

West of England  
Rapid Transit  
Freepost (BS 6529)  
Bristol  
BS1 5BR

27<sup>th</sup> November 2008

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **Rapid Transit proposals from Ashton Vale to Temple Meads**

Thank you for providing Bristol International Airport with the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Rapid Transit proposals from Ashton Vale to Temple Meads via Bristol City Centre.

Bristol International Airport (BIA) is the main regional airport for the south west with a catchment area serving a population of around seven million people. In the 12 months ending October 2008 the Airport handled just over 6.3 million passengers making it the ninth largest airport in the United Kingdom. The latest passenger survey statistics from the Civil Aviation Authority indicate that 47% of passengers in the first three quarters of 2008 had an origin or destination within the four unitary authorities making up the West of England Partnership.

BIA has operated a Surface Access Strategy, in conjunction with sub regional stakeholders through the Airport Transport Forum since 2000. The mainstay of the Strategy is development of the Bristol International Flyer coach service between the Airport and Bristol city centre. This service has proved increasingly popular over the past five years with passenger numbers rising from 126,000 in the year ending March 2003 to 537,000 in the 12 months ending October 2008. We aim to continue this growth in public transport use in the coming years and as part of our forthcoming planning application for the expansion of the Airport we will be proposing to increase the number air passengers using the Flyer service to 1.5 million per annum. We shall be renewing the Flyer vehicle fleet over the next 12 months with new, high quality, low floor, high capacity buses in order to deliver the improvements in service and quality that are required.

We see the West of England Rapid Transit proposals as part of the process of delivering the step change in public transport required for the sub region and Bristol International Airport in particular. We fully support the proposed scheme and we are pleased that the possible future extension of the scheme to the Airport has been identified in the consultation literature. We will play our part in delivering this extension, subject to the delivery of the South Bristol Link Road. The route proposed will provide a high speed, quality route into the city centre which would be suitable for the Airport bus link. It is important that the Airport link can access Temple Meads Station, the Marlborough Street Bus and Coach Station and the city centre hotels. The Airport service also extends to



Clifton and it is important that link is maintained. The Rapid Transit proposals will also provide opportunities to integrate Airport services with services to other parts of the Greater Bristol area with the potential to provide significant improvements to airport surface access. The CAA figures for the West of England catchment area provide an indication of the potential, within a market that is largely underserved by the current public transport provision. There is potential for services to the Northern Fringe and Emerson's Green to be of interest to airport users. Around 13% of our passengers have an origin or destination in Wales and we have received a number of requests from these passengers for public transport services to Bristol Parkway Station. Services to Hengrove are also likely to be of interest to airport staff.

In the absence of the Airport extension the scheme still has the potential to deliver tangible benefits to the Flyer service. Consideration should be given to providing access into the system at Ashton Gate for the benefit of public transport using the A38 pending delivery of a link to the A370. This would provide an opportunity for an express link into the city centre. However we anticipate that there will still be a need for airport buses to provide access to Bedminster but buses to Temple Meads via Bedminster could still benefit from the Rapid Transit scheme proposals if improvements to the bus priority measures on Temple Way and at Temple Meads Station can be delivered. At present a significant amount of running time is involved with the journey between Temple Way and the station forecourt.

With respect to vehicle type we do not consider the articulated vehicle suggested for the city centre route to be appropriate for journeys to the Airport. Airport passengers are looking for high standards of quality and comfort, and we firmly believe that the airport vehicles must be all seating. The articulated vehicle cannot provide this level of comfort efficiently and our preference is for a 13.7m long rigid, single deck, three axle vehicle. We understand that such vehicles would be able to access the Rapid Transit infrastructure, subject to meeting appropriate standards.

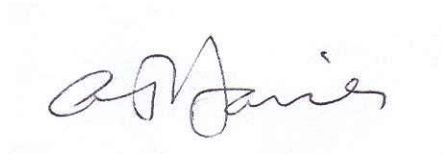
In response to the particular question posed in the consultation questionnaire the particular features of the scheme that are most important to us are:

- G - Additional benefits for other buses
- C - Separate route and priority measures
- E - Integrated with new and existing developments
- F - Implementation as early as possible
- D - Customer Service



Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to comment on the proposals at this early stage. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further assistance as the scheme develops.

Yours faithfully



**Alan Davies**  
**Director of Environment and Planning**

