

## **Regional Transport Advisory Board – 25 February 2010**

There was one major item on this agenda, the **Regional Fund Allocation programme management**.

The issue was, in one respect, a simple one. The DfT has drawn the line at an allocation of 150% of the annual allocation in any one year. This was exceeded with a significant 'spike' in 2014-15 and the immediately following year was little better. The DfT set the region the challenge of showing that we could manage our planned programme in a way which reprofiled expenditure to the satisfaction of the department.

The officers had gone away and produced various suggestions. Of their 6 Scenarios, only numbers 5 and 6 satisfied the requirements. The DfT was present in the person of Mike Fawcett who indicated his acceptance of a programme which met the requirements; he was not seeking the exclusion of any schemes. Initially Cllr. Andrew Carter (Leeds) suggested accepting both and leaving decisions as to which until later to avoid strong criticism from either West or South Yorkshire. Thus we would have satisfied the DfT that we could do as they asked but not actually taken any difficult decision.

Unfortunately both Scenarios presented problems. My personal view is that an assessment methodology based on value for money, policy fit and deliverability was fine simply to decide what went onto a recommended list, but it was incapable of determining which projects are urgently needed and which are aspirations capable of delay without pain. For example, improvements to the A63 in Hull, which have been on the shopping list as long as I have been involved in the region and have implications from pedestrian safety to the efficiency of the port, were given a 3-year delay in both Scenarios whereas FARRRS (the link road to Robin Hood Airport) was treated more lightly when there isn't the traffic to justify its construction. The Leeds NGT (trolleybus system), which should take less than 3 years to build, was spread out over 5 years, which – it transpired later in the meeting – would effectively kill this important public transport project.

Anthony Rae challenged the methodology for failing to balance carbon reduction and economic development, as laid down by the DfT in its DaSTS priorities. Risks were indicated but there was no evidence of work done to reduce them. Should we leave all schemes in? Are we prepared to review? Port access schemes are important for the UK economy and its capacity. Low carbon transport schemes in the cities are important for carbon reduction. But what of Robin Hood Airport? Struggling towards 1m passengers and no need for its road!

Ben Still (SYPT) said the task of the review group was simply to manage the 'spike', which had opened scheme promoters to challenge.. We have demonstrated ability to manage the process and will take a decision on priorities when we have to.

This was not good enough for Cllr. John Watson (N Yorks) who noted that we had 6 schemes already in the DfT pipeline and none approved within the past 3 years. We have to reach a decision or will be giving the DfT as excuse for putting off projects further.

A further Scenario (5b) was presented for debate but in itself it did not meet the concerns expressed, and was in some respects worse than its predecessors.

Simon Foy (Yorkshire Forward) wanted to keep the momentum behind the 12 transport schemes and see the process move forward. He summed up after discussion, suggesting these points as generally accepted:

- There should be further work, going beyond the Scenarios 5 and 6 presented to this meeting, which should aim to ensure that no scheme was delayed by more than 2 years.
- Special concern should be given to port access and, in particular, to the A63 in the city of Hull.
- The Leeds NGT scheme cannot be extended into a length of time which would undermine the whole scheme.

John Hoare  
February 2010