



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE SOUTH EAST

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**CALL FOR WIDESPREAD PUBLIC PARTICIPATION HERALDS LAUNCH OF
INFLUENTIAL SOUTH COAST TRANSPORT STUDY**

**Dedicated website will give greater opportunities for members of the public to
air their views on south coast transport issues**

Transport users from Kent to Hampshire are being asked for their views on rail, road, air and sea routes along the South Coast between Southampton and Margate. The South Coast Multi-Modal Study – SoCoMMs – commissioned by the Government Office for the South East – GOSE – will be launched on Wednesday 27 June, with a call for everyone to make their opinions count.

The study will be undertaken by transport consultants Halcrow. It will focus on the long-term transport challenges facing the area, including the impact and influence of rail and other public transport routes along the south coast, as well as roads and the potential of short sea journeys. Key centres within the study area are: Southampton, Portsmouth, Chichester, Brighton and Hove, Eastbourne, Hastings, Ashford, Folkestone, Dover, Ramsgate and Margate.

Copies of a newsletter on the study, including a feedback questionnaire, will be available through local libraries and some local authorities across the study area.

A dedicated website – www.socomms.org.uk – provides information on the scope of, and timetable for, the study, but, importantly, includes a ‘What do you think?’ section which is aimed at the general public and is accessible in one click from the site’s home page.

Charlotte Dixon, Director for Transport, Environment and Strategy for GOSE, said: “We want to have input from everyone in the area and its surroundings on issues such as congestion, safety and the environment. This will be vital in ensuring that we come up with sustainable transport solutions.”

Dr Mark Brown, Project Director for Halcrow, said: “We need to encourage feedback from the general public during this first stage of the consultation process. Key environmental and transport groups are already involved, but everyone should feel that they can contribute to the study. Nothing is set in stone and we need input from all sectors of the community on the challenges the area faces so that we can present possible solutions later in the year. Once again, we will be asking the public for their opinions at that stage.”

Halcrow will also be consulting with a wide range of representatives from key regional and local organisations including transport operators and all the environmental groups, as well as councillors, MPs and MEPs. Following this first stage of consultation – June/July 2001 – a second stage of consultation focusing on possible solutions will be undertaken in September/October 2001. In Spring 2002, a roadshow will tour the study area to give details of the emerging strategy and allow local people to offer their views once again.

“The transport infrastructure of the south coast corridor faces increasing pressure in the future through new development, a changing economic base and the area’s proximity to Europe as well as London,” Mark Brown concluded. “This study will be a valuable contribution towards recognising the potential impact of these influences in the long term and ways in which they can be channelled to the benefit of all communities and businesses in the area.”

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

1. A steering group led by Government Office for the South East – GOSE, is taking the study forward. The report of the study will be passed to the South East England Regional Assembly, who will make recommendations to the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions.
2. There will be a number of stages during the study when views and comments will be sought. The first stage, launched today, will be in the identification of existing and future problems.
3. Halcrow is a transport consultancy firm, and the other members of the consortium are Chris Blandford Associates; DTZ Pida; Baxter Eadie Ltd; Camargue; Sustainable Futures; Transportation Research Group, University of Southampton; and Accent Marketing & Research.
4. The Government Office for the South East represents central government within the region, working on behalf of a number of departments, including the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions.
5. Additional information about the study is available on the GOSE website – www.go-se.gov.uk.

ENDS.

Media enquiries on this news release should be directed to Paul Stelmaszczyk or Stuart Fox at Halcrow/Camargue press office for SoCoMMS on 0207 636 7366

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