

## **Report to the Transport for South Hampshire Joint Committee**

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**Subject:** Evidence Base - Use of the Modelling Capability

### **Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is inform Members of progress on work to facilitate the use of the transport modelling suite, which has the potential to be used by both the public and private sectors for a suitable fee, producing cost and time savings for both. It is likely to be of great value to local authorities and businesses alike, providing vital quantified data that will help inform decisions and maximise economic benefits.

### **Recommendation**

- 1. That current work aimed at facilitating future use of the Sub-Regional Transport Model by both the public and private sector for a suitable fee in a way that is fair, transparent and non-discriminatory, and which also reflects the level of contribution to date by public sector partners be approved.**

### **Introduction**

1. In April 2009 the Joint Committee gave approval for officers to procure the appropriate transport modelling tool needed as a vital part of the robust evidence base for the area. Work on a suitable transport modelling suite, capable of answering the questions of decision makers looking at the area as a whole, started in March 2010 with work being carried out by a consortium led by MVA Consultancy. Model construction, calibration and validation is currently underway, with progress and early feedback being reported elsewhere on the agenda.
2. It was recognised from the outset that the complexity of the interaction between South Hampshire's environment, its transport networks and the growth that was proposed in the area, meant that the evidence base needed to inform decision making had to have a wide geographic scope, without sacrificing the necessary level of detail. It was also apparent that the area had to be looked at holistically in order to adequately and robustly describe the way in which various proposals

for development would affect each other and the existing transport networks.

3. The Sub-Regional Transport Model (SRTM) will be especially useful in quantifying the impacts of new development and of transport interventions on each other, and in comparing alternative proposals. It will be able to show where and when transport proposals need to be implemented to minimise any adverse impacts of new development on businesses and the travelling public. It will also be able to compare the impacts of alternative transport proposals and package, and help to identify the best ones to implement.
4. The purpose of this report is to set out some of the ways in which the SRTM can potentially be used by both the public and private sectors, producing cost and time savings for both. It has the potential to be of great value to local businesses and the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership, providing vital data that will help to inform decisions and maximise economic benefits.

## **Background**

5. Within the South Hampshire journey to work areas there are complex economic and environmental contexts, and local partners recognised the need to work in partnership across boundaries in looking at a suitable transport modelling tool. They have also recognised the likely timescale required to assemble necessary input data and then construct a suitable transport modelling tool that meets these requirements.
6. The SRTM will be a shared transport modelling tool capable of testing the impact of policies and strategies across the economic area, unlimited by administrative boundaries. Its development is being overseen by the Evidence Base Steering Group and managed by the Progress Group including active participation by the Department for Transport and the Highways Agency to ensure that it is agreed as suitable by all highway authorities operating in the area. It is anticipated that the SRTM will be capable of providing quantified answers to a wide variety of questions that decision makers from the various public sector partners may have in developing their plans.
7. During the data-gathering stage from autumn 2008 onwards, every effort has been made to maximise sharing and re-use of existing and new data. Most notably there was close collaboration with those responsible for work on the Portsmouth Western Corridor Model (PWCM), with mutual agreement on the location of certain road-side interview sites. In future the SRTM will provide a sub-regional context and forecasts for use in existing models such as the PWCM.

## **Public/Private partnership**

8. As well as being of benefit to public sector partners including Transport for South Hampshire (TfSH), Department for Transport (DfT), Highways Agency (HA), Network Rail and local planning authorities, it would also be of great potential benefit to private sector partners. Access to the SRTM could offer both cost and time saving benefits for private sector partners, for example in plans for new development at sites within the area. Whilst the model would be unlikely to meet all the needs of such an organisation in terms of preparing an appropriate transport assessment and environmental statement, it could provide a major part of the transport modelling input required. In particular, it will provide an unusually robust assessment of the impacts of development on the transport networks as a whole, due to its geographic scope and multi-modal detail. SRTM provides a transport planning framework for large scale developments and interventions that will make it unnecessary for developers to produce their own assessment and analysis tools. Additionally it will provide the background forecasts where more detailed modelling such as micro-simulation is required. Importantly by providing a common technical resource it will facilitate negotiations between private and public sector partners offering additional time and cost savings to both parties.
9. It has always been the intention of TfSH to make use of the model available to private sector partners as well as to other public sector partners. There are several examples nationally where local authorities and other public bodies currently offer, or have offered in the past, access to the use of transport models in return for suitable charges.
10. There has been substantial investment by the public sector partners in collecting data and building, calibrating and validating the SRTM. It is proposed that this investment should be partly recovered by making differential charges for private sector, rather than public sector, use of the model. This type of differential charging been used elsewhere successfully, and the best mechanisms to ensure legal compliance, fairness and transparency are currently being considered.
11. Private sector partners could benefit from lower overall cost for test runs using the SRTM, compared with developing their own comparable resource, and reduced risks since the model would already be fully validated and agreed as suitable for use by both highway authorities, public transport and planning operators and planning authorities in the area.

## **Protocols for use**

12. Prior to the publication of the draft Localism Bill (on 13 December), allowing other private sector partners access to use the SRTM fell under regulations concerning re-use of public sector information. The new bill includes provision for local authorities to have a general power

of competence. This would mean that local authorities would be allowed to engage in activities in the local interest that are not explicitly prohibited by law. This contrasts with the current regime under which an authority can only undertake activities specifically set out within existing legislation.

13. The Bill has yet to receive a second reading and resulting debate in Parliament. Details of proposed legislation in the Bill (as amended during its progress up to enactment) will require further scrutiny to ensure that all proposed protocols for use of the SRTM properly reflect its requirements. However, it is anticipated that the enabling powers it contains will broadly facilitate the proposals set out in this paper.
14. In considering appropriate protocols for the use of the SRTM, the main objectives of fairness, transparency, non-discrimination and consistency of application have been central in setting out the way access is managed. It should be noted that there is no requirement to make access to the SRTM freely available, but reasons for refusal should be in the context of the objectives above. Where access is generally permitted, therefore, refusal in any particular instance should be accompanied by the reason for this in writing as a matter of good practice.
15. Any applications for use of the SRTM should be processed in a timely, open and transparent manner, and the processes used should be fair, consistent and non-discriminatory. The charges made for use should be clearly set out, and in addition an easily accessible complaints process should be established.
16. It is proposed that a fully detailed set of guidance notes for use by both public and private sector should be prepared, clearly setting how an application for use should be made, the timescale for responses and the complaints procedures applying.
17. In order to maximise the potential benefits of use of the SRTM, as well as meeting necessary technical requirements for appropriately managing the various modules of the SRTM during its use, all testing would need to be carried out by MVA Consultancy acting on behalf of the consortium as TfSH's consultant. This would ensure that the integrity of the SRTM is maintained, and that where organisations wish to share the outputs from testing this can be done with full confidence that the outputs for any given input assumptions can be accepted by all parties.
18. Work is continuing in relation to the fairest way of managing a suitable charging regime, as well as taking full account of the impact of the Localism Bill.
19. In order to ensure that timescales for individual commissions are adhered to in a reliable and consistent way, the overall programme of

such work needs to be appropriately managed. The Evidence Base Steering Group and the Progress Group, which are overseeing the modelling suite development process, would be the appropriate bodies to manage the programme of required test runs. This group currently has representatives from TfSH, DfT, and the HA, however a formal invitation has been extended to Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) to appoint a representative to the Evidence Base Steering Group, as the SRTM moves into the period of use following successful calibration and validation. An invitation would be extended in the future to allow the Solent LEP to appoint a business representative to the group if appropriate.

20. The guidelines for use produced will set out the process to be undertaken by those wishing to use the model. A simplified flow chart is attached as an Appendix to indicate in broad terms how this is envisaged. Informal advice will be available from the TfSH consultant as to how the SRTM should best be used in any specific instance, although this is not intended to replace the need for prospective users to obtain appropriate professional advice regarding any proposals.
21. The guidance notes will include details on the information needed from applicants in order for the TfSH consultant to properly assess the time required for completion and the cost of the work. The Evidence Base Steering Group or Progress Group would then be able to indicate to successful applicants the cost, start and anticipated end dates for work, depending on current workloads and priorities.
22. Having received a time and cost estimate, applicants would then be in a position to make a formal request for the work to be carried out. Once agreed, work would commence at the programmed start date, provided payment had been received.
23. Any work undertaken using the model would benefit from full confidentiality, although any proposed additional work would have to be referred to and approved by the Evidence Base Steering Group in order to properly manage the overall programme of work. Specifications for work to be carried out would only be seen by the client for that work, MVA Consultancy and the Evidence Base Steering Group and kept confidential. Results of testing would only be shared by the client for that work if the organisation concerned specifically requested this, and then only to those organisations specified.

## Initial Programme of Work

24. During the initial period following calibration and validation of the SRTM it is expected that usage will primarily focus on scenarios and interventions related to the growth currently proposed for South Hampshire. This would be facilitated by the representation of PUSH on the Evidence Base Steering Group. There may be a case to allow access by some private partners at an early stage to facilitate this process.
25. Given the wide range of ways in which the SRTM could inform decision-making by providing quantified information, it is also intended that suitable non-technical guidance on its capability is produced. This should help those organisations (public or private) who might benefit from its use in understanding the role that it might be able to play.
26. Work is now underway to draw up the necessary guidance notes and detailed protocols needed for future use of the SRTM in a way that is clear, fair and consistent.

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background papers

**The following documents disclose facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report.**

NB the list excludes:

1. Published works.
2. Documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.

TITLE

LOCATION

*None*

Rpt/ref/AL