

Bill Davies
West of England Rapid Transit
West of England Partnership
Wilder House
Bristol

January 2009

Dear Bill

Re: Rapid Transit Proposals Consultation Ashton Vale to Temple Meads

Further to our previous response and following our own consultation meeting on 15th January we would like to add the following comments to our response.

Improving transport and accessibility across the West of England has been a top priority for business for some time now and we are keen to see new schemes come forward to achieve this aim. With the extent of the growth agenda as proposed for the West of England, these improvements become ever more necessary, not just to address current issues but also to ensure new growth areas are served by good public transport from the start. Whilst the BRT scheme proposed for Ashton Vale will not solve all the problems associated with the South Bristol growth agenda, it is certainly a good starting point, particularly when combined with proposals for a South Bristol Link Road.

The current consultation around bus based rapid transit is something we fully support as a practical, flexible and realistic option for the Ashton Vale to Temple Meads via city centre route and as a scheme that will help to improve access to the city centre by public transport.

Many in the business community have been waiting to see some progress with rapid transit for a good few years now and the implementation of this first route is crucial to restore some much needed confidence within the business community that something will actually happen – the most common comments about the scheme from our members are “let’s just get on with it” and “when is it actually going to happen”.

It is also important that the scheme is seen with the broader framework of all the proposed transport schemes and within the overall context of the growth agenda. This first scheme is absolutely critical as a key access route for the proposed urban extension at Ashton Park and the proposed development of a new football stadium near Ashton Vale. The opportunity is there to provide a sustainable transport corridor, not just to the new housing, leisure and employment sites, but also out to the airport. Indeed businesses would like to see the extension of the

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route to the airport promoted as a priority – this is a key business aspiration and we would like to continue discussions about how this can be achieved sooner.

We believe there is still some more work needed to persuade the business community (and others) that Bus Rapid Transit can provide the same benefits as a rail based scheme, but that this can be done through clever marketing and promotion that clearly illustrates what the new buses and routes can look like, and what they can deliver in terms of reliability, flexibility and quality. It is crucial that more is done to illustrate these points to overcome common perceptions of buses as slow, dirty and unreliable.

We support the option of a one way, anti clockwise route around the city centre, to serve Broadmead and Cabot Circus first, as well as Temple Meads and the rest of the city centre.

As well as supporting the scheme we are keen to see the involvement the business community in the following areas where more detailed work is needed to deliver the scheme:

- Further discussion regarding the location of stops along the route to maximise benefits
- Prince Street Bridge – keen to see the detail of proposed options to ensure business input into the solution
- Importance of using low emission vehicles with best available technology – keen to see what is finally proposed as this is a key element of the scheme that will help overcome existing negative perceptions of buses.

In addition, your consultation leaflet asks us to identify the five features that are most important, these are as follows:

- E. Integration with new and existing developments
- C. Separate route and priority measures
- F. Implementing as early as possible
- B. Environmentally friendly vehicles
- A. Increased control over operation of the new system

We would look forward to taking part in an ongoing dialogue.

With very best wishes



Tessa Coombes
Director of Policy
GWE Business West