

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

06 January 2009

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

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 SOUTH CENTRAL FRANCHISE

Summary

The Department for Transport (DfT) has recently issued the Invitation to Tender Documents for the South Central Franchise Area. This represents a final opportunity to advocate the case to the bidders for improvements to the base specification

1.1 The Tendering Process

1.1.1 The DfT recently issued its Stakeholder Briefing Document for the South Central Franchise. The Borough Council's earlier submission on the contents of the base specification has been fairly reproduced in the document and it outlines the key points that we wish to make about how critical it is to preserve and enhance the Tonbridge/Redhill/London/Gatwick line.

1.1.2 The document sets out the key objectives the government expects franchisees to achieve and it identifies the short list of bidders. These are;

- Nedrailways Ltd,
- National Express Group plc,
- Govia Ltd and
- Stagecoach Group plc.

1.1.3 Bidders have received the Invitation To Tender package and must submit their bids by 18 February 2009. We had hoped that the bidders would be able to attend this meeting of the Board to explain to members the broad scope of their bids, to the extent that it is possible to do so within the constraints of a competitive tendering process. This would also have been an opportunity for the Borough Council to emphasise the case for preserving and enhancing the line and extending its catchment area to mid and east Kent.

- 1.1.4 Unfortunately, such an approach falls foul of the procedures laid down by the DfT for conducting the tendering exercise. Some of the bidders were willing to attend this meeting but had been 'reminded' by the DfT that this would have to be very much in 'listening mode' with no scope for dialogue on the extent to which they might be able to respond to the Borough Council's aspirations for the line. This being so, there seemed little point in persisting with what was likely to be a rather uninspiring and unconstructive approach.
- 1.1.5 In contrast, the tenderers have indicated that they would be happy to come and talk individually and informally to a smaller group of Members. With this in mind, we are, at the time of report drafting, in the process of setting up a series of meetings with each of the bidders together with the Leader and Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Board. Some of those meetings should have taken place before the evening of the Board and we shall report orally on how these went.

1.2 Legal Implications

- 1.2.1 None applicable.

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.3.1 Not relevant.

1.4 Risk Assessment

- 1.4.1 Not applicable

Background papers:

contact: Mike McCulloch

Nil

Steve Humphrey
Director of Planning Transport and Leisure

Matthew Balfour
Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation