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PRESS RELEASE

South Essex Rapid Transit reaches key milestone

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A bid to secure funds for the South Essex Rapid Transit (**sert**) project has been lodged with the Government today. The business case for the scheme has been prepared by consultants Mouchel and Steer Davies Gleave.

sert has been developed as a partnership between Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Thurrock Council, and will help support development and regeneration in all three areas.

Regional authorities identified **sert** as the top priority for transport in the East of England last year. On their advice, the Government earmarked over £53 million towards the cost of the project. Now the local councils that will be responsible for delivery of the scheme will make the detailed case for it, so that the Government will release the funds.

Against a background of increasing budget constraints, **sert** continues to offer very good value for money, but the local authorities acknowledge that future funding will be limited. A strong case for **sert** will be presented and the three authorities will continue to press for an early announcement of support.

Successful public consultation events on the **sert** proposals in Southend, Thurrock, and Basildon last summer identified overwhelming public support for the scheme. Nearly 90% of respondents backed better public transport,



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while 75% thought the **sert** proposals were better than just improving existing services. Over 70% of people specifically supported priority measures to make sure journeys on the **sert** system are reliable.

Assuming a normal period for review and no policy change following the election, the Government will make a decision on project approval by late 2010. The local councils would then aim to have the scheme up and running by the end of 2012, with full services in place by Autumn 2014.

"sert is the key to tackling congestion and stimulating economic development in Thames Gateway South Essex" said Chris Ferrary, Steer Davies Gleave's project director for sert. "This bus-based rapid transit has already been identified as the highest transport priority for the East of England. We are now asking the Government to provide the money to get on with the scheme" he added.

Rob Surl, project director at Mouchel for **sert** also commented *"sert will be a great boost for South Essex and there is clear public support for investment in quality public transport facilities supporting the delivery of new homes and employment for the area. sert routes will serve areas of growth and regeneration and it is important that there is continued funding to link these areas together."*

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Notes for Journalists:

Electronic images of the **sert** vehicle, and maps showing the **sert** routes for which funding is being sought, are available from Steer Davies Gleave (see contact below). More information is also available at www.sert.org.uk.



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Development of **sert** is led by Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Thurrock Council on behalf of the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership. Founded in 2002, the Partnership aims to deliver a better quality of life for all those who live and work in the area and is committed to helping deliver a significant number of new jobs and homes. The Partnership is led by cabinet members of the six local authorities representing South Essex, the East of England Development Agency and an independent chairman. **sert** will be developed and delivered in partnership with these organisations, using a mix of public and private sector funding. The project has been identified as a priority in recommendations on Regional Funding Allocations for the East of England.

Mouchel and Steer Davies Gleave jointly have provided support to the **sert** promoters in developing the business case for the scheme since 2005.

For more information of to arrange an interview

Contact Anna Chang on +44 (0)7973 851513 or email pressoffice@sdgworld.net

About Mouchel

Mouchel is a consulting and business services group that provides many of the design, managerial and engineering services that support modern society. The company works with government agencies, local authorities, government-regulated industries and the private-sector to provide safe, reliable roads and railways, well-managed education and civic infrastructure, clean water, and cost-effective energy. Visit www.mouchel.com for more information.

About Steer Davies Gleave

Steer Davies Gleave is a leading independent transport consultancy with 400 consultants, providing global services to government, operators, regulators, developers, financiers and other interest groups. Founded in 1978, with headquarters in London and 16 offices around the world, the company has undertaken over 9,000 projects. Visit www.steerdaviesgleave.com for more information.

