



West of England Partnership

Bath & North East
Somerset Council



North
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COUNCIL

South Gloucestershire
Council

Great Western RUS Consultation
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RUS Programme Manager
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E mail: james.white@westofengland.org
Date: 26 November 2009

Dear Sir

West of England Partnership response to the Great Western Route Utilisation Strategy Draft for Consultation

The West of England Partnership welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Great Western Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS). Whilst we broadly support the RUS we have a number of issues we wish to raise as set out below.

1) Severn Beach Line

Concern has been expressed over the RUS suggesting a reduction in services on the Severn Beach Line from three trains every two hours to hourly. We welcome Network Rail's confirmation there is no intention to reduce the existing service and that the RUS does not limit options for continuing with it. We request that this position is made clear in the final RUS.

We ask that the RUS Stakeholder Management Group consider options for increasing the frequency of trains on the Severn Beach line to half hourly. We believe the 22% growth in passengers on the line since 2006, as recorded through our annual West of England Rail Survey, justifies this consideration.

The RUS proposal for an additional hourly service from Bath to Clifton Down is welcomed.

2) Greater Bristol Metro

We welcome the testing in the RUS of elements of the West of England's Greater Bristol Metro proposals for enhanced, half hourly cross Bristol train services. The

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good business case for the additional Bath to Bristol and Clifton Down service is encouraging. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to discuss and understand with Network Rail the business case for the Weston-super-mare to Yate, Weston-super-Mare to Bristol and Bristol and Bath to Chippenham elements of the Greater Bristol Metro. The high cost of providing new infrastructure and train services in relation to the likely passenger numbers and fares revenue is noted. We take on board the findings of the RUS, whilst remaining concerned about some of the figures, and recognise the need for the West of England authorities to fund further development of the Greater Bristol Metro business case.

The importance of cross Bristol services is underlined by the West of England Annual Rail Survey showing considerable cross-city flows such as Bath and Oldfield Park to Filton Abbey Wood. We ask that the Stakeholder Management Group consider all cross Bristol train movements.

The Greater Bristol Metro, along with the Portishead line, were included in the South West Councils and South West Regional Development Agency list of Regional Funding Allocation 2 (RFA2) schemes submitted to the Department for Transport in February 2009. The Region's advice was accepted by the Department for Transport in July 2009. This importance, and with it the likelihood of over £42m of funding and its implementation, merits greater recognition in the RUS and we ask the Stakeholder Management Group to consider this.

We look forward to Network Rail's continued involvement in the development of the Greater Bristol Metro and Portishead line projects. We remain confident that the more detailed appraisal of these projects will result in a stronger business case for investment.

3) Growth Forecasts

In the light of continued growth in passenger numbers the use of low growth forecasts by the rail industry has long been a concern of local authorities throughout the South West. For the West of England area the RUS uses revised forecasting methods producing higher than previously used forecasts. We acknowledge that these are amongst the highest forecasts used anywhere in the country. The use of higher forecasts and the move away from the traditional passenger Demand Forecast Handbook approach is appreciated as a step forward.

The RUS predicts a 41% growth in passengers from 2008 to 2019, an annual rate of 3.2%. Nonetheless results from the annual West of England Rail Survey show a 15.05% growth from 2007 to 2008 and a 38.7% growth over the last five years (2004 to 2008).

Figures from the Office of Rail Regulation, based on ticket sales, for all stations in the West of England area showed a 7.07% increase in passengers from 2006/07 to 2007/08 (see Table One). For the period 2004/05 to 2007/08 there was a 25.3%

increase. All of these figures predate the three trains every two hours service introduced on the Severn Beach line in May 2008.

Table One: Passenger growth all West of England Stations

Stations	2004/5	2005/6	Annual increase	2006/7	Annual increase	2007/8	Annual increase	Cumulative Increase 2004/5 to 2007/8
West of England area	13,645,112	14,708,523	7.79%	15,959,493	8.51%	17,088,107	7.07%	25.23%

Figures from the Office of Rail Regulation

Due to the timing of the announcement to electrify the Great Western Mainline the benefits of electrification producing a “sparks effect” generating new passengers has not been factored into the RUS growth forecasts. Electrification will attract more passengers to high-speed services and to local services feeding into them. We request that the Stakeholder Management Group revise passenger forecasts to take this into account.

Whilst recognising the use of higher forecasts we remain concerned that the RUS still underestimates future demand that will only lead to further overcrowding and undermine the attractiveness of local rail travel.

4) Electrification

The electrification of the lines to Bristol via Bath and Bristol Parkway is to be welcomed. Reassurances, however, are sought that other schemes proposed in the RUS are not delayed. We ask it be made clear in the final RUS that the resignalling of Bristol Temple Meads through the European Rail Traffic Management System is developed alongside electrification to maximise the benefits of both and minimise disruption.

The introduction of the new Intercity Express (IEP) trains will provide much needed new rolling stock. We understand these will be bi-mode trains able to use electric power where the line is electrified and diesel power where it is not. Figure 7.2 in the RUS shows the routes of the new IEP trains bypassing Weston-super-Mare. Network Rail has indicated this is an error and IEP trains will serve Weston-super-Mare. We ask that this is made clear in the final RUS.

5) Inconsistencies

We draw Network Rail’s attention to inconsistencies between the list of proposals for enhanced local rail services and Figure 6.11 in the RUS. The list suggests a service specification of:

- 1 tph Weston-super-Mare to Yate

- 1 tph Weston-super-Mare to Chippenham
- 1 tph Taunton to Cardiff via Weston
- 1 tph Portishead to Gloucester
- 1 tph Portishead to Clifton Down (peak only)
- 1 tph Temple Meads to Severn Beach
- 1 tph Bristol to Westbury (with extensions to Weymouth)
- 1 tph Chippenham to Salisbury

Figure 6.11 proposes an entirely different structure including:

- Cardiff-Taunton service split at Temple Meads
- Yate-Portishead service
- Weston-super-Mare-Chippenham service
- Taunton-Bristol services going north bound to Westbury/Weymouth (via Bristol), but returning south bound from Cheltenham!
- Bedminster-Clifton-Down

We request that this be clarified in the final RUS.

6) New infrastructure and services

The RUS proposals for new infrastructure (four lines from Bristol Temple Meads to Parson Street and three or four lines from Dr Days Junction to Filton) and enhanced Cardiff to Portsmouth via Bristol services and additional rolling stock are all to be welcomed. For the Cardiff to Portsmouth service we ask that additional stops at Patchway be included.

Worle station is an important gateway to Weston-super-Mare and has seen a considerable increase in population in the last ten years. Up to 9,000 new homes and new business development adjacent to the station site is planned over the next 16 to 20 years. North Somerset Council is investing in new car park facilities as part of the Weston Package RFA2 scheme and has provided a new pedestrian and cycle route to the station. To capitalise on this, we ask the Stakeholder Management Group to consider options to provide a net increase in the number of inter-city services stopping at Worle, particularly cross country (but without detriment to services into Weston-super-Mare).

We are disappointed that a longer term view towards providing additional capacity through the fourth platform at Bristol Parkway and the doubling of Worle Junction and potential extension to Weston-super-Mare has not been taken forward through the RUS. We recognise the performance benefits these schemes would have delivered have been achieved in the short term by other means. This still leaves, however, limited operational flexibility and network resilience.

We consider that the re-instatement of all four lines from Dr Days Junction to Filton would be required to cater for forecast growth in passengers and freight, the

proposed IEP depot at Stoke Gifford and network resilience. However should the final RUS only recommend three lines in the short term Bristol City Council is keen to explore the possible use of the fourth line from Dr Days Junction to Filton used as a pedestrian and cycle way until the line is required for rail use. Formal safeguards to ensure future rail use would of course be required.

7) Long Term Schemes

The West of England's Joint Local Transport Plan - Rail Action Plan has long term rail schemes including:

- Investigate and lobby for re-introduction of a local passenger service between Avonmouth and Filton.
- New station at Charfield to cater for trips from Wotton-under-Edge towards Bristol.
- Development of services on the Chippenham – Bath corridor and the re-opening of Corsham station to address the effects of new development in these areas.

We draw these schemes to the attention of the Stakeholder Management Group and ask them to consider them in the context of the forecast growth in sub-regional housing and employment over the period 2006 to 2026.

Yours Faithfully



James White
Group Leader Transport Policy

On behalf of four Executive Members for Transport:

Councillor Charles Gerrish
Bath and North East Somerset Council

Councillor Jon Rogers
Bristol City Council

Councillor Elfan ap Rees
North Somerset Council

Councillor Brian Allinson
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