

Regional Transport Advisory Board – 16 June 2009 (report by John Hoare)

The first meeting of the new, smaller board was a thoroughly civilised affair, as could be anticipated when there were no financial recommendations to be made!

Much of the business concerned setting the scene for the changed situation, with Yorkshire Forward in charge and the as yet unclear relationship with strengthened sub-regions. The agreed terms of reference are sufficiently wide for the board to discuss and advise on any consultations and developments related to transport.

An **‘Executive Transport Group’**, chaired by Simon Foy, YF Executive Director of Strategy, has been set up to support the board in promoting and managing the strategic transport agenda and in considering schemes and monitoring performance.

The former Regional Transport Forum is to be replaced by a **regional transport conference**, probably held twice a year. The name ‘conference’ may be misleading as the meeting generally took the view that the membership (on which officers had as yet done no work) should be broadly as that of the Forum, in other words the transport network of members, officers, operators and organisations working in the transport field. The conference would scrutinise the work of the board, besides having value for information sharing.

There was discussion about the **impact of the recession on transport**.

Unemployment in the region is 3% up on a year ago (now 8%, worst in South Yorkshire and along the Humber), and a 4% decline in Yorkshire’s output is anticipated this year. There are anxieties about the level of the Regional Funding Allocation for transport when government expenditure is anticipated to be cut. A response from Government to the latest recommendation for approval of projects from the former board is expected shortly. The sub-regions need to identify bottlenecks and try to get speedier action; the DfT is looking at how it can simplify its rather arcane appraisal processes, which contribute to the length of time transport projects take to achieve. The Board is to write to Lord Adonis (the latest Minister of Transport, but one who actually shows some enthusiasm for rail!) to express our anxieties about the East Coast Main Line franchise and the promised improvements to its services.

‘Delivering a Sustainable Transport System’ – the region has been asked to put forward its ideas for a work programme for 2009-11 as part of the Government’s latest thinking on transport planning. The greatest challenges are seen as economic productivity, climate change and social equity. Steer Davies Gleave have been working on this for the region and gave a presentation to the board. The ‘Task and Finish Group’ supporting them is proposing six challenges from DaSTS as priorities for the region. The reduction in transport-related carbon dioxide emissions is first on a list which emphasises social inclusion and connectivity for deprived or remote areas; if these priorities were implemented, public transport would command a higher proportion of the available funds. There are also areas under consideration, mostly predictable (e.g. access to Humber ports, Trans Pennine routes,) but also road safety. Members will receive the draft paper before it goes to the Regional Board and the DfT in July.