

Rapid transit for the Greater Bristol Area – will it be up to scratch?

We are worried that Bristol will not end up with a quality and bone fide rapid transit system but instead with a system of bus lanes and bendy buses. The result will be that we fail to achieve modal shift and attract middle class ridership – in other words that our investment does not give the expected returns.

The rapid transit system has to look and feel like a real system of trams, whether or not bus-based. Can we be assured that this is still what is envisaged?

The worst case scenario is that the rapid transit “lines” are merely tarmac areas for running buses – partly segregated road-space, in effect. These might then carry buses of every flavour, including non-low floor old vehicles of the kind that are now replacing modern vehicles on some key routes in Wiltshire and BANES. These are neither “quality”, “fit for a European city” or accessible for the disabled or those with children in buggies.

Integrated transport authority even more clearly needed

We still believe that without an ITA for Bristol, we will never get delivery of the quality of public transport system that we need. Currently the four local authorities have their own public transport teams, and then on top of these there are officers associated with the West of England Partnership. This arrangement is both difficult to coordinate and wasteful on resources.

As the time to actually deliver rapid transit and local rail improvements gets nearer, we cannot envisage that the current arrangement is appropriate. Already there are signs that West of England Partnership is finding the detailed specification and delivery of the rapid transit system too complex and there seems to be a lack of tie-in when it comes to new development – like the football stadium at Ashton Vale – and the potential of new railway stations – in this case Ashton Gate – to serve the stadium. Similarly the large new Long Ashton development cannot be really specified in detail in terms of layout until we are assured that the rapid transit is to be delivered and the location of stations precisely known. Other development, which needs to be designed and orientated around rapid transit stations, will be in the same position. In a word, there is a great deal of work to do and an ITA with the right powers and expertise is needed.

An ITA would be able to set the fares, timetables, frequency, routes and vehicles. It would be able to produce the business cases and even bids to make up shortfalls in funding.

ITA and rail

Equally when it comes to rail, an ITA is needed to coordinate efficiently, and without the complexities and stumbling blocks of local political arrangements, the suburban network right out into Wiltshire, Somerset and Gloucestershire. Business cases for the opening of new stations are complex and require specialist skills. Understanding the nuances of signalling and timetabling and interfacing with Network Rail and developers who might fund station improvements are further complex areas. Without an ITA we worry that the Greater Bristol Area will fail to make the best use of the upgrading of the signalling in the area in 2014, in terms of combining signalling improvement with new services. Without an ITA we may well fail to get the rolling stock we need, and will not manage to open new stations. *The public are waiting...*

Bus quality – going down fast

In the case of buses, and ITA would be able to coordinate routes, fares and frequency across the city area and make sure that we do not get a further proliferation of antiquated buses on key routes. In BANES and Wiltshire the conversion of many important routes to old non-floor buses ultimately gives the message that bus passengers are assumed to be the poor, the frail and the old who cannot just jump into their cars but are forced to use public transport.

Whereas the WoE Partnership may feel that it is able to do something about the worsening situation, an ITA would have the powers to do much more. The routes affected we think include the 14, 233, 12, 700, 716, 734, 228, 79, 237, X72, 267 and 234. Some of these routes are the major bus links between places such as Chippenham, Frome, Bath, etc.

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Transport South West Network
Positively promoting public transport



Rapid Transit
TRAMS... OR BENDY BUSES??
STATEMENT Full Council Meeting

Rapid transit for Bristol: will it be a modern system of trams to be proud of, or a cheap-o version based on buses? *Tuesday 10th Nov*

Is the Hartcliffe to Long Ashton proposed Rapid Transit of the right quality for Bristol?...Read on..... *2pm.*

Currently proposed for Bristol are two rapid transit lines - but will these look like modern tram lines or simply be a bus-based system that is second rate?

Line 1: Bristol Temple Meads – Cabot Circus – City Centre – Wapping Wharf – Harbour railway – Long Ashton Park and Ride

Line 3: Long Ashton to Hartcliffe along the proposed South Bristol Ring Road

The problem:

Bristol is very fortunate in winning south west regional money for its rapid transit. This is a chance to finally get quality public transport off the ground. But we need to get it right.

Bristol is gummed up with traffic because our suburban railways are infrequent and neglected and because we haven't yet got trams or light rail. It's not rocket science to see why we have some of the slowest moving traffic in the country.

But isn't the proposed rapid transit therefore good news? In part, yes. However we are worried that it will be of low quality and based on buses, rather than a modern European system of tram-type vehicles with proper "stations". We fear not enough money for the quality of rapid transit vehicles that we need is being made available. We may even be palmed off with Boris's fleet of bendy buses from London!

Money is needed to bump up our rapid transit proposals to the kind of quality that will make our brand new transport system something that Bristol can be proud of. We need a rapid transit system that looks and feels like a tram system.

What you need to do:

The organisation in charge of much of Greater Bristol's transport and planning is the West of England Partnership (WoE), consisting of Bristol City Council, Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

You might like to write to them, as well as to your MP and local councillors, to explain:

1. The worry that the rapid transit proposed is likely to be low quality and not up to scratch for a modern European city.
2. New housing is not being designed properly around rapid transit, good buses, cycling and walking.
3. There is far too much emphasis on road construction to support future housing, which cannot be right when we are hoping to reduce car usage.

The main council contact is:

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Lets get what Bristol deserves - quality rapid transit to match its status as a European City

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