

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

29 July 2009

**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 KENT ROUTE UTILISATION STRATEGY

Summary

The Board is invited to consider the officer level response recently sent to Network Rail commenting on the Draft Kent Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) and to provide any supplementary comments it might wish to add for forwarding to Network Rail.

1.1 Context

- 1.1.1 Network Rail published its Draft Kent Route Utilisation Strategy for public consultation several weeks ago and invited responses by a return date of 23 July 2009.
- 1.1.2 The strategy sets out Network Rail's vision for rail infrastructure and service patterns in Kent for the next thirty years, though in reality the detailed focus is over the first decade of that period through to 2019.

1.2 Consultation Response

- 1.2.1 The date for return of responses was a little out of phase with the meeting cycle so an officer level reply has already been submitted within the consultation period but with a request that allowance be made for a follow up response to provide Member endorsement and any supplementary comments and observations that the Board might wish to add.
- 1.2.2 The submitted reply is contained at **Annex 1** and it focuses on the items in the Draft RUS of direct interest to this Borough area. Matters such as the imminent elimination of the city routes on the West Malling/Maidstone East Line in the December 2009 timetable are not strictly speaking within the remit or gift of the RUS to influence but we have taken the view that the Board would wish its views on this to be strongly represented in the context of the consultation response.

- 1.2.3 In very general terms, Network Rail has had the 'windfall' of additional passenger capacity within Kent arising from the High Speed services into St Pancras and it is fair to say that without this the general tone of this RUS document would have been bleaker than it currently is.
- 1.2.4 That said, there are still elements of the strategy that prompt concerns. The medium to long term prognosis for passenger crowding in the peak hours, especially the high peak, on West Kent services, where the direct influence of the High Speed services will be least felt, appears to be as now or slightly worse. This is despite actions to alleviate this through train lengthening and selective door opening.
- 1.2.5 Also in the short term, Network Rail is anticipating significant service impacts from the major remodelling of London Bridge. This is only touched on in the Draft RUS and more detail will need to come from the final document when it is published next year.

1.3 Sussex RUS

- 1.3.1 In parallel with the Kent RUS, Network Rail is running a public consultation on the Sussex RUS. The only element of this latter document that is of local interest to this Council is the Tonbridge/Redhill Line. There is a degree of overlap between the two RUS documents in that they both refer to it.
- 1.3.2 The strong views of this Council on the need to preserve and enhance services on this line and, if possible, to reinstate the direct Gatwick connection have been robustly aired in the response to the Kent RUS. We suggest that, even although the Council may not have any other views to offer on the Sussex RUS, we send in a response that echoes what has already been said about the Tonbridge/Redhill Line in reply to the Kent RUS to ensure that this Council's views are fully recorded in the context of the Sussex RUS.
- 1.3.3 The deadline for responses to the second consultation is towards the end of August and it is recommended we be invited to forward a response along the lines described by the due date for return.

1.4 Access to the Document

- 1.4.1 A copy of the Draft Kent RUS has been deposited in the Member library and there are some additional copies available in the office if required. It can also be referenced on the Network Rail website by following the links to the RUS pages.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 None applicable.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 None applicable.

1.7 Risk Assessment

1.7.1 Nil.

1.8 Policy Considerations

1.8.1 Community – transportation links to London and around Kent are important to the local community and the Borough Council is acting as a key stakeholder in the RUS consultation in representing those interests.

1.9 Recommendations

1.9.1 That, subject to any supplementary comments the Board might wish to add, the annexed consultation response **BE ENDORSED**.

1.9.2 That the Director be invited to submit a response to the Sussex RUS setting out the Board's views on the need to preserve and enhance services on the Tonbridge/Redhill Line.

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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Nil

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