

CONSULTATION ON THE REVISION OF DECISION No 1692/96/EC OF THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL

of

23 July 1996

on

Community guidelines for the development of the Trans-European
transport network

**Submission of the
South East England Regional Assembly**

Regional Context

1. The Regional Assembly is the Regional Planning Body for South East England; the largest English region with 8 million citizens (13.5% of the United Kingdom total). With a Gross Domestic Product in excess of £120 bn (€168 bn) the region is the economic powerhouse for the UK economy, accounting for 16% of the national Gross Domestic Product.
2. South East England is the main gateway for the United Kingdom and its neighbours on continental Europe and with the rest of the world, with a substantial proportion of international passenger and freight movements using the region's major ports and airports.
3. The Port of Dover is the largest ferry port in North West Europe and the Channel Tunnel is the only fixed link across the English Channel. The Port of Southampton is the second largest deep-sea container port serving the United Kingdom while the ports of Portsmouth, Newhaven and the Medway Ports provide facilities that support cross channel and short sea shipping services. Gatwick Airport is the second largest international airport in the United Kingdom and, while Heathrow Airport is located within the Greater London Authority area, there is a strong spatial and transport linkage with South East England.
4. The Region's gateway role means that the transport system plays a pivotal role in the wider transport system serving North West Europe. This role will increase in its significance with the entry of the Accession Countries into the European Union. The Spatial Vision for North West Europe, published in 2000 as part of an INTERREG IIC project, identified the Dover Straits and movement through/around London as being the two key bottlenecks on the transport system serving North West Europe.

5. As the Regional Planning Body for South East England the Regional Assembly is responsible for the preparation of the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). The RTS will be an integral element of the future Regional Spatial Strategy and, as such, it will be a statutory document that provides the policy and implementation framework for the investment in the region's transport system.
6. The RTS submitted to the UK Government in January 2003 identifies investment requirements that reflect the region's gateway role, including that which is required to support the efficient operation of the region's international airports, ports and the Channel Tunnel. Particular emphasis is given to the identification of landside infrastructure proposals that help address bottlenecks or provide missing links on the transport networks serving these facilities. In identifying specific proposals, priority is given to promoting schemes that encourage a modal shift and greater inter-operability between modes. Given the region's gateway role, such investment will assist in increasing the cohesion of Europe by improving access to the more peripheral regions of the United Kingdom, as well as Eire. Such investment will also assist in maintaining the economic success of one of Europe's genuine world-class regions, thereby contributing towards delivery of the Lisbon agenda.
7. The Assembly has worked closely with officials in the European Commission in order to understand better and to reflect Commission priorities within the RTS. We have read with interest the views of the High Level Group mandated by the Commission to review the list of priority transport projects and we welcome the opportunity presented by the Commission to communicate its position and concerns regarding the revision of the Community guidelines for the development of the Trans-European transport network.

General Principles

8. The Assembly supports the work of the Commission to reformulate the Community guidelines. We agree that emphasis should be given to promoting investment that address bottlenecks and complete missing links in the network. We also agree that greater emphasis should be given to improving inter-operability and to reducing peripherality.
9. The Assembly recognises the importance of ensuring that the need to encourage the integration of the transport networks of the Accession Countries within the wider trans-European transport network, however we wish to stress the importance of continuing to invest in infrastructure that helps maintain the Community's competitive position in the global economy. The Community should therefore

continue to support investment in world-class regions, such as South East England.

10. The proposal of the High Level Group to adopt a more transparent methodology, based on agreed criterion that can be used to identify priority projects, is welcomed. While the Assembly further notes the progress made by the High Level Group in this respect, further work is required to refine the criteria before they could form an agreed basis for inclusion in the revision of the Community guidelines.
11. The Assembly recognises the importance of the Community being targeted at those proposals that have a European dimension. While the use of a threshold of €500 million for infrastructure might be a useful initial filter, the revision of the Community guidelines must recognise that, in some instances, bottlenecks on the trans-European axes may be addressed through smaller scale proposals.
12. The importance attached by the High Level Group to the identification of the European value added of a particular proposal is noted. If such a criteria were to be incorporated within the revised Community guidelines, further work would be required to clarify the basis on which a value might be ascribed to individual proposals on a consistent basis.
13. The High Level Group's report includes references to the identification of intra-Community traffic in percentage terms on the sections concerned, the increase in net capacity on the route concerned and the number and length of networks that become interoperable as being potential measures of European value added. Of these measures, it is unclear to the Assembly whether the data is available at present to enable the first of these measures to be applied on a consistent basis. Caution would need to be exercised in applying the latter two measures to avoid the creation of perverse effects. Work undertaken within the United Kingdom has emphasised that improved infrastructure can encourage the concentration of activities which may be at variance with the aim of reducing peripherality.
14. The Assembly stresses the importance of having a robust analysis of future changes in movement that might arise, not just from transport interventions, but also from the successful implementation of interventions in other policy areas. The Commission's own Transport White Paper highlighted the importance of such linkages in rebalancing the use of the transport system and this should be reflected in any forecasting work undertaken by the Commission. The Assembly has a Strategic Transport Model for South East England that enables the implications of high level transport policy interventions on the pattern of future movement and the balance between modes to

be assessed. The model also allows the environmental impact of a particular policy scenario to be compared on a consistent basis. The Assembly would be willing to discuss with officials the potential of this model to assist the Commission in any future forecasting work.

Trans-European Axes

15. The idea of defining main trans-European axes as a focus for the identification of potential priority projects is supported in principle. Given the importance of such definitions to the remainder of the methodology used by the High Level Group, the Assembly emphasises the importance of further consultation with Regional Planning Bodies to ensure the most appropriate corridors are identified as trans-European axes. .
16. The RTS prepared by the Assembly includes within it the concept of the Regional Frame (see attached Map). The Frame provides the context for integrating spatial and transportation planning policy at the regional level. It seeks to promote the need to redress the spatial balance of the region, support a more polycentric structure and to promote improved inter-regional connections reducing, in the process, reliance for movement through the London bottleneck.
17. There are four principal corridors forming the Regional Frame. Of these, two have a significance that the Assembly considers makes them suitable for identification as trans-European axes:
 - **Eastern Corridor:** the Dover Straits are already identified as a bottleneck on the transport network serving North West Europe. With the growth in freight and passenger movements across the Straits likely to continue on a significant scale, the pressure on the landside infrastructure will increase serving to focus even greater attention on the need to address the London bottleneck. It is the scale of these pressures and their significance in both a National and European context that has led to the identification of this corridor as part of the Regional Frame. Through the RTS, the Assembly has sought to develop the potential that this corridor has in supporting regeneration within the Thames Gateway sub-region; the largest regeneration opportunity within North West Europe.
 - **Western Corridor:** movements between the international ports of Southampton and Portsmouth and the northern regions of the United Kingdom are significant, with a particular emphasis on the scale of freight movements to and from the deep-sea container terminal at the Port of Southampton. The national significance of this corridor of movement (both road and rail) has been recognised through its identification by the Government as requiring further study.

18. The importance of the Regional Frame in promoting improved inter-regional linkages that support the region's gateway function are such that the two remaining corridors have a significance for improving territorial cohesion:

- **Southern Corridor:** the transport networks along this corridor have an important role to play in delivering economic regeneration. In addition, located along the corridor are the majority of the region's international ports: Southampton, Portsmouth, Newhaven and Dover, as well as the Channel Tunnel.
- **Northern Corridor:** developing improved east-west connections has been identified by the Government as critical to realising the economic potential of the arc that sweeps from Oxford through Milton Keynes and beyond to Cambridge. In addition, the development of transport connections along this corridor would assist in addressing the London bottleneck, as well as improving access from peripheral regions in the west of the United Kingdom to the international ports in Eastern England.

The Priority Projects (List 1)

19. The Assembly restates the need for the revision of the Community guidelines to recognise the importance of continuing to invest in infrastructure that helps maintain the Community's competitive position in the global economy.

20. The Assembly supports the use of a criteria based approach to the identification of the Community Priority Projects. In doing so, the revised Community guidelines should include an indication of the financial framework within which those criteria have been applied in arriving at a final list of proposals.

Motorways of the Sea

21. The Assembly strongly endorses the concept of "motorways of the sea" as an appropriate way of encouraging the development of shipping services as a viable alternative to other modes of transport.

22. The RTS for South East England is required to provide a strategic steer on the future role and development of the ports and shipping sector and, in particular, provide guidance on how port-related movements fit within the operation of the region's transport networks and priorities for developing landside infrastructure. It will remain for the port sector to bring forward and justify specific proposals for future investment in individual pieces of port infrastructure, however the RTS identifies that

the ports of regional and sub-regional significance in terms of the potential they offer to support the development of short sea shipping services are:

- Southampton
- Portsmouth
- Newhaven
- Dover
- Ramsgate
- The Medway Ports

23. The Assembly would welcome further clarification as part of the revised Community guidelines as to the circumstance in which Community funds might be used to support the development of the “motorways of the sea” concept within the regulations governing the use of state aid. The development of the “motorway” network is of clear public interest and investment in developing the network should be treated accordingly.

24. The identification of ports eligible for inclusion on the “motorways of the sea” should not be constrained to ports from within the current TEN-T category A ports. The revised Community guidelines should recognise that there may be occasions when, through investment in landside infrastructure, the untapped potential of a smaller port may be realised. The revised Community guidelines should enable Community funds to be made available to support the provision of landside infrastructure in these instances where appropriate.

25. Considerable work is required to develop an appropriate set of assessment criteria within which the Member States can develop specific proposals. It is noted that the High Level Group recommended that ports should be selected using transparent criteria, although it stopped short of suggesting what those criteria might be. Potential criteria could include the standard of landside infrastructure provision, the standard of the port infrastructure and the level of service provided by the shipping lines. The Commission should involve regions in the development of any potential criteria.

Longer Term Priority Projects (List 2)

26. The Regional Assembly welcomes the suggestion of the High Level Group that there should be a list of longer term Priority Projects and it recommends that the idea be developed further as part of the revision of the Community guidelines. In particular it makes the

observation that the paucity of schemes in the list proposed by the Group is probably a reflection of its focus on the preparation of the list of Priority Projects (List 1).

27. The benefits of a more comprehensive list of longer-term Priority Projects would be that it provides the opportunity to develop a rolling programme of proposals that can be brought forward over time. The inclusion of a proposal on this list would encourage Member States to work on developing proposals to a level of certainty that would enable their consideration for promotion to the list of Priority Projects as part of a future review of the Community guidelines.
28. The criteria used to identify proposals for inclusion in the list of Priority Projects should be used to identify longer-term priority projects although it must be accepted that a similar level of detail will be available.
29. A critical part of the Eastern Corridor put forward by the Assembly as a trans-European axis is the need to develop proposals for a Lower Thames Crossing. A multi modal crossing, this piece of infrastructure would assist in addressing the London bottleneck. The Assembly recommends that this proposal be added to the list of longer-term priority projects.

Projects for territorial cohesion (List 3)

30. The Regional Assembly welcomes the suggestion of the High Level Group that there should be a list of proposals that contributes to economic and social cohesion and it recommends that the idea be developed further as part of the revision of the Community guidelines.
31. A criteria based selection process would appear to be the most appropriate mechanism for the identification of proposals to be included in the list. Given that the focus of the list is likely to be on proposals that improve inter-connection of networks and cross-border connections, we believe it would be appropriate to make provision for the involvement of regional representatives in the decision making process, possibly through the Committee of the Regions.
32. The RTS identifies a network of transport hubs (whose high level of accessibility encourages them to act as a focus for economic development) and spokes (corridors of movement between the hubs). The development of this network takes into account the need to promote inter-regional linkages.
33. Drawing upon this network of hubs and spokes, the RTS identifies a number of specific investment proposals that promote territorial

cohesion and which the Assembly recommends are added to this list, specifically:

- **The Great Western main line** (London Paddington to the South West and South Wales): a critical piece of the rail infrastructure that serves the South West of England and South Wales, both of which include areas included in the list of Objective 1 locations. The railway station at Reading has been identified by the Regional Assemblies in all three regions as being a bottleneck in the railway network that requires urgent attention in order to encourage modal shift for both passengers and freight.
- **The M3/A303 corridor** (including the London to Salisbury and Exeter railway line): the UK Government has accepted the need for two strategic corridors linking South West England with London and the South East. A programme of road improvements to the A303 have been approved by the Government, while proposals to increase the capacity of the railway line has been identified by the South West Assembly as a priority for investment.
- **East-West connections:** the UK Government is proposing that substantial growth should take place in the Milton Keynes area located on the Northern Corridor of the Regional Frame. Studies commissioned by the Government and Regional Assembly have identified a substantial programme of infrastructure proposals (specifically the East-West railway infrastructure) that are required in order to support delivery of the planned growth.
- **Access to Heathrow Airport:** the airport remains the leading international gateway into the Community, particularly from North America. With the opening of Terminal 5 in 2007 the pressure on the transport system will increase substantially. The RTS identifies two rail-based schemes that would increase the overall level of accessibility by public transport, particularly for those passengers whose journey to the airport begins in another region.

Horizontal priorities

34. The better management of the existing transport networks should rightly be an integral element of any transport policy framework. While the ideas put forward by the High Level Group could be used to provide the basis for the development of more detailed proposals, the Assembly has concerns regarding two specific aspects of the Group's report.
35. The Assembly supports encouraging modal shift of freight movement from road to rail, however any revision of the Community guidelines must take into account that, within the United Kingdom, the opportunity to develop dedicated rail freight networks are limited.

36. Maximising the use of limited capacity at international airports such as Heathrow and Gatwick is supported in principle. However, any revision of the Community guidelines must accept that the aviation industry operates within a global market. Proposals that are limited solely to operation of airports within the Community must be considered carefully to avoid creating perverse effects that impair the ability of South East England to continue to perform as a world-class region.

Funding Mechanisms

37. The Commission's Transport White Paper highlights the importance of developing the linkages between transport and other policy areas. Accordingly there is a need for greater co-ordination of the TENs funds with the Commission's Cohesion and Structural funding programmes.

38. In addition, the Assembly supports the proposal by the European Parliament to create a European Transport Fund. The High Level Group report has identified that proposals for investment in the transport networks exist at a number of levels within the planning framework. It is proposed that those at the highest level (List 1) would get priority for Community funds available through the TENs budget. However, proposals included on the other lists identified by the Group (Lists 2 and 3) also have a high level of common interest and, accordingly, should attract some funding from Community sources albeit not on a similar scale to those on List 1. Were a European Transport Fund to be created consideration should be given to allowing Member states to submit bids for funds that will cover preparation costs for proposals included on Lists 2 and 3.

39. The High Level Group emphasises the need for difficult decisions to be taken, given the scale of the challenge facing the transport networks serving the Community. The Assembly endorses this view. It is within this context that it is all the more surprising that the Commission has yet to fulfil the commitment set out in its Transport White Paper to publish proposals to develop a common approach to the issue of charging for infrastructure. The relative cost of different modes of transport is a key determinant in travel choice. The Commission correctly identified that the issue is primarily one of rebalancing the relative cost of infrastructure use as opposed to increasing the overall tax burden. The Commission should publish, as a matter of urgency, its proposals to enable an informed debate to take place at the earliest possible opportunity.

40. The Assembly supports the need to make the strongest possible case for funds to be allocated to support delivery of the TENs as part of the next financial perspective. We are also aware of the Commission's Communication entitled "Developing the trans-European transport network: innovative financing". The Assembly has recently completed an initial piece of research that has considered the opportunity to capture the increase in land value arising from investment in the transport networks. The results of this research has confirmed the practicality of the approach in helping to bring forward transport proposals that enable planned levels of development to come forward. The Assembly would welcome the opportunity to share the outcome of this research with Commission Officials.

Future revisions of the Framework

41. The Assembly agrees with the need to establish a mechanism by which regular reviews of the Community guidelines might take place. Any such mechanism must make provision for the involvement of the regions in the decision making process. It is suggested this could be achieved through the Committee of the Regions.

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