



West of England Rapid Transit

Ashton Vale to Temple Meads
and Bristol City Centre

Scheme Summary II - Spring 2010

travel 

The West of England sub-region has a unique heritage and character, including Bristol's industrial and maritime past, and Bath's status as a world heritage site. The area has a wealth of natural environmental assets spread across the urban and rural areas including parkland, landscapes and natural resources but also contains areas of significant deprivation and disadvantage which suffer from poor transport links.

Congestion is already a serious problem. Over the last ten years traffic on the area's roads has grown by 21% compared to 16% nationally. This has resulted in poor air quality, delays, unreliable journey times and unsustainable pressure on existing infrastructure and services. The continued growth of congestion, with its undesirable effects, threatens the quality of the environment and the quality of life for people who live within it.

Each of the four councils has developed its Core Strategies which set out the spatial and strategic objectives for each region until 2026. These strategies are aligned with the South West Regional Spatial Strategy, which has yet to be finalised, and overall they plan to deliver 86,500 homes and 95,500 jobs in the West of England sub-region by 2026.

To continue our success and achieve our aspirations for economic, environmental and social development, we require an ambitious but realistic vision for our future transport.

Our Future Transport Vision aims to:

- Improve our quality of life
- Tackle congestion
- Improve road safety
- Improve air quality
- Improve access to job opportunities
- Help us get to work and school efficiently
- Strengthen the local economy



The four councils are working together as the **West of England Partnership** to tackle transport and other major strategic issues

Rapid transit will provide a fast, frequent and reliable public transport service.

Development of a West of England Rapid Transit Network

A comprehensive transport study to assess the current and future strategic transport needs of the West of England region up to 2031 was completed in 2006. Known as the Greater Bristol Strategic Transport Study (GBSTS), it was commissioned by the Government Office for the South West in partnership with the Highways Agency, South West of England Regional Development Agency and the West of England authorities. GBSTS recommended a package of measures to support the sustainable growth of the sub-region. One of these is the development of a Rapid Transit Network with the aim being “to provide high quality alternatives to the private car”.

GBSTS identified that this network should:

- Extend choice of transport modes for all, in particular for private car drivers, to encourage a shift to public transport.
- Promote sustainable development by providing high quality public transport links.
- Improve access to public transport for areas that currently have poor provision.
- Improve integration of the public transport network.
- Promote social inclusion by improving access to employment, retail, community, leisure and educational facilities.
- Improve safety along the corridors by reducing use of private cars.

GBSTS set out the plan for the development of a Rapid Transit Network. It identified corridors in the network that would serve many of the new and existing residential and employment developments. This network is embedded in the Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP) within the major schemes programme and has funding allocated in Regional Funding Allocation (2006) for the South West.

The Ashton Vale to Temple Meads and Bristol City Centre (the Rapid Transit Scheme) is the next scheme¹ in the network to be taken forward for funding with the Department for Transport and applications for consents to build and operate the scheme.

Scheme Description

Rapid transit will provide a fast, frequent and reliable public transport service. Services will run on a largely segregated route, separate from car traffic, and will be given priority over other road users at traffic signals.

There will be a set of core services running frequently from Long Ashton Park and Ride to Bristol Temple Meads and on to Cabot Circus, Broadmead and the Centre (running in an anti-clockwise loop around the city). Additional services will make use of the Rapid Transit alignment to provide faster journey times and improved reliability for services to North Somerset (Weston-super-Mare, Clevedon and Nailsea).

¹ The first bus rapid transit scheme in the West of England is being pursued as part of the Bath Transport Package.

Rapid transit will provide a high quality passenger experience – ticket machines at stops, user-friendly electronic information displays, high quality stop design, safe and secure access to stops. The route between the Museum of Bristol and Long Ashton Park and Ride will include a parallel cycling and pedestrian route linking in to existing networks thereby providing a further sustainable transport option.

Services will be run using modern, accessible, comfortable, low-emission vehicles that provide the quality and feel of a high quality metro-style system. The Authorities are committed to exploring the range of alternative fuel sources with potential operators. These would offer considerable environmental improvements with lower noise levels, fewer greenhouse gas emissions and less harmful local pollutants. Access to the rapid transit route will be open to operators meeting quality thresholds which will govern vehicle and service standards.

Works

- Construction of a two-way segregated busway between Long Ashton Park and Ride and the Museum of Bristol including a parallel pedestrian/cycleway linking with the existing 'Chocolate Path' and new routes proposed as part of the Connect2 and Cycling City projects.
- A new bridge over the Portbury Freight Line at Ashton Gate.
- Refurbishment of Ashton Avenue Bridge including a new pedestrian and cyclist facility.
- Parking restrictions along Cumberland Road.
- Strengthening works to Prince Street Bridge and closure to car traffic.
- Additional bus lanes and priority measures within Bristol City Centre on The Grove, Redcliffe Way, Temple Way, Haymarket, Rupert Street and Colston Avenue.



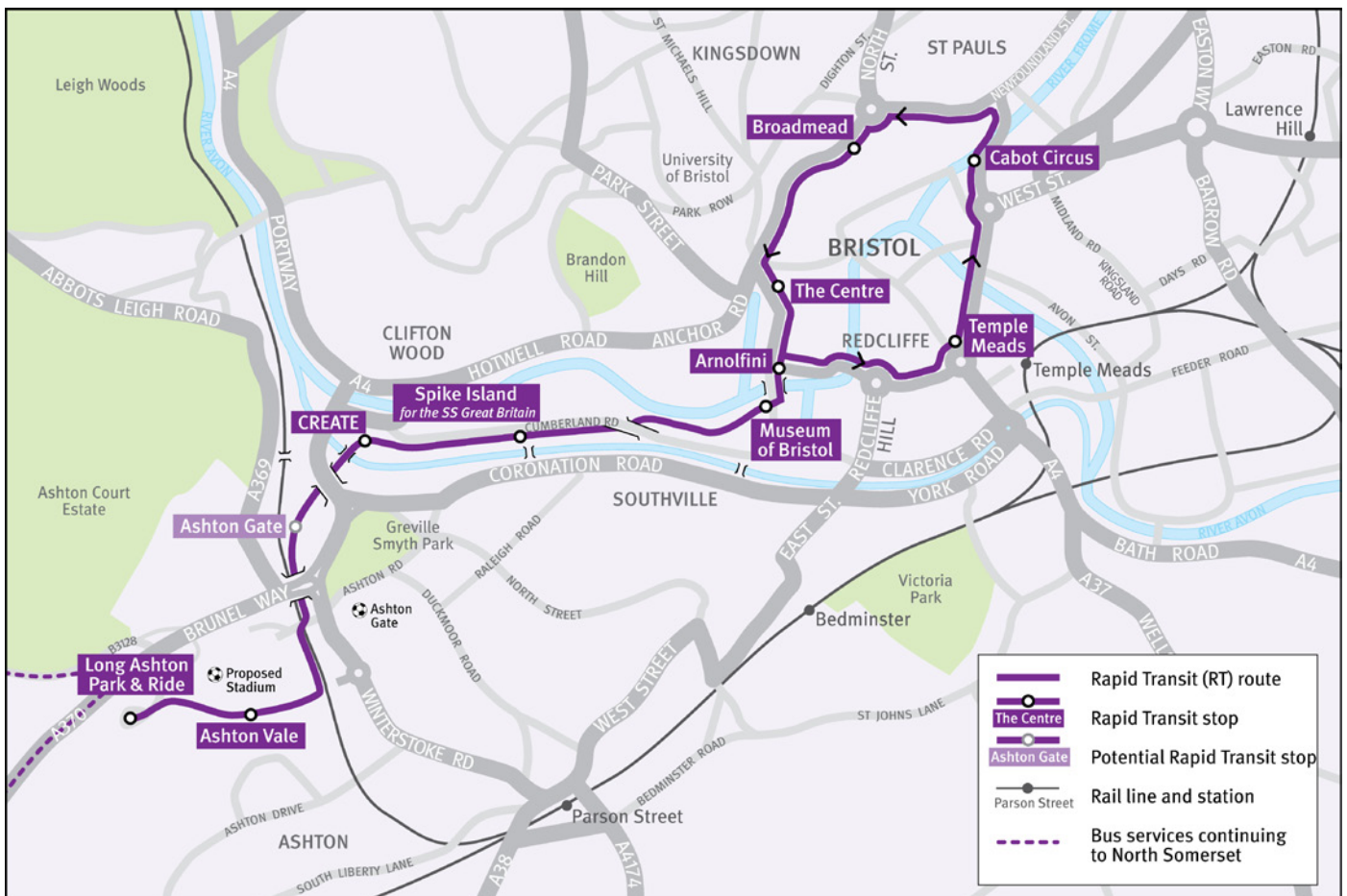
Rapid Transit will provide a high quality passenger experience

- New bespoke stops along the length of the route which have CCTV, real time service information and off-board ticketing.
- Appropriate environmental mitigation works which are likely to include water attenuation features, ecological and landscape planting, noise barriers where required and species specific measures (such as bat boxes).
- Urban design improvements in Bristol City Centre including removal of kerbside-clutter, improved wayfinding and street scene.

The proposed rapid transit route is shown in Figure 2.
Rapid transit will serve:

- Bristol Temple Meads Railway Station.
- New and planned development at Redcliffe and Temple Quay.
- Retail and employment areas of the new Cabot Circus development and Broadmead.
- Retail and employment areas around The Centre and interchange with bus services.

Figure 2: Ashton Vale to Temple Meads and Bristol City Centre



Ashton Vale to Temple Meads and Bristol City Centre Rapid Transit Scheme

- The refurbished Museum of Bristol and planned Wapping Wharf development.
- Spike Island and the SS Great Britain.
- The potential new stadium and development of Bristol City Football Club.
- Long Ashton Park and Ride.
- Weston-super-Mare, towns and villages in North Somerset.

Rapid transit will replace the existing Long Ashton Park and Ride service. The Authorities are reviewing a range of options for procuring an operator, or operators, to run services. The Authorities will use the powers afforded by the new Transport Act (2008) to ensure that arrangements are put in place that deliver the Rapid Transit Scheme's objectives and present value for money to the Authorities, central Government and the public.


Scheme Appraisal

A 'Major Scheme Business Case' (MSBC) to apply for funding was submitted to the Department for Transport in March 2009. The MSBC sets out an appraisal of the scheme and its benefits, including:

- Rapid transit will improve journey times and reliability from the south west of the sub-region to Bristol City Centre.
- Provision of a high-quality, more sustainable choice of travel - rapid transit and cycling or walking and a shift of trips to a safer transport mode.
- Shift of trips to more environmentally sustainable transport modes, and improving physical activity and quality of life through encouraging walking and cycling.
- Improved connectivity between existing centres of activity with new and proposed development. Contributing to a more reliable and efficient transport network to improve business efficiency, movement of labour and connections to national and international networks.
- Improved accessibility to and from the south west of the sub-region to the existing public transport network, without the need for interchange, particularly Bristol Temple Meads Railway Station.

The economic appraisal of the scheme results in a 'Benefit to Cost Ratio' of 3.15 : 1. This means the value of the benefits arising from the scheme substantially outweigh the cost of providing the scheme.

The capital cost estimate for the Rapid Transit Scheme is £47.8 million. £43.2 million is allocated in the draft South West Regional Funding Allocation submitted to the DfT at the end of February 2009.



Rapid transit will improve journey times and reliability from the south west of the sub-region to Bristol City Centre.

The South West Region fully supports the MSBC for this funding. Around 10% of the required funding will be provided from local sources. The Authorities will seek this funding from developments related to the Rapid Transit Scheme and potentially from operators.

What Next?

The Department for Transport awarded "Programme Entry" to the scheme in March 2010. This is the first step in a three-stage process to access the available Government funding.

The project will now submit an application for the powers and permissions to build and operate the scheme via a Transport and Works Act Order. It is anticipated that the application will result in a Public Inquiry.

Construction could start in 2012 with services operational from 2014.

Information on the scheme is provided on the West of England Partnership website at www.travelplus.org.uk/rapidtransit/AVTM

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

or by post at:
**Bristol City Council Major Projects Team,
Wilder House
Wilder Street
Bristol, BS2 8PH**

If you would like this information in a different format, for example Braille, audiotape, large print or computer disc, or community languages, please contact West of England Partnership office.

