

Regional Transport Advisory Board

The RTAB met on Friday 22 January for a double bill. In the morning the first ‘**Stakeholder Event**’ was held; this replaces the former Regional Transport Forum, which was the Assembly’s wider reference group. The intention was and is similar, to give a broad constituency of those interested in and involved with transport to meet, be informed about what is going on, have a chance to comment and put forward ideas and network. The session seemed to go well and be widely appreciated.

On this occasion the material was probably fairly familiar to all concerned. It consisted of

- An explanation of the role of the RTAB in recommending how the region’s funding allocation for transport should be spent
- An update on the progress of High Speed Rail and the position taken up collectively by the three northern regions through their collaboration in the Northern Way
- A report by a consultant new to the region, Peter Twelftree, who has been recruited to relate the Government’s DaSTS approach to a sustainable transport future for Yorkshire and the Humber. The challenges set as agreed priorities by the region are (1) reduce carbon emissions, (2) improve reliability and reduce time lost in transportation, (3) connect the labour force to key places of employment, (4) support the delivery of new housing, (5) promote social inclusion, (6) improve road safety and (7) support regeneration. *(Readers will be aware of the potential for conflict between some of these objectives)*
- A description of the way forward to the new Integrated Regional Strategy.

After lunch, the **Board** met, for what turned out to be a short meeting, called to agree a revised assessment for managing its programme. Frankly, it is difficult to know whether this will reflect a real recognition of the need either to reduce carbon consumption or to promote modal shift to sustainable means of transport. The proof will come in the outcome later in February.

The problem is that the current programme produces a ‘spike’ in expenditure in 2014/15 of 300% of the annual allocation to the region. Government accepts that equal expenditure is not possible each year but the DfT is not prepared to accept more than 150% in any one year. The region has to respond by ‘re-profiling’ its programme to remove the spike.

The 12 schemes involved, because all had funding included in 2014/15, are as follows – with my observations on each:

North Yorkshire –

- Bedale/Leeming by-pass (*linked in to upgrade of A1 to motorway standard*)

West Yorkshire – (*both schemes involve public transport*)

- East Leeds Parkway Station at Micklefield
- Leeds New Generation Transport (fancy name for trolleybus)

Hull –

- A63 Castle Street (*access to Hull docks through town –much needed improvement and the project with the longest history*)

North Lincolnshire –

- A180/A160 access to Immingham Docks (*the only single carriageway section of road between national motorway system and the port*)

South Yorkshire –

- Waverley link, Rotherham
- A61 Penistone Road Quality Bus Corridor, Sheffield
- Additional vehicles for Sheffield tram
- Sheffield – Rotherham Bus rapid transit north
- Sheffield – Rotherham Bus rapid transit south
- Finningley and Rossington Regeneration Route scheme (FARRRS)
- INTEGR8 – a collection of bus priority schemes

(I do not know what some of these South Yorkshire schemes are! However, it is clear that there is insufficient traffic to Robin Hood Airport to justify FARRRS – the short link to Rossington from M18 J3 will be constructed separately if the former colliery site is redeveloped. On the face of it, 5 of the 7 schemes are for public transport but my personal view is that much of this programme is aspirational and delay would not be a disaster.)

Behind this exercise is the threatening cloud of financial realism which will descend whoever wins the General Election. There must be serious doubts that the promised level of regional transport funding will actually be delivered. Putting cherished ambitions aside to come to a genuine view of what is most needed across the region will be a serious test of political maturity.

John Hoare

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