



West of England Partnership

Bath & North East
Somerset Council



North
Somerset
COUNCIL

South Gloucestershire
Council

Minutes of meeting of the

Joint Transport Executive Committee

Thursday 01 October 2009, 10am, The Campus, Weston-super-Mare

Present

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| Cllr Charles Gerrish | Bath and North East Somerset Council |
| Cllr Jon Rogers | Bristol City Council |
| Cllr Elfan Ap Rees | North Somerset Council |
| Cllr Brian Allinson | South Gloucestershire Council |

In Attendance

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|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Peter Dawson | Bath and North East Somerset Council |
| Andy Strong | Bath and North East Somerset Council |
| David Bishop | Bristol City Council |
| Colin Medus | North Somerset Council |
| Karuna Tharmananthar | North Somerset Council |
| Peter Jackson | South Gloucestershire Council |
| Terry Wagstaff | West of England Partnership |
| Barbara Davies | West of England Partnership |
| James White | West of England Partnership |
| Penny Bell | West of England Partnership |

Also Present

| | |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Chris Jones | Highways Agency |
| Justin Davies | First Bristol, Somerset and Avon |
| Sonia Mills | WEP Social, Economic and Environmental Partner |
| Keith Walton | Sevenside Community Rail Partnership |
| Ian Crawford | Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance |

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Member and Public Forum - Statements

Keith Walton, Chairman of Severnside Community Rail Partnership, addressed the meeting to present a statement on various rail issues.

He informed members that Network Rail had recently issued a draft Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for Great Western for the period to 2019, and that there were a number of concerns with this. These concerns included a likely reduction in cross-Bristol services, the decision against the Bristol Metro proposal for an increased service to Weston-super-Mare on grounds of cost, and the reduction in services on the Severn Beach line. The draft RUS was now in a period of consultation and it was important that comments were sent to Network Rail by 27 November 2009. Keith also highlighted concerns that First Great Western was soon to lose 11 trains and suggested lobbying the Department for Transport (DfT) for their replacement.

Keith Walton circulated a leaflet summarising current work of the Severnside Community Rail Partnership to improve local stations, which demonstrates its commitment to social inclusion and should enable local authorities to quote this work where appropriate.

Members acknowledged and praised the work that has been put into the improvements to the stations, and wished to record a vote of thanks to Severnside Community Rail Partnership.

The Joint Committee agreed:

- To jointly respond to the draft Route Utilisation Strategy, a draft to be considered at the next meeting, which Network Rail will attend.

A potential visit by the Minister on 16 October 2009 would provide the opportunity to raise concerns.

Ian Crawford of Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance had produced a statement concerning the Local Transport Act 2008 Governance Review, but it was agreed that he would present this to members under agenda item 12.

4. Minutes of meeting held on 16 July 2009

Item 5 - Potential rail powers arising from the Local Transport Act

James White informed members that DfT did not envisage any rail powers being devolved to Integrated Transport Authorities. Members wished to have

their disappointment at this noted.

The Joint Committee approved the minutes as a true record.

5. Highways Agency: Update on Highways Agency Projects

Chris Jones from the Highways Agency gave a presentation (available at <http://www.westofengland.org/media/163160/m4-m5%20works%20around%20bristol%20-%20ha.pdf>) summarising current and future M4/M5 works across the Bristol area.

The main points for discussion included the works from Junction 19 on the M5 to Junction 18 on the M4 (including ongoing Avonmouth Bridge repairs) and the impact this had on the wider area, the potential for hard shoulder opening during peak times to improve traffic flow similar to an initiative on the M42, and the impact of works over the Christmas period on the Cribbs Causeway junction of the M5 and its surrounding area.

Sonia Mills commented on the proposals for the closure of the hard shoulder and enquired what impact this would have on emergency vehicles. Chris Jones reported that emergency vehicles were still able to get to incidents and that the Highways Agency was in discussion with the Emergency Services regarding this issue.

Concerns were raised regarding the lack of information and notice that is passed from the Highways Agencies to the relevant local authorities at times of works being carried out. This prevented the local authorities from being able to forward plan and left them poorly equipped to deal with any problems that the works may present.

It was agreed that joint forward planning was essential to prevent works and incidents on the motorways from having a negative impact on surrounding main roads and vice versa, and also to lessen any impact on bus services and parking. Communication using real time information was important if this was to be achieved.

Chris Jones commented that these issues should be addressed in the proposed Memorandum of Understanding.

6. Multi-Area Agreement: Transport Actions and Asks

Barbara Davies presented a report to members updating on the transport actions of the recently signed Multi-Area Agreement and the 'asks' of Government in relation to these.

A particular focus was the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Highways Agency, which, once implemented, would help to resolve many of the concerns highlighted in the previous item. A workshop was due to be held between Officers and the Highways Agency to discuss the associated practical issues linked to the MOU and to bring together the

collective shared outcomes.

Members expressed their thanks to Barbara Davies and her team for producing the report and it's accompanying draft MOU and welcomed the documents.

7. Issues for Discussion with Justin Davies, Managing Director, First Bristol, Somerset and Avon

Justin Davies of First Bristol, Somerset and Avon was present at the meeting to address various issues that had been presented to him by Officers of the Partnership's four local authorities.

Greater Bristol Bus Network (GBBN)

This item was to be explored in greater detail under item 9 of this agenda, however Justin Davies did comment that the overall package was evolving as the project was being implemented and the scheme was being evaluated. It was envisaged that the resulting changes to the network would improve the frequency of services.

Vehicle Replacement Programme

Justin Davies reported that the GBBN had taken delivery of 27 new vehicles that were in the depot and were to be introduced to the network by the end of October this year.

He also reported that there would be a clear commitment to further investment in vehicles, but in the context of the current economic climate expenditure would be likely to be restricted over the next year.

Ticketing

This item was to be explored in greater detail under item 8 of this agenda, however Justin Davies did comment that with proposals from Government Office of the South West (GOSW) coming through, Smart Ticketing was high on the agenda. In response, First was planning to pilot a scheme of flat rate ticketing on services 8 and 9 in Bristol to gauge public response.

Service Changes

In response to concern, Justin Davies commented that he was always happy to discuss service changes in advance with concerned local authorities.

Integration with Network Rail

The Bristol Temple Meads service had been enhanced and GBBN was looking to improve ticketing on this service.

Justin Davies reported 2 main priorities at present, as follows:

1. Improving customer service standards particularly amongst drivers – there was a customer service training package being rolled out next year which would begin with Bristol staff and would then be rolled out across the other depots

2. Vehicle handling and fuel economy – measures were being taken to reduce fuel consumption whilst maintaining the same number of vehicles on the road. Bristol and Bath vehicles were being fitted with a dashboard device that would indicate whether the driver was driving the vehicle in an economical way, with the same initiative to be rolled out across the whole fleet following this. The devices work by detecting speed and handling, and show red, yellow or green depending on the level of fuel consumption at that time.

Cllr Rogers highlighted the success of a Smartcard scheme operated by the University of the West of England on behalf of all students, and commented that the speeding up of boarding as a result of the scheme and associated improvements to the speed of buses could encourage more people to use local services. He also wanted to see more ticketing options made available for example season tickets and multi-tickets. With the economic downturn there was concern that buses would be a contracting services at a time when the service should be expanded.

Justin Davies responded to the issue regarding speed of vehicles and stated that the past few weeks had been chaotic, particularly on Friday afternoons. This had been due to works on the Avonmouth Bridge, and it was envisaged to get worse as 2 lanes of the Avon Ring Road were due to be closed on Friday 2 October for works to take place.

Cllr Rogers highlighted that Bristol City Council had a control room in the City Centre that was worth visiting because it monitors traffic, congestion and incidents around the City and used real time information to manage traffic flow.

Cllr Allinson thanked Justin Davies for his responses and commented on the success to date of the vehicle replacement programme. However, South Gloucestershire did not appear to have benefited from the programme of new double decker vehicles, but instead had continued with the older single deck vehicles. Justin responded by stating that they would be looking to focus on some of the more rural routes and areas that had not benefited from the replacement service in the past.

Cllr Gerrish commented on the importance to integrate bus and train tickets, particularly with the improvements that had been made to integrate the bus and rail services. It was now important that simpler ticketing was also introduced to make these services even more efficient. This was the general view of all members.

8. Ticketing

Andy Strong, Public Transport Team Leader at Bath and North East Somerset Council, presented a report to members summarising current Government initiatives and current local initiatives in relation to smart ticketing, and also current schemes elsewhere in the Country and emerging

technologies.

Cllr Rogers highlighted that there was already a Wessex Connect Smartcard scheme in operation in Bristol and that it was also due to be extended to include the Park and Ride schemes in the City and potentially the Severn Beach line. Cllr Rogers tabled a Smartcard paper.

Sonia Mills indicated potential subsidy for such initiatives and suggested that other large employers in the sub-region may be in a similar position. Sonia agreed to investigate this further within her hospital.

Justin Davies brought to the member's attention the complications that could arise in the back office system of smart ticketing initiatives, for example it could be complicated to move revenue from different sources to the correct operator with appropriate confidentiality. Justin Davies supported the Regional Smartcard initiative.

Cllr Gerrish agreed to the concepts in principal and recommended that, due to the large amounts of information to consider, members consult their own authorities. Officers were asked to prepare a report so that members can discuss this further at the next meeting.

9. Greater Bristol Bus Network (GBBN) Progress Update

Peter Jackson of South Gloucestershire Council reported that a number of scheme elements were currently being delivered on or under budget due to cost savings, and that these savings would be returned to the change budget.

There were 3 major change requests proposed:

4-003 for the A4018 Lysander Road roundabout requested by South Gloucestershire Council

The request was to reduce the bus length by 24 metres from the original length of 90 metres. This was a result of further detailed design work that had identified that the full bus lane length could not be achieved without reducing road safety on the approach to the roundabout.

4-005 route 73 Pegasus Road requested by South Gloucestershire Council

It was recommended not to progress with this scheme following the planning submission for the North Field development that includes a new link between the A38 to Merlin Road.

4-010 route 73 signal priority requested by South Gloucestershire Council

As per the previous change request the proposal submitted by the developer includes bus priority measures.

Members highlighted concerns regarding the risk of proceeding without developer contributions being secured first, and also concerns that potential

delays in real time information could result in inflated prices.

Concerns were also raised that Midsomer Norton was not benefiting from an enhanced service despite GBBN contributions to that route. Justin Davies agreed to formulate a response to this issue and send to the Chair of this Committee.

Cllr Rogers commented that real time passenger information worked well but periodically did not work, and suggested that it should be switched off in such incidences to prevent incorrect information being given to the public.

The Joint Committee agreed:

- To note progress on the GBBN to date, change requests approved by the Programme Board and the financial update
- To approve the major change requests so they can be taken forward to DfT for full approval
- To delegate to the Programme Board the authority to approve changes to the bus lane length of up to 20% with periodic reports of decisions taken in this respect being brought to this committee for noting
- To authorise the SRO to enter into formal discussions with DfT around the possible use of residual funding to address the potential shortfall in developer contributions required to complete the GBBN by the due date – subject to confirmation by the Programme Board that there was a shortfall.

10. South Bristol Link Major Transport Scheme Bid

Karuna Tharmananthar of North Somerset Council presented a report to members that provided an update of progress on the South Bristol Link (SBL) major transport scheme bid and sought their views and agreement on the next phase of work to secure funding from the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA).

Karuna Tharmananthar reported that the first round of public consultation for this project ended on 31 March 2009 with a subsequent Options Consultation Report being produced. A further round of public consultation would be carried out as the next stage of the project, and following this there would be a report to members with the major scheme bid.

He explained why the project was now focusing on two options and further work needed to be undertaken before deciding which would be the most appropriate. There was general agreement about the importance of achieving the bid within the timescale.

The Joint Committee agreed:

- To note progress to date
- To endorse further assessment of SBL options for a combined single-carriageway highway and Rapid Transport link between the A370 and Hartcliffe roundabout comprising an inner alignment Rapid Transport route with either an inner or outer highway alignment between the A38 and Hartcliffe roundabout
- To a second round of public engagement in winter 2009/2010
- To require a report on the outcome of the further assessments/public engagement and to grant approval to submit a bid to the DfT in early 2010 to be submitted to this Committee beforehand.

11. North Fringe to Hengrove Package Programme Update

Barbara Davies presented a report to members that provided an update on progress and issues related to the regionally significant North Fringe to Hengrove package, for which £168m had been earmarked within the RFA.

The project is a national pilot for speeding up the Major Scheme Bid (MSB) process, and work is progressing towards submission of a MSB in spring 2010.

An initial evaluation of potential scheme options is due to be undertaken in October 2009, with full consultation due to be carried out in December 2009. Cllr Gerrish asked that the consultation be undertaken early in December.

Cllr Rogers and Cllr Allinson highlighted the importance of this scheme to Bristol and South Gloucestershire, particularly in view of recent traffic congestion problems. This section of the package would be vital to improve traffic flow in these areas.

Officers were asked to continue to put updated information on the elements of the package into the public domain.

12. Local Transport Act 2008 Governance Review

Ian Crawford of Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance presented a report to the meeting and suggested that the setting up of an Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) would provide an opportunity to review governance as well as an opportunity to take action to improve public transport in various ways, particularly integrated ticketing. He also referred to their Bus Strategy (which can be found at <http://www.westofengland.org/meetings/joint-transport-committee/1-october-2009>).

Ian Crawford also suggested that the Partnership considers investment into funding free bus travel for under-18s in an attempt to encourage young

people to consider using buses as a regular mode of travel.

James White presented a report outlining the requirements for a possible review of transport governance. Appendix 1 to the report summarised the advantages and disadvantages of a range of options for enhanced governance, many already available within existing legislation. He then highlighted the importance to consider these. Appendix 2 listed the potential powers that could be devolved to ITAs. At present, DfT did not envisage passing rail powers to ITAs.

Discussion ensued regarding the potential setting up of an ITA and whether it would be considered both appropriate and necessary. There was concern regarding the costs involved, as the guidance to the Act suggests up to 2 years should be allowed for a full governance review before proceeding with an ITA. Some members felt that a review of what the Partnership can achieve with existing powers and functions would be more beneficial. The main focus needed to be on improving the bus services in the sub-region.

The Joint Committee required for the next meeting a report outlining:

- How the Partnership can maximise and strengthen its powers within existing arrangements.

13. Joint Local Transport Plan 3 Consultation and Engagement

James White presented the report. Members were also provided with a copy of a draft Consultation and Engagement Plan that detailed the proposed engagement process, timescales, and budget.

Members suggested other groups of people who might be consulted.

The Joint Committee agreed:

- To endorse the draft Engagement Plan.

Date of next meeting:

Thursday 12 November 2009, 10:30am at the Council House, Bristol