

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

3 December 2012

Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters For Information

1 BOROUGH TRANSPORTATION MATTERS

Summary

This report brings together a range of currently important transportation matters in the Borough.

1.1 Introduction

In November I reported to the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board a comprehensive overview of rail and road transportation issues currently within the Borough Council's focus. Many of the matters discussed within the report involve a common and partnership approach between the County and Borough Council in one way or another and are reported in more detail in other papers to this Board. Those not referred to elsewhere in these papers are brought together here for your information.

1.2 Feedback from Southeastern Stakeholder Group

1.2.1 The Southeastern Stakeholder Group met in October and was attended by the Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation and the Chief Engineer. Presentations were made by Charles Horton (Southeastern's Managing Director) and Vince Lucas (their Service Delivery Director).

1.2.2 The key issues are as follows:

- The Government will be capping next year's regulated fare increase at RPI + 1%. As the RPI for July (the month when fare increases are set) was 3.2%, this means that the average increase on Southeastern services from January 2013 will be 4.2%.
- Southeastern have developed a new "app" for mobile users to use to access their website information and up to date information can also be found by following them on Twitter.
- There will be improved on-train information systems, better electronic display boards and new and upgraded CCTV at many stations.

- Smart ticketing, where the entitlement to travel is stored electronically on a microchip, is being explored by the train operator and could lead to a wider range of pricing options for those travelling in and around the peak times.
- From December work begins to re-build London Bridge station as part of the Thameslink programme. This will be an enormous civil engineering project as the station will be totally re-built. When fully complete in 2018, London Bridge will have the biggest concourse in the UK.
- As the building work progresses there will be an impact on services to and from London Bridge, Cannon Street and Charing Cross.
- For the first time a high speed service will operate between Ashford International and St. Pancras on Boxing Day. This is trial conducted by Southeastern, HS1 and the Department for Transport and this service is outside the usual revenue support system to make it possible. Other lines will see the usual restricted service over the Christmas period.

1.3 Feedback from Kent Community Rail Partnership

- 1.3.1 The Medway Valley Line is one of two Community Rail partnerships in Kent. It runs from Strood down to Paddock Wood, connecting at each end with the main rail network, each junction offering onward journeys to London and the Kent Coast. Good connections are provided at Strood to and from High Speed services to Ebbsfleet, Stratford and St Pancras. 'Our' stations at Snodland, New Hythe, Aylesford and Watlington are served by this line and Maidstone West sits almost centrally along the line.
- 1.3.2 In addition to the recent station enhancement work to Paddock Wood Station Southeastern is looking to see if bus access can be improved too. Although not in our Borough, Paddock Wood station provides a service for residents in the East Peckham and surrounding area.
- 1.3.3 Snodland Station is going to have raised beds for growing fruit and vegetables, a sort of mini allotment scheme. Southeastern in general seem to be keen that their railway stations are "adopted" and are keen to engage with local communities to achieve this.
- 1.3.4 Southeastern is to increase the size of the car park at Strood Station by knocking down a derelict building. Funding has still to be agreed but they hope to extend the booking Hall to double its present size.
- 1.3.5 Enforcement along the Medway Valley Line by British Transport Police will hopefully increase with the possibility of 20 British Transport Police Officers being based at Maidstone Barracks.

1.4 South Eastern Franchise Consultation

The current rail franchise with Southeastern ends in March 2014. The deadline for the Department for Transport public consultation seeking stakeholder views on the new franchise was 12 September and the attached officer response (**Annex 1**) was submitted on behalf of the Borough Council following liaison with KCC and Maidstone Borough Council officers.

1.5 The Joint Parish Councils Transport Consultation Group

1.5.1 This Joint Parish Councils Transport Consultation Group (JPCTCG) met at the end of September and received a presentation from Tim Shaw, Chairman of the J5 Slips Committee. This group is, amongst other things, campaigning for east facing slips at junction 5 of the M25. Its aim is to promote and lobby for practical support to assist in enabling the building of these slip roads which would allow full road connectivity in all directions at the M25/M26/A21 interchange and a consequential reduction in traffic along the A25 through several villages including Borough Green. Further details can be found at their website www.j5-slips.org/

1.6 A21 Tonbridge to Pembury Dualling Scheme - Public Inquiry

1.6.1 The Transport Minister Stephen Hammond has just announced that the Department for Transport will shortly restart the statutory process for the proposed multi-million pound widening of the A21. This is excellent news and should now pave the way for construction work to begin in 2015, subject of course to the release of funds. Officers will be liaising with the Highways Agency and others in the course of the inquiry preparations. The news release issued by the Highways Agency can be found in **Annex 2**.

1.7 Bus Transport to Schools

1.7.1 I am conscious that significant interest has been expressed locally in Tonbridge about bus the importance of bus transport to serve the town. In particular I am very much aware that during the first weeks of the new academic year some difficulties were experienced by school children not being able to access services due to apparent capacity issues. In view of the complicated issues around school buses, rather than report to this Board the County Council has offered to provide a specific briefing session for Members.

1.7.2 It is anticipated that this will outline the way in which the organisation and provision of bus services works in connection with school travel and how the relationship between KCC and bus operators works in planning and funding service provision.

1.8 Legal Implications

1.8.1 None.

1.9 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.9.1 No direct considerations.

1.10 Risk Assessment

Not applicable.

Background papers:

contact: Mike O'Brien

Nil

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure