



# West of England Rapid Transit Ashton Vale to Temple Meads and Bristol City Centre

## Scheme Summary August 2009

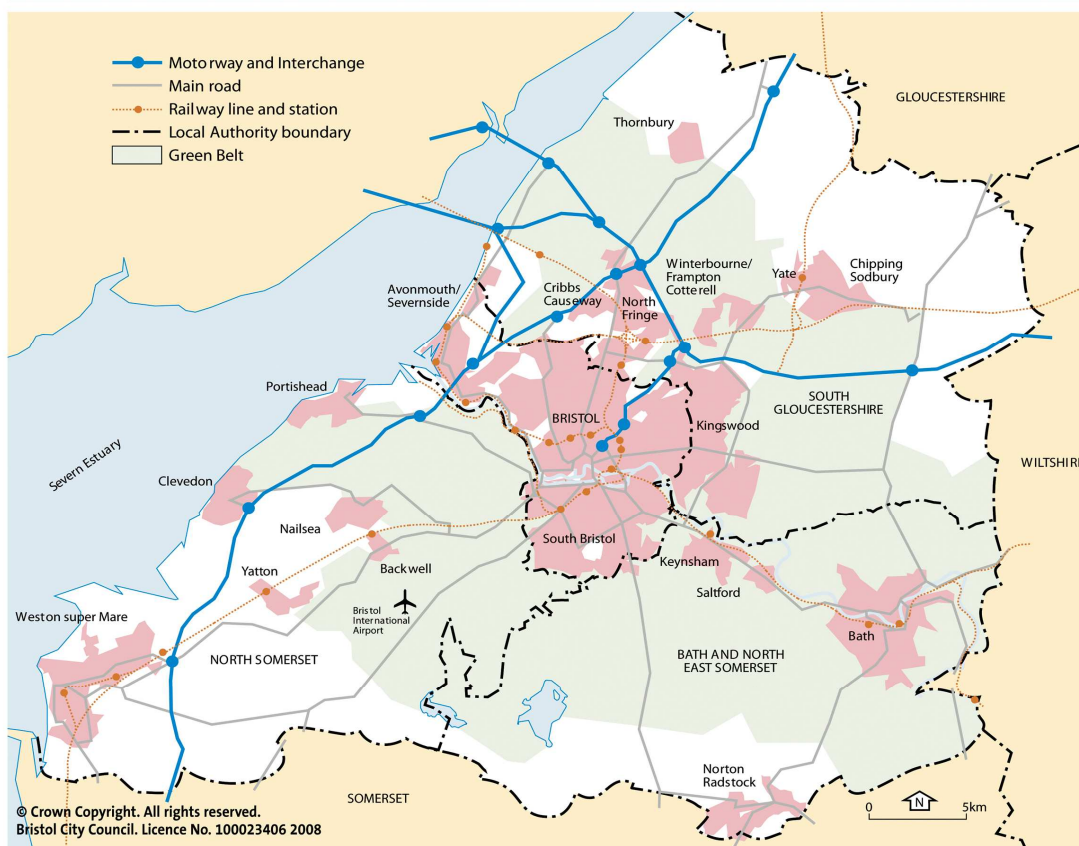
The West of England sub-region is a prosperous area with an excellent quality of life and a growing national and international profile. The travel demands that accompany this prosperity and growth are increasing pressure on infrastructure, particularly provision of transport.

The West of England Authorities are working together to deliver high quality public transport measures to provide alternatives to the car that are a realistic choice for the majority of trips. This will meet the area's growing needs, whilst safeguarding its environmental and economic future. Rapid transit, as one of these measures, will play a significant role in reducing traffic congestion.

The West of England sub-region is made up of Bath and North East Somerset, the City of Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire, Figure 1.

The four councils are working together as the West of England Partnership to tackle transport and other major strategic issues.

Figure 1: The West of England



## Background

About a million people live in the West of England sub-region and it provides around 500,000 jobs. Most of these people live in the major urban areas of Bristol, Bath and Weston-super-Mare and the in the area's seven towns. One in six live in villages and the wider countryside.

The South West region contributes nearly 8% towards the National Gross Value Added of the UK with the West of England sub-region contributing one quarter of this. Forecasts show that by 2026 the sub-region's economy will support an additional 138,000 jobs, an increase of 28%, and its population could grow by over 200,000 people. The draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) consequently proposes large-scale housing development in the sub-region, with construction of 138,500 new dwellings. Overall £3 billion of potential development sites are identified.

The West of England sub-region has a unique heritage and character, including Bristol's industrial and maritime past, Bath's status as a world heritage site and the rich traditions of North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. The area has a wealth of natural environmental assets spread across the urban and rural areas including parkland, landscapes and natural resources but also contains areas of significant deprivation and disadvantage which suffer from poor transport links.

Congestion is already a serious problem. Over the last ten years traffic on the area's roads has grown by 21% compared to 16% nationally. This has resulted in poor air quality, delays, unreliable journey times and unsustainable pressure on existing infrastructure and services. The continued growth of congestion, with its undesirable effects, threatens the quality of the environment and the quality of life for people who live within it.

To continue our success and achieve our aspirations for economic, environmental and social development, we require an ambitious but realistic vision for our future transport.

Our Future Transport Vision aims to:

- Improve our quality of life
- Tackle congestion
- Improve road safety
- Improve air quality
- Improve access to job opportunities
- Help us get to work and school efficiently
- Strengthen the local economy

## Development of a West of England Rapid Transit Network

A comprehensive transport study to assess the current and future strategic transport needs of the West of England region up to 2031 was completed in 2006. Known as the Greater Bristol Strategic Transport Study (GBSTS), it was commissioned by the Government Office for the South West in partnership with the Highways Agency, South West of England Regional Development Agency and the West of England authorities.

GBSTS recommended a package of measures to support the sustainable growth of the sub-region. One of these is the development of a Rapid Transit Network with the aim being "*to provide high quality alternatives to the private car*".

GBSTS identified that this network should:

- Extend choice of transport modes for all, in particular for private car drivers, to encourage a shift to public transport.
- Promote sustainable development by providing high quality public transport links.
- Improve access to public transport for areas that currently have poor provision.
- Improve integration of the public transport network.

- Promote social inclusion by improving access to employment, retail, community, leisure and educational facilities.
- Improve safety along the corridors by reducing use of private cars.

GBSTS set out the plan for the development of a Rapid Transit Network. It identified corridors in the network that would serve many of the new residential and employment developments.

This network is embedded in the Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP) within the major schemes programme and has funding allocated in Regional Funding Allocation (2006) for the South West.

The Ashton Vale to Temple Meads and Bristol City Centre (the Rapid Transit Scheme) is the next scheme<sup>1</sup> in the network to be taken forward for funding with the Department for Transport and applications for consents to build and operate the scheme.

### Scheme Description

Rapid transit will provide a fast, frequent and reliable public transport service. Services will run on a largely segregated route, separate from car traffic, and will be given priority over other road users at traffic signals.

There will be a set of core services running frequently from Long Ashton Park and Ride to Bristol Temple Meads and on to Cabot Circus, Broadmead and the Centre (running in an anti-clockwise loop around the city). Additional services will make use of the Rapid Transit alignment to provide faster journey times and improved reliability for services to North Somerset (Weston-super-Mare, Clevedon and Nailsea).

Rapid transit will provide a high quality passenger experience - ticket machines at stops, user-friendly electronic information displays, high quality stop design, safe and secure access to stops. The route between the Museum of Bristol and Long Ashton Park and Ride will include a parallel cycling and pedestrian route linking in to existing networks thereby providing a further sustainable transport option.

Services will be run using modern, accessible, comfortable, low-emission vehicles that provide the quality and feel of a high quality metro-style system. The Authorities are committed to exploring the range of alternative fuel sources with potential operators. These would offer considerable environmental improvements with lower noise levels, fewer greenhouse gas emissions and less harmful local pollutants. Access to the rapid transit route will be open to operators meeting quality thresholds which will govern vehicle and service standards.

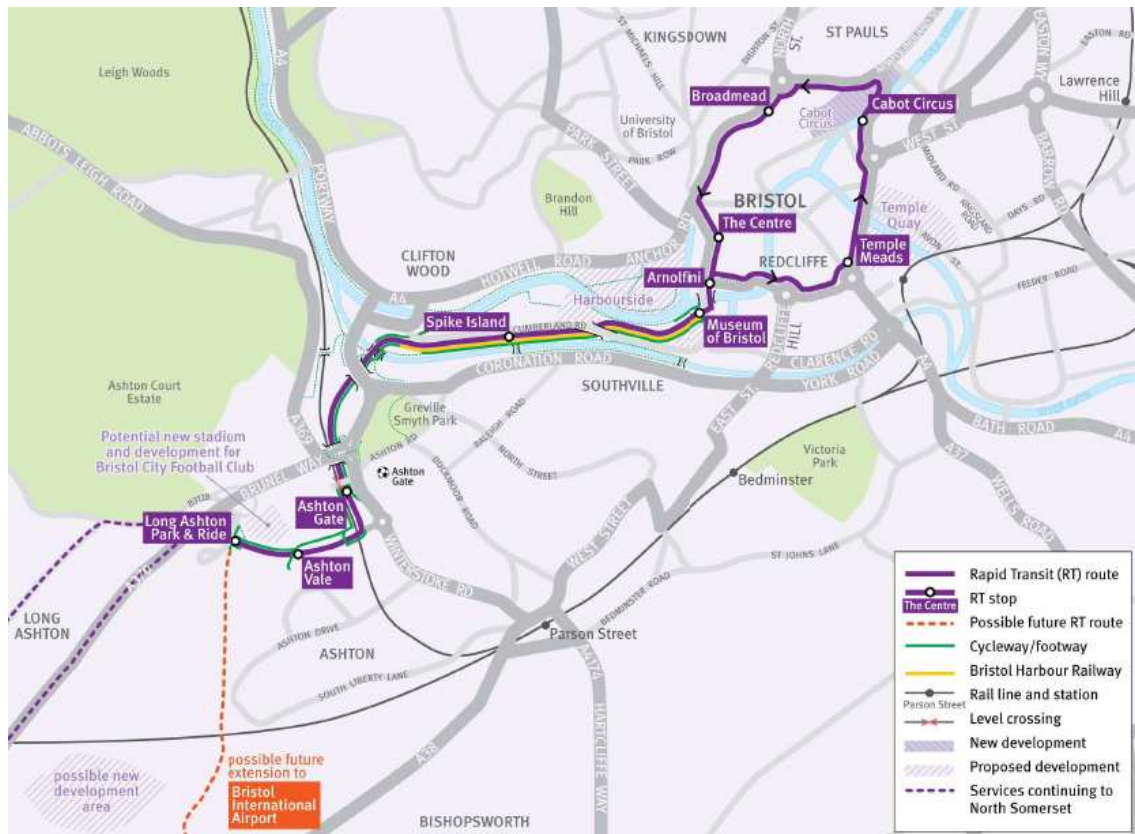


Works in Bristol City Centre include a new interchange at Temple Meads. These works are part of wider regeneration and development proposals for the area including Network Rail's station enhancement programme. The Authorities are working with the South West Regional Development Agency, Network Rail, First Great Western, bus operators and developers to realise the significant benefits of this site.

The proposed rapid transit route is shown in Figure 2.

<sup>1</sup> The first bus rapid transit scheme in the West of England is being pursued as part of the Bath Transport Package.

Figure 2: Ashton Vale to Temple Meads and Bristol City Centre



Rapid transit will serve:

- Bristol Temple Meads Railway Station.
- New and planned development at Redcliffe and Temple Quay.
- Retail and employment areas of the new Cabot Circus development and Broadmead.
- Retail and employment areas around The Centre and interchange with bus services.
- The refurbished Museum of Bristol and planned Wapping Wharf development.
- Spike Island and the SS Great Britain.
- The potential new stadium and development of Bristol City Football Club.
- Long Ashton Park and Ride.
- Weston-super-Mare, towns and villages in North Somerset.

Rapid transit will replace the existing Long Ashton Park and Ride service. The Authorities are reviewing a range of options for procuring an operator, or operators, to run services. The Authorities will use the powers afforded by the new Transport Act (2008) to ensure that arrangements are put in place that deliver the Rapid Transit's objectives and present value for money to the Authorities, central Government and the paying public.

## Scheme Appraisal

A 'Major Scheme Business Case' (MSBC) to apply for funding was submitted to the Department for Transport in March 2009. The MSBC sets out an appraisal of the scheme and its benefits, including:

- Improved journey times and reliability from the south west of the sub-region to Bristol City Centre.
- Provision of a high-quality, more sustainable choice of travel - rapid transit and cycling or walking and a shift of trips to a safer transport mode
- Shift of trips to more environmentally sustainable transport modes, reducing carbon emissions and local pollutants. Improving physical activity and quality of life through encouraging walking and cycling.
- Improved connectivity between existing centres of activity with new and proposed development. Contributing to a more reliable and efficient transport network to improve business efficiency, movement of labour and connections to national and international networks.
- Improved accessibility to and from the south west of the sub-region to the existing public transport network, without the need for interchange, particularly Bristol Temple Meads Railway Station.

The economic appraisal of the scheme results in a 'Benefit to Cost Ratio' of 4.12:1. This means the value of the benefits arising from the scheme substantially outweigh the cost of providing the scheme.

The capital cost estimate for the Rapid Transit Scheme is £47.8 million. £43.2 million is allocated in the draft South West Regional Funding Allocation to be submitted to the DfT at the end of February 2009. The South West Region fully supports the MSBC for this funding. Around 10% of the required funding will be provided from local sources. The Authorities will seek this funding from developments related to the Rapid Transit Scheme and potentially from operators.

## Description of Works

The detail of the main works for Rapid Transit are still being designed and consulted on but at this stage are likely to include:

- Construction of a two-way segregated busway between Long Ashton Park and Ride and the Museum of Bristol including a parallel pedestrian/cycleway linking with the existing 'Chocolate Path' and new routes proposed as part of the Connect2 project.
- A new bridge over the Portbury Freight Line at Ashton Gate. The project is investigating the potential closure of the Ashton Gate Level Crossing at Winterstoke Road and provision of alternative access route to the Cala Trading Estate from the B3128.
- Refurbishment of Ashton Avenue Bridge including a new pedestrian and cyclist facility.
- Potentially removing on-street parking on the south side of Cumberland Road.
- Strengthening works to, and traffic management options on, Prince Street Bridge.
- A new public transport interchange at Temple Meads.
- Additional bus lanes and priority measures within Bristol City Centre on The Grove, Redcliffe Way, Temple Way, Haymarket, Rupert Street and Colston Avenue.
- New bespoke stops along the length of the route, the details of which are being determined, but likely to include CCTV, real time service information and off-board ticketing.

- Appropriate environmental mitigation works which are likely to include water attenuation features, ecological and landscape planting and management, noise barriers (if these are found to be required) and species specific measures (such as bat boxes).
- Urban design improvements in Bristol City Centre including removal of kerbside-clutter, improved wayfinding and street scene.

## Community Engagement and Consultation

With the help of the Bristol Neighbourhood Planning Network (NPN), the independent voluntary organisation of neighbourhood groups across Bristol, we have established a Community Involvement Group which includes representatives from resident and user groups which provides an ongoing opportunity for local people to be involved in deciding the details of the proposals.

The project team is also actively working with stakeholder groups, statutory authorities and environmental groups to ensure the design of the scheme takes in to account key issues and concerns.

There will be an opportunity to formally make representations or object to the proposals as part of the project applying for authorisations to construct and operate the scheme. Details of this will be provided later in the year, before the applications are made.

## Programme

The key milestones in the project programme are:

- Submission of draft Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) and other planning applications and consents (to obtain required authorisations to construct and operate the scheme) - by the end of 2009. This will include a full Environmental Impact Assessment.
- Public Inquiry (if required) - Summer 2010.
- Approval of TWAO and planning application - mid 2011.
- Procurement/tendering of contractors - 2010/2011.
- Award of funding from Department of Transport - Autumn 2011.
- Commencement of construction - end 2011.
- Operational services - 2013.

## Further Information

Information on the scheme is provided on the West of England Partnership website at [www.westofengland.org/transport/rapid-transit](http://www.westofengland.org/transport/rapid-transit).

You can contact the project team by email at [transport@westofengland.org](mailto:transport@westofengland.org) or by post at:

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