PRESS RELEASE

Transport for the future of South Essex: Visionary Transit System Unveiled

Tuesday 10th March 2009 – for immediate release.

People in South Essex are being asked to give their views on visionary plans that will see around half a million people with better access to state-of-the-art, efficient public transport. The system could be in operation by the end of 2012.

sert or South East Essex Rapid Transit will serve the rapidly expanding areas of Thurrock, Basildon and Southend, with 30,000 new homes and 40,000 new jobs due to be delivered by 2021. ***sert*** is a rapid public transport system designed to tackle congestion and help to contain carbon emissions in the Thames Gateway South Essex area in the future.

The innovative project is led by Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Thurrock Council, on behalf of the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership.

The scheme will be funded by £53 million of Government money that has been allocated to develop a network of high quality public transport corridors and state-of-the-art vehicles serving Southend, Basildon and Thurrock.

The first stage in the process of the Government formally handing over the money for the project is a series of public exhibitions.

These are being held in Thurrock initially and in Southend and Basildon subsequently. An updated interactive ***sert*** website has also been launched at www.sert.org.uk, which will keep the public informed in an imaginative way of developments in the scheme, consultations and so on.

It is planned that the services will be up and running by the end of 2012.

Consultations start in Thurrock on Tuesday 10th March, with further consultations to follow for residents in Southend and Basildon in April and May. Details of the location of the exhibitions and opening hours can be found on the ***sert*** website at www.sert.org.uk.

Current proposals include:

- In **Southend**, two corridors will link Shoeburyness with London Southend Airport via employment and retail areas to the north of the town, and the Town Centre and seafront with the Hospital and Schools towards Progress Road and Rayleigh. Linking areas of employment and housing will support Southend Council's regeneration priorities, provide a viable transport solution to reduce congestion and offer a high-quality alternative to the car. Park and ride sites are also being proposed as part of the comprehensive approach to providing high-quality public transport. The Council will also be working with European partners to bring the best experience of continental systems to the TGSE area.

- In **Thurrock**, a corridor is proposed that provides a link from Basildon University Hospital via the A13 and Grays Town Centre to Lakeside shopping centre. A second corridor would link Lakeside to new residential areas in Purfleet.

- In **Basildon**, a link to extend the Thurrock corridor into Basildon Town Centre is proposed in the first instance. In the longer term, this corridor may be extended to other parts of the District.

Essex County Councillor Norman Hume, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation welcomed the consultation, and said:

> *"SERT is one of the key proposals of the Thames Gateway South Essex Business Plan for Transport, which aims to tackle congestion and stimulate economic development. This bus-based rapid transit system will combine the comfort and reliability of a tram system with the flexibility and responsiveness of buses. The flexibility of the proposed system means that it can grow and develop over time to meet the changing face and needs of South Essex. We are keen to hear what the public has to say about our plans."*

Southend Councillor Anna Waite, Cabinet Member for Transport and Planning, also commented:

> *"We need the public's views on this exciting opportunity to transform public transport in Southend. We have put forward route options that are flexible, but focus on the links that we need to make to join up journeys to work, education and for shopping. The type of vehicle and the routes will provide regular and reliable travel options using Rapid Transit Vehicles that will be the most up-to-date, low emission and comfortable that can be*

provided. We are planning a consultation in late April at locations around Southend for the public to provide comments and feedback."

Thurrock Councillor Neil Rockliffe, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation added:

*"Local public transport is a major issue for residents in Thurrock and for the council. I believe the introduction of **sert** will be of great benefit for the people of south Essex, but I would also urge them to take part in the consultation so their ideas can be incorporated into the scheme where possible. It is imperative that **sert** has the support of local people if it is to succeed and therefore it is equally imperative that their views are heard."*

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Notes for Journalists:

Electronic images of the ***sert*** vehicle, proposed corridors and taken at the Thurrock Consultation event are available from the media offices at the relevant local councils (see contacts below).

Development of ***sert*** is led by Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Thurrock Council on behalf of Thames Gateway South Essex partnership. This organisation is masterminding the regeneration strategy for Thames Gateway South Essex. Its membership includes representatives from the public and private sector, education and voluntary services, local authorities in South Essex and the East of England Development Agency. ***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.

For more information on *sert*:

Essex County Council Media Contact: Scott Wilson on Scott.Wilson@essex.gov.uk or +44 (0) 1245 434383

Southend Borough Council Media Contact: Katy Best on katybest@southend.gov.uk or on + 44 (0) 1702 215505

Thurrock Council Media Contact: Andy Lever on ALever@thurrock.gov.uk or +44 (0) 1375 652017 / +44 (0) 776 175 4450

The initial public consultation is being carried out in a number of venues in Thurrock as follows:

- Grays Shopping Centre: Tuesday 10th March 8.30 to 18.00
- Lakeside Shopping Centre: Thursday 12th March 9.30 to 22.00
- Stanford Library: Friday 13th March 8.30 to 18.00
- Lakeside Shopping Centre: Tue 17th March 9.30 to 22.00
- Grays Shopping Centre: Wednesday 18th March 8.30 to 18.00
- Purfleet Proof House: Friday 20th March 8.30 to 18.00.