

Response to statements made at Joint Transport Executive Members meeting on 22 January 2009

Purpose

1. The report sets out responses to the statements made at the 22 January 2009 Joint Transport Executive Members meeting.

Campaign for Better Transport

Harbour Railway and Connections

2. The creation of a rapid transit alignment will in principle reserve the corridor for future conversion to a rail-based alternative at a later date if appropriate, albeit at a cost. In addition, the proposals include the retention of rails for the Bristol Harbour railway between the Create Centre and the Museum, with rapid transit vehicles running on this alignment Monday to Saturday but switching to highway running (on Cumberland Road) on Sundays to facilitate steam railway operations on those days. This will also facilitate the potential conversion to a rail-based rapid transit service (such as tram-train) at a later date if appropriate.

Design and Quality of Rapid Transit Vehicles

3. The details of the vehicle specification are still under consideration, although the vehicle will need to be high quality and potentially with a hybrid transmission to effectively promote a tram-style service quality when combined with high profile stops and interchanges, comprehensive service information and an alignment segregated from general traffic.
4. The Cambridgeshire Guided busway remains substantially less costly than a conventional railway or tramway - for example, costs for the Edinburgh tram, currently under construction, are of the order of £20 million per route kilometre.

Weston Package

5. The Weston Package contains two key public transport elements. Firstly the A370 Gateway (between the town centre, Weston's suburbs the proposed urban extension) will remodel Winterstoke Road with better priority for buses and cyclists whilst the westbound A370 approach to the Drove Road roundabout will be widened from 2 to 3 lanes to enable a bus lane.
6. Secondly at Worle Station a new car park, bus interchange and cycle parking on council-owned land on the south side will be provided. Bus interchange facilities in the north side car park will be upgraded and two bus priority measures implemented on the approaches to the station. Better passenger facilities will also be provided on the station itself.

Integrated Transport Authorities

7. The Department for Transport published Guidance on Governance Reviews to accompany the Local Transport Act 2008 in December 2009. As well as covering the creation of Integrated Transport Authorities (ITA) the guidance states that reviews of local governance need not necessarily lead to the creation of an ITA in areas that do not currently have one. Other options that would not require legislation and would be achievable quickly include creating a partnership board, joint committee or a non-profit company limited by guarantees. Clarification will be sought with the Department for Transport and Government Office for the South West over the transfer of potential powers.
8. Policing issues are discussed under the British Transport Police below.

British Transport Police

9. In a verbal presentation Sergeant Mark Harris summarised the role of the British Transport Police (BTP) in the local area. From an HQ in Bath, 10 officers (including community support officers financed by First Great Western) cover an area from Chippenham, Swindon and Warminster to Filton Abbey Wood, Pilning, Bristol Parkway and Yate. Bristol Temple Meads is excluded as it has a separate dedicated police station. Proposals to extend the team to cover stations in Somerset where private security teams are used is being looked at as well as possible extension to Gloucester.
10. The British Transport Police's presentation emphasised the importance of policing the railway network and the need for local authorities, train operators and the Police to work closely together.
11. The Greater Western Franchise Agreement requires First Great Western to fund 12 Police Community Support Officers, install 131 new CCTV cameras at 47 stations and increase the number of stations accredited to the Secure Station Scheme to 168.
12. Bids to the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) for future rail schemes will, wherever practicable, incorporate provision for CCTV to improve security. Revenue funding for additional staff, however, is outside the scope of either the RFA or the Integrated Transport Block of the Joint Local Transport Plan as both are capital related. As part of future franchise negotiations with the Department for Transport the local authorities will seek the inclusion of increased levels of staffing and policing at stations across the West of England network.

GWE Business West

13. A letter from GWE Business West fully supported a bus based rapid transit route from Ashton Vale to Bristol Temple Meads as a practical, flexible and realistic option that will improve access to the city centre by public transport. Implementation of the first route is seen as crucial to restore some much needed confidence within the business community that something will actually happen. Businesses would also like to see the extension of the route to the airport as a priority and greater involvement in the location of stops, option details and vehicle types. GWE Business West's statement is noted and welcomed.

Peter Floyd

14. An email from Peter Floyd expressed full support for the Ashton Vale to Bristol Temple Meads Rapid Transit and South Bristol Ring Road proposals. He felt that the reduced cost and flexibility in the use of a road vehicle is to be preferred to a tracked system with vehicles using existing roads where required. He also stressed the importance of everyone understanding why a South Bristol Ring Road is needed with South Bristol's problems made worse by inaccessibility and address all the pluses and minuses. Peter Floyd's comments are welcomed and noted.

West of England Partnership Office