



BAA Consultation on ‘Sustaining the Transport Vision’ – A Surface Access Strategy for Heathrow

SWELTRAC is a sub-regional transport planning partnership covering ten Boroughs in the south and west London area. These include the London Boroughs of Hillingdon, Hounslow, Hammersmith & Fulham and Richmond and the Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames, all of which are most directly affected by the traffic and transport issues affecting access to Heathrow. We also retain links with Surrey County Council and Spelthorne Borough Council, especially in relation to issues involving Heathrow. Some of these authorities will be responding directly to this consultation, but we are also pleased to have the opportunity to offer the views of the SWELTRAC Partnership as a whole.

SWELTRAC was originally formed in the early 1990's as the result of the concerns of a number of south west London Boroughs regarding traffic volumes into Heathrow and the lack of orbital public transport options. Congestion has significantly worsened in that time and the opening of Terminal 5 in March 2008 will obviously have a further major impact on traffic within this part of the capital. We therefore welcome any proposals which will improve and promote the use of public transport by both passengers and staff travelling to the airport. SWELTRAC has been pleased to have played a part in the work of the Heathrow Area Transport Forum and its various working groups over many years in order to help shape and influence many of the policies and proposals included within this strategy.

Targets

Generally, we support the objectives and targets that are set out in the strategy and recognise the achievements that have been made since 1999. In light of recent trends, we believe that the 40% target for PT modal share is certainly a realistic one, although perhaps there is scope to be a little more ambitious in this regard. A higher target could certainly prove to be realistic if some of the major transport scheme proposals affecting Heathrow are implemented over the next 5–10 years.

Staff Travel Plans

We are aware that much work has been done in terms of promoting the use of public transport to staff working at and around the airport. We support those measures that have already been implemented and will continue to seek to work with BAA and relevant local authorities for improvements to both public

transport accessibility and cycling/walking facilities in the vicinity. Whilst we note that some successful work has been undertaken in respect of Personalised Travel Planning, we would encourage further efforts in this regard. These sort of soft measures have been shown to be very effective when trialled in various areas across London and particularly at workplaces. The promotion of car sharing can also be an effective alternative to public transport for many staff, whilst still having clear benefits in terms of congestion and CO2 emissions.

Corridor Studies and Major Rail Projects

We welcome the proposals to look at specific corridors on the approaches to the airport and target particular measures at these routes. We await with interest the results of your work in this respect.

With regards to rail access, SWELTRAC have long been supporters of the proposals for both Crossrail and Airtrack. We recognise that Crossrail will only be likely to result in limited modal change as far as access to Heathrow is concerned, but we would nevertheless hope that it will provide an attractive alternative to the car for passengers travelling longer distances from both the eastern and western ends of the route.

As members of the Airtrack Forum, we are delighted at the financial commitment that BAA has given to the funding of the TWA process. We believe that the business case for this project is very strong and that it would have a significant impact on orbital travel in SW London and encourage greater use of rail as a means of accessing the airport for both passengers and staff.

Rail-Air Services

We understand that more efforts have been made of late in promoting the various rail-air options available to passengers, not least by the bus operators outside of Greater London. However, we feel that Feltham has been neglected for some years in terms of the promotion of bus services to the airport that are available for passengers. We welcome the extension of route 285 to serve Terminal 5 as from next March, as well as the provision of an extended route 490 service directly into Heathrow via Feltham and Hatton Cross.

SWELTRAC has recently been leading on a project to improve the promotion of these two services and the information available to passengers both on the trains and at the station and forecourt at Feltham. This has involved a number of stakeholders who are all keen to encourage the use of this rail-air link. However, we feel that more could be done to promote the various rail-air options, particularly by the train operators, and we would encourage BAA to engage with them to this effect.

Wayfinding

SWELTRAC has also played an active role in recent efforts to improve wayfinding facilities at the airport. We recognise that much work has already been done or is planned for the near future, particularly in relation to the Central Bus Station. Good signage and information is a great incentive for the increased use of public transport and we hope that the momentum will not be lost on this project following the completion of work at Terminal 5.

Future Developments

We note the proposals for the construction of Heathrow East to replace the existing Terminals 1 and 2 and we welcome the commitment to minimise car travel by construction staff. Whilst it is not intended that this project will increase capacity at the airport, it will be important that access to public transport is a strong factor in the design and fit-out of this facility.

We also note the announcements regarding proposals for a third runway and a sixth terminal at Heathrow, which will clearly have an impact on transport issues in the longer term. Whilst we appreciate that there are many hurdles to overcome before these could become reality, we will continue to watch with interest the debate surrounding these projects and will seek to represent the views of our partner Boroughs insofar as traffic and transport issues are concerned.

Conclusion

SWELTRAC generally welcomes the proposals contained within the Draft Surface Access Strategy. We recognise the work that has already been undertaken and welcome the commitment of BAA to continue to promote the use of sustainable transport by both staff and passengers.

We encourage the continued use of Personalised Travel Plans and proposals to undertake corridor studies around the airport. We would also urge BAA to give greater encouragement to train and bus operators to promote rail-air services to the airport.

We are confident that with these measures in place, targets for modal share can be both achieved and exceeded in the near future.