

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

Issues raised through engagement with the Neighbourhood Planning Network Steering Group 30 November 2009

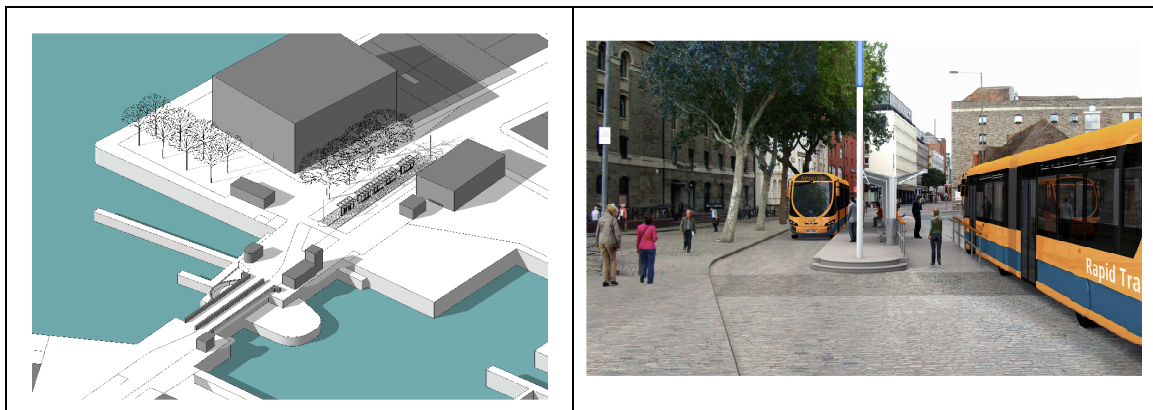
1. Impacts on Prince Street Bridge and usage by cars, cyclists and pedestrians

Strengthening works are required to the internal mechanisms of Prince Street Bridge to enable rapid transit vehicles to use it. The bridge has a Grade II listed status for these mechanisms and the works can be undertaken without alteration to the exterior appearance. The full deck width between the main beams, with an allowance for protection for the beams from impact damage, can be utilised to enable a flat surface on both sides of the bridge. The works will require closure to either highway and/or maritime traffic while they are undertaken. This is our preferred approach rather than taking the bridge away off-site. Dialogue with English Heritage to date has been positive and supportive.

Approximately 650 vehicles and just under 500 vehicles (both directions) using the bridge in the AM and PM peaks respectively. These flows are relatively light compared to similar links elsewhere in the city centre. Closure of the bridge will result in a redistribution of the traffic demand for the bridge across the immediate highway network. The main influence in both peaks is at Bedminster Bridge. The increase in traffic numbers at Bedminster Bridge is a net increase of approximately 210 vehicles entering the junction in the AM peak and approximately 200 vehicles in the PM peak¹. This increase represents a relatively small proportion of overall traffic flow using the junction and it is considered that this small increase should not be perceptible in operational terms.

Closure to general traffic will provide for better rapid transit stop arrangements and significant scope for public realm improvements. It is proposed that the area to the north of the bridge could be used to create a further, high quality meeting space to serve this dynamic quarter of the city centre, linking closely to the Arnofini, Museum of Bristol, Pero's Bridge, Brunel Mile and other waterfront attractions.

Figure 1: Prince Street Bridge



¹ Model testing does not include any consideration of the decongestion benefits of mode shift on to rapid transit.

2. Impacts on trees at Spike Island and crossings between Chocolate Path and Spike Island

The project has identified options which will not impact on the trees at Spike Island and retain appropriate pedestrian facilities. This will mean some compromise on the stop design and priority for rapid transit vehicles on Cumberland Road leading to the stop.

Figure 2: Spike Island Stop



3. Changes to the City Centre route to include running via Christmas Steps and the BRI

The proposed City Centre route runs along the inside of the inner circuit road via The Grove, Redcliffe Way, Temple Way, Bond Street, Rupert Street, Colston Avenue and Prince Street with services always picking up and dropping off passengers on the left-hand or inner side of this circuit.

The benefits of this route are that it maximises the efficiency of the rapid transit vehicles and minimises conflict with other road traffic particularly at junctions resulting in better journey times than all other route options considered.

4. Have you considered a Low Cost Alternative? What is it?

Assessment of a “Low Cost Alternative” is a requirement for a submission for funding to the Department for Transport (DfT). The project was required to review the case for implementing services at a lower capital cost.

The high cost items of the scheme are largely the bridge works - a new bridge crossing the Portbury Freight Line, refurbishment of the Ashton Avenue Bridge and provision of a new pedestrian and cyclist crossing and refurbishment of the Prince Street Bridge.

Without these bridge works the rapid transit route would be restricted to the existing bridge crossings and therefore can only run via Brunel Way and Hotwell Road. This is effectively the existing Park and Ride route.

The assessment undertaken for DfT showed higher patronage and higher passenger benefits of the proposed route when compared with existing Park and Ride route particularly given the journey time savings for passengers, now and in future when the local road network continues to get more congested.

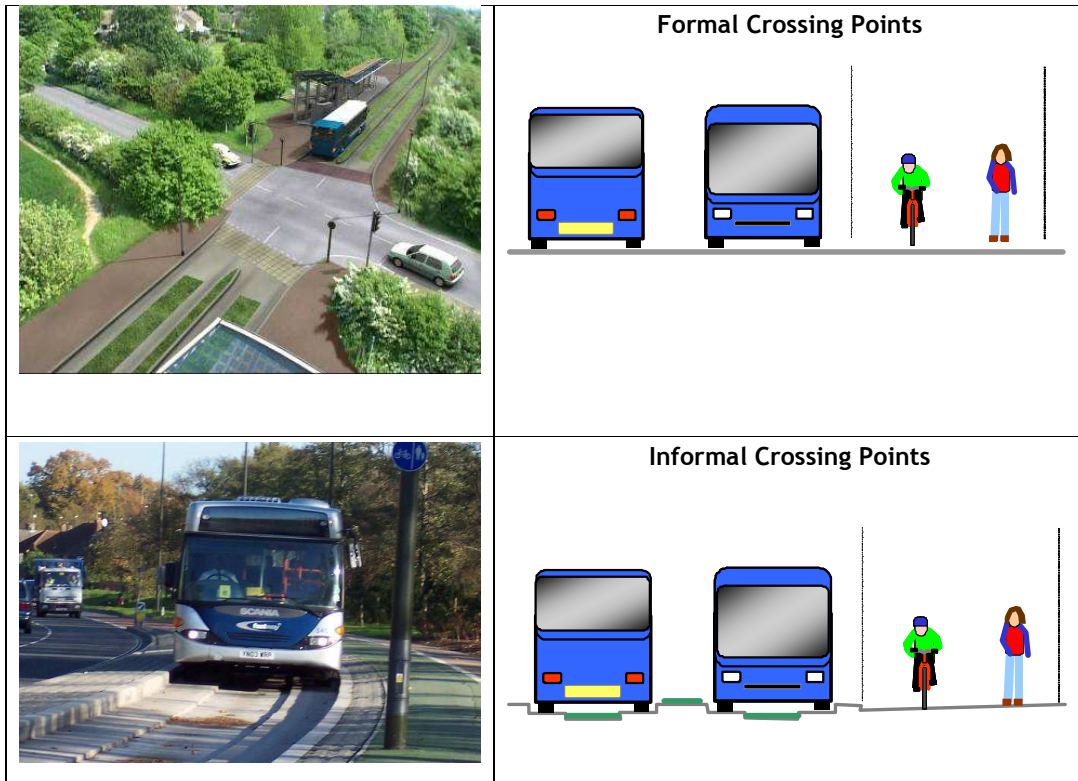
5. Crossing the busway and division it may create

There are different types of crossings - formal and informal. Formal crossing points will be provided at junctions with the highway and areas of high usage by pedestrians and cyclists. These crossings will be 'at-grade' or flat, without the need to negotiate a step. People will still be able to cross the busway at other points on the route but will have to negotiate a small step either side and in the middle of the busway. This is the same as a roadside kerb and referred to as informal crossings.

In terms of severance, an integrated engineering and landscape design could reduce impacts but a linear scheme will inevitably introduce some severance. The project is consulting with groups about areas of higher usage and "desire lines" to make sure crossing points of the busway are provided where needed to reduce this impact.

The project will be required to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment and safety audits of all crossings and ensure the scheme is Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant. The project is also reviewing the need and type of lighting, signage and signal provision to make sure all users can safely cross the busway.

Figure 3: Types of Busway Crossings



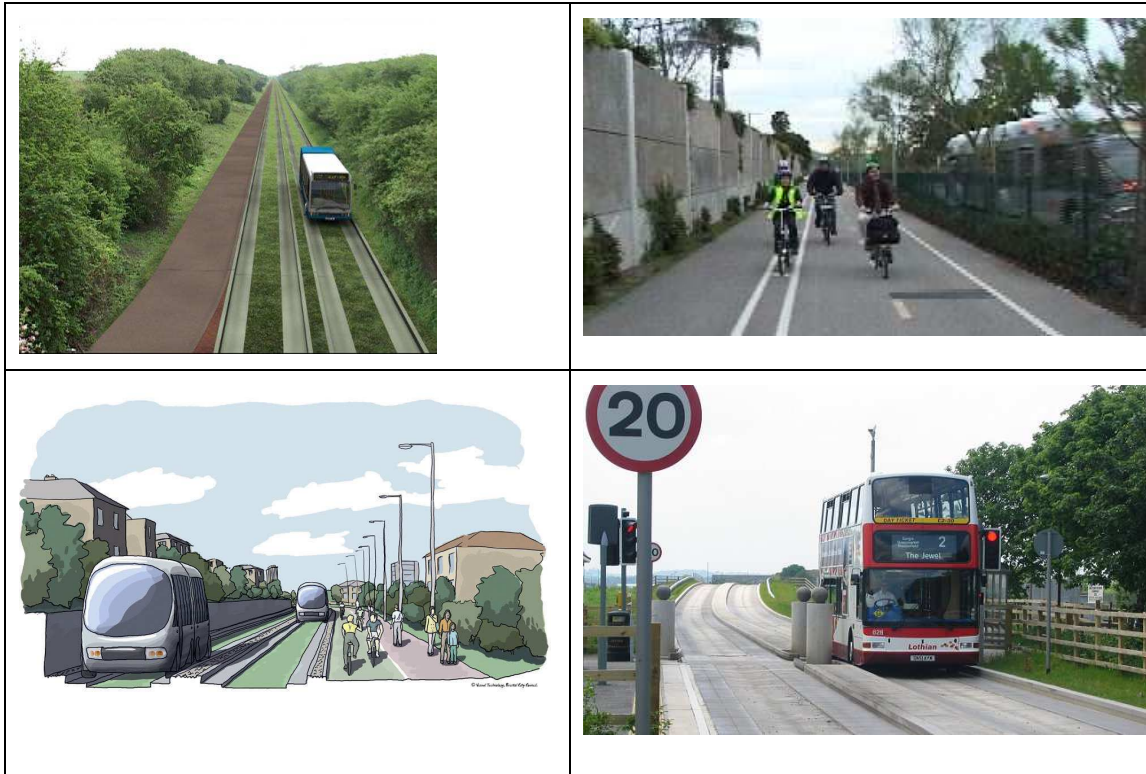
6. Segregation of pedestrians and cyclists from the busway

There are benefits and dis-benefits of physically separating pedestrians and cyclists from the busway. Physical separation by, for example fencing, can introduce severance and potentially make it less safe for pedestrians and cyclists in specific locations. In other places it could be safer for pedestrians and cyclists to be fenced from the busway.

The case for, and type of, physical separation of pedestrians and cyclists will be considered carefully along the route and different solutions may be appropriate on different sections of

the route. The project is consulting with groups about areas of higher usage and “desire lines” to make sure appropriate separation is provided. The project will be required to undertake a safety audit of the scheme and all crossings of the busway including consideration of physical separation, signage and signal provision where appropriate.

Figure 4: Types of Segregation of Busways from Cyclists and Pedestrians



7. Use of bus lanes by other users - taxis, cyclists, motorbikes

It is current Bristol City Council policy and practice for taxis, cyclists and motorbikes to use bus lanes. The rapid transit project needs to be consistent with these policies to avoid user confusion. As part of the scheme development with the project is reviewing the widths of bus lanes and ensuring these are appropriate. The City Council, in its role as highway authority, keeps the use of bus lanes under review. Should the use of bus lanes by taxis, cyclists and motorbikes become a concern this would be addressed comprehensively.

8. Traffic should operate on a general one-way system in the city centre

The issue of wider traffic circulation and potential solutions is not an issue that this particular project can address. The suggestion will be forwarded to the Head of Transport for consideration by Bristol City Council.

9. Green space at Long Ashton and Impact on Green Belt

The application for planning permission for the rapid transit scheme will be made through a Transport and Works Act Order. This is an application made to the Secretary of State for Transport. The Secretary of State will consider the rapid transit proposals in consideration of the green belt designation and the scheme’s impact. As part of the Transport and Works Act Order there is the opportunity to object to the proposals on the grounds of the impact on green belt.

10. Concerns about the speed of travel

The speed of vehicles on the busway will be 30 mph, the same as a low speed local road. It is the independence from road congestion and the certainty of journey times that provides the service with faster and reliable journey times.

11. Impacts on Quayside with mix of pedestrians and vehicles

Between Wapping Road and Cumberland Road the rapid transit route will run south of the Museum of Bristol building and then along the rear of properties on Cumberland Road, ie on the south side of the area used by the heritage railway. The route in this area will be shared with car traffic accessing the proposed Wapping Wharf development, car traffic accessing other local businesses, for example, Brunel's Buttery and service vehicles for the Museum of Bristol. The area to the north of the Museum of Bristol building, the main pedestrian route, will not be affected by the proposals.

12. Temple Meads Interchange

The project aims to provide services that link with rail services at Bristol Temple Meads Railway Station and other bus services that provide an opportunity for interchange. Independently of this project, Bristol City Council is working with Network Rail, the South West Regional Development Agency and other stakeholders on plans for a new, integrated interchange at Temple Meads. The rapid transit project, in the interim and before these longer-term plans are finalised, has proposed arrangements that could work independently of these plans to enable delivery of the project independent of development timescales but also to ensure the project does not prejudice any future development plans that may come forward.

13. Link/dependence with the Bristol City Football Club Proposals - which scheme came first?

A transit route to Ashton Vale has been set out in the Bristol Local Plan since at least 1995. The Greater Bristol Strategic Transport Study identified the route for Bus Rapid Transit in 2005 and this was endorsed through the Joint Local Transport Plan in 2005. Feasibility and corridor options study in early 2006 recommended Ashton Vale route as first route of the proposed network to come forward.

14. How does this fit with other bus routes? Concern about impact with existing bus services

The aim of the rapid transit scheme is to improve public transport services and provide an additional option for people in south west of the West of England sub-region.

Bus routes have a different purpose to that of the rapid transit services. For example the nos. 24/25 services from Ashton Vale provide a good local link through Southville and Bedminster to the city centre.

Bus services are operated in a deregulated, commercial environment. The project will be working with existing and potential bus operators over the next few years with the aim of maintaining existing services as a minimum and improving provision where possible.

15. Impacts on the Harbour Railway

The project is working with the Harbour Railway operator to retain the existing Sunday services of the route. The rapid transit project will provide:

- Access to run specified Sunday services.
- New and improved track between CREATE and Bristol Industrial Museum.
- Space for a new western terminus for services.
- Space for new sheds and a run-round loop.

There is no effect on services that run between the SS Great Britain and Museum of Bristol.

The powers to retain operation of the Bristol Harbour Railway will be included in the permission sought for the scheme and therefore protected by the Transport and Works Act Order.

16. Stop at the CREATE Centre

The results of public consultation in 2008 raised the issues of provision of a stop for the CREATE Centre. The project has looked at two options for a location either on the north or south side of the New Cut. In terms of accessibility and links with destinations such as CREATE and Hotwells the northern option is significantly closer and better connected. The topography to the south of the New Cut also means that a stop there would be in a cutting and concerns were raised about how isolated this would be for users.

The area to the north of the New Cut contains an area known as 'Butterfly Junction'. The Friends of Avon New Cut (FrANC) group is concerned about the potential impact of the route on the butterfly population at Butterfly Junction and consider that the introduction of a stop there would make the destruction of this important habitat all the more likely. The project is looking in further detail about how the area could be improved for butterflies through habitat management or if the relocation of the habitat and wildlife of Butterfly Junction to another area could be accomplished.

17. Cumberland Road width and crossings between Chocolate Path and Avon Crescent and Spike Island

Concern has been raised about the width of the alignment near Avon Crescent and whether the width of the carriageway available is sufficient to accommodate an inbound and outbound busway, cycleway (the Chocolate Path), two lanes of traffic along Cumberland Road and a pedestrian pavement next to the wall bounding the Underfall Yard.

The project has undertaken detailed topographical surveys and can confirm there is sufficient width. The works will require widening through this section through cantilevering the cycleway for approximately 200 metres through this area.

The project is also aware of the safety concerns about the junction of Avon Crescent with Cumberland Road and the poor pedestrian links from the cycleway across Cumberland Road particularly given the 'desire line' or route for pedestrians accessing Underfall Yard and on to Hotwells. The rapid transit proposals include opening up the bridge underneath Cumberland Road west of Avon Crescent with Smeaton Road to provide a new pedestrian and cycle link which will avoid users having to cross Cumberland Road with traffic.

18. Impact on Users of the Chocolate Path - additional noise and pollution

Given current traffic levels on Cumberland Road, it is anticipated that rapid transit services will not significantly contribute to noise levels in this area, although there will be a closer noise source to users of the Chocolate Path of vehicles passing. Rapid transit will use new, low emission vehicles.

The project will undertake a full Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposals. This includes noise and pollution assessment which will set out any potential impacts. The environmental statement will be part of the Transport and Works Act Order application for the scheme.

19. Traffic Impacts on Coronation Road

The Friends of Avon New Cut is concerned about the narrowing of Cumberland Road caused by the introduction of the outbound bus lane and the knock-on effect on the volume of traffic on Coronation Road.

The project is currently undertaking a full Traffic Impact Assessment which will look at the redistribution effects of traffic as a result of the proposals. This document will be available once completed.

20. Effects on Vauxhall Bridge

In order to allow double-decker buses to use the rapid transit route, works will be required to Vauxhall Bridge to increase its height. The bridge is a listed structure and these works will be undertaken in consultation with English Heritage. The Environmental Impact Assessment will include the assessment of impacts on all listed structures.

21. Impacts on Underfall Yard

The Environmental Impact Assessment will include the assessment of impacts on historic buildings during both construction and operation.

22. Impacts on the arches supporting the Chocolate Path and Harbour Railway

The arches supporting Chocolate Path and Harbour Railway form part of the embankment of the New Cut in the vicinity of the Underfall Yard sluice gates. Structural and geotechnical studies will be undertaken by the project to ensure the integrity of these structures is retained. The studies include desktop analysis of and historic mapping for the area (showing land development), data on ground movements, mining records, environmental data (known contamination areas) and invasive surveys such as boreholes.

The Environmental Impact Assessment will include the assessment of vibration impacts during both construction and operation.

23. Impact on the stone walls currently separating edge of Cumberland Road and Harbour Railway track

Along Cumberland Road there are varying level differences between Cumberland Road and the Harbour Railway Track. There is currently fencing along the edge of Cumberland Road which varies in type and quality along the route, particularly where it has been replaced following damage.

To ensure the safety of rapid transit and vehicles using Cumberland Road the edge of Cumberland Road will need to continue to be fenced. This will need to be designed to current highway safety standards. Some parts of the existing fence do not meet these standards.

The project is aware of the desire to retain the character of this area as far as possible and is working with the City Council design team to provide design solutions. The project is establishing design guidelines which will accompany the Transport and Works Act Order application which will set out the principles of retaining the existing character along the route as far as practicable.

Further Information

Information on the scheme is provided on the West of England Partnership website at www.westofengland.org/transport/rapidtransit.

You can contact the project team by email at transport@westofengland.org or by post at:

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