

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

20 October 2008

**Report of the Director of Planning Transport and Leisure
and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation**

Part 1- Public

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken
by the Cabinet Member)**

1 SOUTH CENTRAL FRANCHISE CONSULTATION

Summary

During the summer months the government consulted on the refranchising of rail services on the south central area. This is important to rail passengers in the Borough because it affects services on the line to Charing Cross through Redhill and the line to Gatwick. An officer level response was submitted during the consultation period to the Department for Transport.

The focus on rail transport has continued elsewhere. Kent County Council currently has a Select Committee considering the Channel Tunnel Rail Line Domestic Service and the implications this will have for the classic line service across Kent. An officer level response has been submitted and an opportunity has been taken to bring the implications of the South Central Refranchising exercise to the Committee's attention, in addition to concerns about services on the Maidstone East/West Malling line.

1.1 South Central Refranchising

- 1.1.1 The new South Central franchise is due to begin on 20 September 2009. Importantly for this Borough, it will include Tonbridge to Redhill services. These currently are operated by Southeastern Railway but will be transferred to Southern at the start of December 2008.
- 1.1.2 The new franchise specification confirms this transfer and represents a further threat to the line. **Annex 1** contains the officer level response submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) and this has been shared with neighbouring districts, the County Council, the local MP, the Regional Transport Board, Passenger Focus and the Tonbridge Line Commuters group.
- 1.1.3 It is extremely disappointing that the draft specification represents further adverse change to Tonbridge to Redhill line from that which has already taken place this

year with the loss of the direct line to Gatwick and reduced off-peak services to East Croydon and central London. The fact that the DfT's specification is so lukewarm about the line inspires little confidence that the successful bidder for the new franchise is likely to give it much, if any, priority.

- 1.1.4 The DfT is considering responses to the consultation and the extent to which it has been influenced will be evident when it issues the Invitation to Tender to the short list of potential Train Operating Companies for the new franchise. This is expected to be available in November and we will advise the Board further on the implications of the document as soon as we have had an opportunity to analyse its contents.

1.2 KCC Select Committee

- 1.2.1 In recent weeks, the County Council established a Select Committee to consider the implications of the Channel Tunnel Rail Line Domestic Service for the wider rail network in Kent in both the short and the long term.
- 1.2.2 The new High Speed Domestic Service is due to come into operation in December 2009 and Southeastern Railway has been working on timetable changes on both the new High Speed line and the classic network. We know about the off peak service and the Select Committee presents a further opportunity to confirm this Council's disappointment that the links into the city on the Maidstone East/West Malling line are to be deleted. The off-peak destination on the Maidstone East line will be consistently into Victoria in the future.
- 1.2.3 The peak service timetable has yet to be announced by Southeastern Railway. At a recent stakeholder meeting, Southeastern confirmed that it was still working on this and expected to announce the details shortly into the New Year.
- 1.2.4 **Annex 2** reproduces the advice offered to the Select Committee and the Board will see that a further opportunity has been taken to enlist wider support for the Tonbridge to Redhill line, since this is, albeit indirectly, relevant to the longer term consideration of rail transport in Kent.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 Not applicable

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 None directly for the Borough Council

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 Not applicable

1.6 Recommendation

1.6.1 That the submissions made on rail issues covered in this report **BE ENDORSED**.

The Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

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South Central Franchise Consultation - DfT

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