REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR THE SOUTH EAST

<p>Report of: <i>Planning Policy Manager</i></p> <p>Report Author: <i>Susie Williams Planning Policy 01865 252165 swilliams@oxford.gov.uk</i></p> <p>Lead Member Responsible: <i>Colin Cook</i></p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Committee Responsibility: <i>Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee</i></p> <p>Key Decision: <i>No</i></p>	<p>WARDS AFFECTED ALL</p>
<p>SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>The South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) have produced a Consultation Draft Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) for the South East. The deadline for comments was the 18 September 2002.</p> <p>Officer comments have been sent to SEERA in response to the consultation and the key points are attached at Appendix 1.</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council as highway authority have responded separately to the draft RTS. At the sub-regional level, ACTVaR (the Association of Councils of the Thames Valley Region) have also responded separately to the draft RTS. Wider transport and highway implications of the RTS have not been discussed in detail unless specifically relevant to Oxford and the City Council as local planning authority.</p> <p>The input to the draft RTS will be met from existing staff resources within the Planning Policy team.</p> <p>In light of the recent Planning Green Paper, the RTS is likely to gain considerable weight in influencing planning and transport investment in the future. By helping shape the final RTS, it will help support the five</p>	

strategic aims of the Council's vision.

The Executive Board is ASKED to:

- 1. thank SEERA for consulting Oxford City Council on the draft Regional Transport Strategy for the South East;**
- 2. endorse the points set out in Appendix 1 which formed the basis for the Officer level response on the consultation draft RTS; and**
- 3. make any additional comments which will be forwarded to SEERA.**

1. The consultation draft Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) for the South East has been produced to reflect recent government guidance which was not available at the time Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) was approved in 2001. In preparing the RTS, the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) have reviewed the transport elements of RPG9 but its overall spatial strategy remains the same.
2. The RTS formally covers the period to 2016 but includes a vision for the longer term to 2021 and beyond. RPG9 also runs to 2016 but will be reviewed from 2003 to roll it forward to 2026.
3. The RTS has been prepared under the recognition that the existing transport system is failing to deliver secure and reliable links; is dominated by car and lorry traffic; and creates pollution, disturbance and environmental damage on a major scale. It recognises that not only is the system wasteful of resources and unsustainable in economic, social and environmental terms, but that there is a lack of public confidence that the system can be improved and congestion relieved. In referring to successes of recent transport investment, it lists Oxford's park and ride as one of the few examples.
4. Appendix 1 shows the key issues raised by Officers which were submitted to SEERA in time for the deadline for responses.

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY: THE PLANNING POLICY MANAGER AND THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT (COUNCILLOR COLIN COOK)

Appendix 1:

Officer response to the Consultation Draft Regional Transport Strategy for the South East "From Crisis to Cutting Edge".

Background papers:

Consultation Draft Regional Transport Strategy for the South East "From Crisis to Cutting Edge".

**Officer response to the Consultation Draft Regional Transport Strategy
for the South East "From Crisis to Cutting Edge"**

Vision

The Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) is seeking to achieve better links within and into the South East region. The Vision includes a shift in the balance of travel away from car and lorry traffic and to end the dependence of economic growth on traffic growth. The Vision also seeks to meet the travel needs of the socially excluded and reduce environmental impacts. Overall, it aims to achieve a high quality transport system and, by 2021, one which reflects the standards of the best in North West Europe.

The City Council welcomes the vision in principle. Suggest that rebalancing the system away from the car and lorry should be more "urgent" than "gradual" (p.10, bullet point 7).

Objectives

The City Council supports the objectives of the RTS. However, it is suggested that the management objectives should include the quality of the transport system, rather than just the quantity.

Invest and Manage

The overall strategy of the RTS focuses on "Invest and Manage". This means high and sustained levels of investment with support for increasing levels of investment through Local Transport Plans. It prioritises investment in non-car modes of transport and proposes a new package of Mobility Management measures. It ensures that land use planning plays a key part in delivering the Strategy to achieve urban renaissance as set out in RPG9.

The City Council supports the "invest and manage" principle. Having recognised that increased capacity alone cannot solve the regions problems, need to reinforce the role of land use planning in achieving urban renaissance and reducing the need to travel through sustainable development. The City Council welcomes the aim of breaking the link between economic growth and increased traffic. However, this principle should be given greater emphasis throughout the strategy.

Key proposals

The policy framework set out in the RTS is supported by a number of key proposals. These include a focus on key transport "hubs" including Oxford and a set of links and key corridors, referred to as "spokes", connecting the hubs. The links between Oxford and Reading, Swindon and High Wycombe are identified as spokes.

It focuses investment, particularly in relation to public transport, on a regional "frame" which comprises four strategic corridors of which two directly serve Oxford. The Oxford-Milton Keynes link is named as a key project. Enhancement of rail freight capacity and transport links with the near continent are also proposed. Map 6.1 gives no indication of how the linkages into region are to be developed. If, for example, priorities elsewhere include upgrading or increasing capacity on spokes and frames feeding into the South East region, then it is imperative that the South East is aware of these and can integrate the implications into our own priorities. Particular examples of the regional frame include the East-West link between Oxford and Milton Keynes, and north-south link from Southampton to Oxford. If these are to be developed beyond the South-East's boundary, then this should be shown as such.

At the very least, adjacent regional strategies should be indicated on Map 6.1 along with any other relevant links into the regional frame.

Policy framework

Clearly the RTS affects many aspects pertinent to local authorities across the region. Most policies in the RTS focus on the role of the Local Transport Plan or regional strategies. However, a significant number are of relevance to local planning authorities and the content of development plans.

In particular, policies in the draft RTS require our local plan policies to encourage more sustainable development which reduces journey length and modal shift away from the car (policy T1); promote higher density and mixed land uses and prioritise high quality interchange facilities (policy T5); focus development in existing urban areas to encourage modal shift to walking and cycling, prioritise the needs of pedestrians, and seek a safe, direct and continuous network of pedestrian and cycle routes (policy T14); and safeguard sites critical for freight-related infrastructure and to maximise the use of rail and sea freight-travel (policy T21).

While rail and sea freight is mentioned, the development of our inland waterways for freight is vital at both the regional and local level, and should be included in Policy T21 (iii).

A number of policies are potentially directed towards the role of development plans. The phrase "and/or", in relation to the development plan and/or Local Transport Plan, should not be used and the policies should clearly specify at which level responsibility lies (see policies T15, 17, 18). This also applies to references to the development plan for two-tier administrations and policies should explicitly state whether the structure plan or district local plan is appropriate (eg. Local Plan would not be the appropriate document for T3 and T11). Where the Local Plan would be appropriate, the policies seem to simply duplicate advice in PPG13. However, in the light of the Planning Green Paper, the RTS should recognise the intention to move towards a single-tier

planning system and the introduction of Local Development Frameworks. To ignore this will mean the document is out of date from the outset.

Mobility Management

The City Council welcomes the acknowledgement that increased capacity alone is not enough, and that effective management of the demand for movement must be an on-going priority.

The overarching drive of the RTS is an integrated approach to transport and seeks the development of "Mobility Management". I suggest that a transport network will only be successful if it is integrated. There needs to be more explicit commitment throughout the strategy on developing a more integrated system rather than the current focus of improving travel by various modes (eg. policy T15 neglects to mention integration). The RTS fails in that it seems to focus on Mobility Management being an integrated approach of managing investment, rather than on its purpose of achieving an integrated transport system. Investment in transport will only result in realising the objectives of the RTS if it achieves a useful and therefore integrated network.

The primary focus for implementation of this approach will be Local Transport Plans.

The City Council disagrees that increased car parking at Stations should be supported and that additional land should be safeguarded (para 7.15). Stations occupy considerable areas of land and to assume that further land should be safeguarded for surface parking in urban areas cannot necessarily be considered the best use of land. While additional parking may be favoured in some situations, it should not automatically follow that significant additional land take will be necessary.

The role of the RTS should be to translate the national maximum parking standards as set out in PPG13 to the south-east region. Paragraph 7.23 states that SEERA's changes to the RTS will be submitted directly to the Secretary of State. Any further development of the approach to parking at new developments in the RTS must be further consulted on prior to submission to the Secretary of State.

Para 7.40. Congestion charging in the Thames Valley will require further consultation. The decision to implement charging lies with the Local Highway Authority and a coordinated scheme could not be guaranteed without prior agreement with participating authorities. Paragraph 7.42 states that SEERA's changes to the RTS will be submitted directly to the Secretary of State. Any further development of the approach to charging in the RTS should be subject to a further round of consultation prior to submission to the Secretary of State.

Investment priorities

Oxford is within the sub-region identified as the Western Policy Area. The RTS discusses a number of multi-modal studies (MMS) which affect the sub-

region although Oxford is not within any of the MMS areas. The RTS describes a number of key initiatives planned for the Area and a table identifies the investment framework from 2001-2016 and beyond. While reference is made to planned railway upgrading as well as the renewal of Reading Station, no reference is made to Oxford Station. Trains (Virgin) are already missing Oxford out due to lack of capacity and have been since July 2001. The proposed increased capacity at Oxford Station, including its potential relocation, is vital to the region and should be included in the list of priorities.

Targets and Monitoring

The RTS acknowledges the necessity of setting targets and monitoring progress. The draft Strategy identifies the indicators it associates with each RTS objective and policy. However, no regional targets have been set to date and there is no indication as to the sources of the data they refer to. The resource implications for local authorities and is unclear. The final RTS should provide specific targets and identify the source of the various data involved. In table 14.1, reference should also be made to distance travelled to work/school as well as mode of travel (sections B, C, G, J, M).

Conclusion

The Local Plan should provide for the proposals in the RTS and other major projects consistent with RPG9 (policy T25). The First Draft Oxford Local Plan 2001 - 2016 does not conflict with the draft RTS and in the most part the RTS could be seen to be just about catching up with the long established policy of balanced transport provision employed in Oxford. As such, the general thrust and policies of the RTS are to be welcomed but some clarification and further emphasis of certain issues will help create a more robust strategy.