



West of England Partnership

Bath & North East
Somerset Council



North
Somerset
Council

South Gloucestershire
Council

News Release
17 March 2010

Over £50 million worth of transport improvements one step closer

Major milestones in the programme to complete the 'transport jigsaw' in the West of England to tackle congestion in Weston-super-Mare and build a rapid transit route between Ashton Vale and Temple Meads via Bristol city centre have been achieved.

Paul Clark, Under Secretary of State for Transport, visiting Bristol earlier today announced that the two bids worth over £50 million have been accepted by the Department for Transport. Both schemes have been granted 'programme entry' status. This is made up of £43 million bid for Ashton Vale - Temple Meads Rapid Transit, and £11 million bid for the Weston Package. This is the first of three DfT approval stages (see editors notes).

Bristol and North Somerset Councils are working together as part of the West of England Partnership on the rapid transit route that will make available a fast, reliable, frequent public transport option.

The modern, high-quality vehicles, will run on a specially designed guideway alongside a broad cycling and walking path from Long Ashton park and ride, via refurbished Ashton Avenue Bridge, along the Cumberland Road, turning right once over Prince Street Bridge into an anticlockwise loop around Bristol city centre, stopping at Temple Meads, Cabot Circus, Broadmead and Arnolfini before returning to the park and ride site. The guideway will be built to ensure the heritage railway on Cumberland Road can continue to operate.

North Somerset Council have developed a package of improvements for the M5 Junction 21 and widening Marchfields Way on the A 370 Gateway, plus additional parking at Worle Station, new and improved facilities for cyclists and pedestrians and a new bus interchange in Weston-super-Mare to help tackle congestion and encourage people to use other forms of transport than the car.

Both these projects are part of the Travel+ group of transport projects that together will deliver real change for local people and represent the future of sustainable travel in the sub-region.

“This is excellent news,” agreed Councillors Elfan Ap Rees and Jon Rogers, “This rapid transit route will be the first part of the network in the area, and together the two projects build on the work we are doing to tackle congestion and help make public transport a real option for commuters and visitors alike.”

The next stage in the planning of the Ashton Vale-Temple Meads rapid transit route is an application for the legal powers to build and operate the system. Both Bristol City and North Somerset Councils have approved the application being made.

If the process continues to schedule construction will start in 2012 with the first rapid transit running in 2014.

The operator for the rapid transit route has not been selected; a full open tender process will have to take place.

The Ashton Vale to Temple Meads rapid transit route is one part of the jigsaw of transport projects the four West of England Councils are working on together. The Partnership Councils are currently implementing the £70 million Greater Bristol Bus Network, and developing further bids to the Department for Transport for government funding totalling £51 million for a package of improvements in Bath and are about to submit two more bids to the Department for Transport for assessment for £47 million for the South Bristol Link, and £168 million for the North Fringe to Hengrove Package.

Editors Notes

Details about the Weston package can be seen at <http://www.travelplus.org.uk/weston-package>

Full details and a map of the Ashton Vale -Temple Meads route, plus visuals, are available at <http://www.travelplus.org.uk/rapid-transit---ashton-vale-to-temple-meads>

The next stage in the planning of the Ashton Vale- Temple Meads route is an application for the powers to build the guideway using a Transport and Works Act Order. The Full Councils of Bristol City and North Somerset have approved making the application. Information about the process and how to get involved can be found at <http://www.westofengland.org/transport/rapid-transit/transport-and-works-act-information>

The Department for Transport's process for considering major schemes for funding is in three stages:

- Programme Entry - making an initial case for the scheme to DfT setting out what the scheme is, what the economic case for the scheme is and how the scheme is planned to be funded and delivered. The submission to DfT is formally referred to as a 'Major Scheme Business Case' or is known as a bid.
- Conditional Approval - is applied for once all the necessary statutory powers have been granted for a scheme. This involves obtaining planning permission and other legal consents (for example listed building consents) and/or a Transport and Works Act Order to build and operate the scheme.
- Final Approval - is applied for once contracts have been agreed to build and operate a scheme and works on the ground are ready to commence.

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