

BERKSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT BODY (BLTB)

REPORT TO: BLTB

DATE: 19 July 2018

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PART I

Item 14: Southern Rail Access to Heathrow

Purpose of Report

1. On 20 March 2018, DfT published [a call for ideas for market-led proposals for rail enhancements](#)¹. This report suggests a response urging DfT to consider any proposals it receives in the light of the principles set out in paragraph 20.

Recommendations

2. That you agree the response to the government's call for market-led proposals for a new Southern Rail Access to Heathrow set out in paragraph 20.

Other Implications

Financial

3. There are no financial implications of this report for BLTB.

Risk Management

4. There only low risks for BLTB connected with this suggested response to the DfT.

Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

5. Slough Borough Council will provide legal support for the BLTB should any questions arise on this matter.

Supporting Information

6. In its paper, the DfT defined a "market-led proposal" (MLP) as:

a project promoted by the private sector which addresses an opportunity not necessarily identified or prioritised in a departmental programme or through the Network Rail-led long-term planning process. In the rail sector, an MLP could be developed or promoted by, for example, ports, train operators, freight operators, housing developers, financial investors or a consortium of such parties.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rail-market-led-proposals>

7. The paper set out the DfT's general approach to MLP for rail services, but also specifically identified access to Heathrow as a priority topic:

Heathrow Rail Access

World class surface access to Heathrow will enhance our global competitiveness, enabling new local, national and international connections and make the UK a more attractive place to invest.

Government is already moving forward with plans for new rail links to Heathrow, to enable holiday makers, business travellers and airport workers to access the airport without having to travel via London. Our plans for a new Western Rail Link are well developed and would enable faster, direct journeys from Reading to the airport.

As we change the face of railway investment in the UK, we are approaching the development of a proposed Southern Rail Link to Heathrow differently.

At this early conceptual stage, we want to ensure we take full advantage of the opportunity to harness new and innovative ideas. The department and Heathrow Airport Limited are working together to unlock funding for the next phase of development, which will invite ideas for rail access to Heathrow and to explore the market's appetite to share the risk of development.

8. The DfT also held a Market Sounding Briefing on 24 May 2018, which provided some further clarification as to the Department's thinking. The Government sees the Heathrow Southern Rail Access as offering a unique opportunity to effectively involve the private sector in funding parts of the rail network. The proposal is seen leading the way to a new approach to investment in the railways and will be used as a disruptor to the industry, from which Network Rail can learn in shaping their own approach to future investment.
9. At the briefing Government officials also indicated that they consider the potential strength of the proposal is in the value that can be added by securing improved orbital connectivity in the south-west quadrant around London and offering greater benefits by providing a new strategic rail link from Guildford/Woking and beyond, through Heathrow linking directly to Paddington and HS2. Government therefore clearly see this as more than just a new link to Heathrow.
10. Government also emphasised that they see their role as being to facilitate delivery of a scheme and providing an environment to make it happen. They are very clear that they will not be paying for a scheme or building it. The first stage of the process will be one of filtration, to identify those proposals that are considered credible, which includes the investment model proposed. Those scheme promoters that pass this stage, expected in the Autumn, will be invited to take forward their proposals in more detail. Exactly how the process will work and how it will ensure consistent assessment of schemes against public policy objectives and indeed wider network impacts is unclear.
11. This approach is part of wider Government objectives for the market led programme to boost economic growth. In addition, they are keen to encourage modal shift and reduce congestion and reduce environmental impacts.

12. This report sets out a suggested contribution to the DfT process for sifting the ideas that come forward for consideration in response to this invitation. It sets out only a few high-level principles. It does not cover the detail of engineering solutions, route selection, service frequencies or other matters of local detail. We leave these matters to the local authorities more closely affected by these matters.
13. This report has been drafted in close consultation with colleagues at the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group and Transport for the South East. The following high-level principles broadly in line with the submissions made by those bodies.

Potential Expansion at Heathrow

14. Heathrow Airport is fundamentally important to the economy of the so-called “Western Wedge” spreading along the M40, M4, M3 and A3 corridors out of London.
15. Many observers, including the Airports Commission, have concluded that improved rail connections to the airport, including Western and Southern rail access, are justified on the basis of a 2-runway airport. Government officials were quite explicit in its document accompanying the market led launch event that neither western nor southern access were dependent on another runway
16. TVB and EM3 LEPs have taken the position that new rail connections should not be seen as mitigation for airport expansion and that they have a strong business case if the airport continues to operate on the existing 2-runway model.
17. Our response to the DfT’s call for ideas relating to the Southern Rail Access to Heathrow should be to encourage the DfT to favour proposals which meet the needs of the wider sub-regional economy and not just the narrow needs of Heathrow Airport.
18. DfT is sponsoring, via Highways England, the M25 South West Quadrant Study and one of the options for accommodating demands for travel is to promote Heathrow Airport as a hub for public transport travel throughout the sub-region. Our response should encourage the DfT to favour proposals which properly take account of the findings of this study, which is in line with current Government thinking.
19. The proposals for a new tunnelled Western Rail Access scheme are being progressed by Network Rail via a more conventional funding route. These proposals are currently subject to a formal consultation and are not the subject of this report. However, it is worth noting that Government has indicated it will ask promoters of a new Southern Rail Access to indicate if there is any potential to combine elements of the two schemes, such as shared tunnelling.

Southern Rail Access to Heathrow – Principles

20. DfT is recommended to support the following principles when sifting responses to the call for Southern Rail Access to Heathrow market led proposals:
- a. The proposals should be designed to meet the needs of the South of England not just South London
 - b. The proposals should serve the sub-region as well as the airport
 - c. The proposals should specifically embrace the findings of the M25 South West Quadrant study
 - d. The proposals should promote through-running of the airport and not shuttle services terminating on the airport
 - e. The proposals should acknowledge national schemes for pricing of journeys and not seek to charge premium fares for airport access
 - f. The proposals should be fully integrated with respect to national and regional tickets
 - g. The proposals should be coordinated with off-airport development sites for housing and/or employment and demonstrate how they might unlock new development potential across the south-east.
 - h. The proposals need to show how they will be able to contribute to attracting new investment to the area and support exports

Conclusion

21. The proposed Southern Rail Access to Heathrow is a significant project for the economy and transport infrastructure of the area. It is important that any investment supports and enhances the area's strategic transport objectives, therefore you are recommended to endorse the 8 principles set out in paragraph 20.

Background Papers

Correspondence with HSPG and TfSE colleagues