

West of England Partnership  
14 June 2010

## Major Transport Schemes

### Purpose

1. To report progress with the RFA2 Major Transport schemes and the forthcoming national review of transport investment and priorities

### Background

2. In 2009 through the Regional Funding Allocation process (RFA2) government supported the South West Region's programme of prioritised major transport schemes. This programme included 7 major transport schemes in the West of England for completion within the next 10 years, and a further 4 schemes where construction would start during this period. The current development and implementation profile for the sub-region's major schemes is shown in the Appendix.

### Progress with Major Schemes Programme

3. Since the report to the Partnership Board on 25 February 2010 there have been a number of significant developments in the programme which are summarised below.

#### *Being Implemented - Greater Bristol Bus Network (GBBN)*

4. Work has continued with the implementation of the GBBN scheme with the completion of works on the A367 (with new bus lanes and traffic signalling giving greater priority to buses) and at Congresbury (bus lane with pedestrian crossing and cycle path). Over half of the 89 tasks within the project have now either been completed (31 tasks) or are in progress (14). Consultation on the 10 bus corridors will be broadly complete in the Summer with the launch of consultation on the Whiteladies Road corridor. The first public launch of a corridor is planned for January 2011.
5. A Quality Partnership Scheme (QPS) is being developed in discussion with bus operators to secure good quality services. This will be implemented on the A367 Midsomer Norton/Radstock to Bath corridor in late Summer 2010, and then to subsequent corridors.

#### *Schemes with Programme Entry – Bath Transportation Package, Rapid Transit Ashton Vale to Temple Meads and Weston Package*

6. The Bath Transportation Package has Programme Entry but requires a Public Inquiry into the Compulsory Purchase of land. This will be held in September 2010. The aim is to submit the updated Major Scheme Business Case for Conditional/Full Approval post CPO inquiry.

7. Following the submission of major scheme bids in Spring 2009, the Weston Package and Ashton Vale to Temple Meads Rapid Transit schemes received Programme Entry from the Department for Transport (DfT) on 17 March 2010. This represents the first phase of funding approval for these schemes.
8. For the Ashton Vale to Temple Meads Rapid Transit scheme much progress has been made in recent months. A Transport and Works Act Order has been prepared and will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Transport in early June 2010. The first full Council resolutions were passed in support of the application at meetings of North Somerset and Bristol City councils in January and February 2010. Second resolutions are scheduled for full Council meetings on 29 June 2010. The application will trigger a 42-day objection period after which a Public Inquiry is normally required. The date is determined by DfT but is usually held around six months after the application is made. If the application and Inquiry are successful the project can then apply for Conditional Approval stage with DfT which is anticipated to be Autumn 2011.
9. For Weston Package work is on programme for seeking Conditional Approval in December 2010. Site investigations and topographical surveys are complete and detailed design is well underway. It has been decided to use detailed micro simulation modelling for some of the scheme elements to enhance public consultation. This should improve public understanding and acceptance and will not delay the overall programme.
10. Unfortunately the progress with the development of these schemes has been drawn into the Government's comprehensive spending review. In April the DfT put on hold their work on the Major Scheme Business Cases for these schemes, together with others at this stage of development nationally. The DfT have indicated that they will not be engaging with scheme promoters for several months, and that any work undertaken in the interim will be at risk.

*Major Scheme Bids with Government - South Bristol Link and North Fringe to Hengrove Package*

11. The South West Transport and Infrastructure Board in February, and the Strategic Leaders and SWRDA Joint Regional Board for Transport and Infrastructure in March, confirmed that the South Bristol Link and the North Fringe to Hengrove Package are within the RFA2 programme. This confirmation was a prerequisite for the Programme Entry bids submitted at the end of March following discussion at sub-regional meetings and approval by Council Executives or Cabinets.
12. In March the DfT confirmed that they will not be undertaking any work to review these bids, including the initial compliance check. Again they have confirmed that any work undertaken on these schemes will be at the authorities' risk.

13. This situation has left the authorities balancing the need to undertake key development tasks to maintain momentum, whilst not incurring expenditure undertaking significant work at risk. This is particularly an issue for North Fringe to Hengrove Package given the scale, complexity and challenging programme. The compromise has been to identify key tasks, such as progressing Gateway Reviews; continuing engagement with the Highways Agency, Network Rail and other interests; as well as coordinating activities with the Ashton Vale to Temple Meads Rapid Transit scheme to develop a suitable means for procuring Rapid Transit services.

#### *Multi-Area Agreement*

14. As part of the Multi-Area Agreement (MAA) concluded with Government in September 2009, a number of transport actions were identified to seek ways to accelerate the delivery and reduce the development costs of major transport schemes. These included a commitment from Government to:
  - Pilot a more collaborative approach to scheme development for the North Fringe to Hengrove Package involving early and ongoing engagement with the DfT to ensure a better and shared understanding of the schemes objectives, elements and timescales. This process has brought benefit and has helped this scheme progress from inception to major scheme bid for Programme Entry in under a year.
  - Enhance complementary working with the Highways Agency. To facilitate this a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and supporting Action Plan has been produced and approved by the Joint Transport Executive Committee. This has provided immediate benefits in the development of North Fringe to Hengrove Package where positive engagement with the Highways Agency has been fundamental to bid submission.
  - Ensure more effective engagement and influence with the Rail Industry to increase investment in rail infrastructure and rolling stock and secure more say in the scheduling and capacity of trains through an MoU planned for approval at the Joint Transport Executive Committee on 2 July 2010. This will include the progression of the two rail schemes included in the RFA2 programme, Portishead Rail Corridor and the Greater Bristol Metro.
15. More broadly, the MAA identified the need for a sub-regional Delivery and Infrastructure Investment Plan progressed through the Single Conversation. The substantial growth in homes supported by this Plan is underpinned by the delivery of the transport infrastructure set out in the current RFA2 Major Transport Schemes Programme.

## *Regional Funding Allocation and Spending Review*

16. Given the impact of the recession on public finance RFA funding is likely to be reduced in the coming years. The DfT previously asked the Region to carry out 'scenario planning' to consider how it would respond to reduced Government funding. This work focused on identifying a range of high-level issues which would need to be considered as part of the review of the RFA programme. These include: developing an evidence base to support the re-examination of regional priorities; the balance in reductions between maintenance and improvement funding; increased emphasis on high value smaller schemes; and innovation and smarter delivery (eg new procurement practices, greater use of Regional Infrastructure Fund, more partnership working).
17. Once the required reduction in funding is known there will be a more focused review of the RFA2 programme. Regional meetings are planned for the Transport and Infrastructure Board on 29 June 2010 and Strategic Leaders Board on 20 July 2010, but given the challenging agenda, and need for a sound evidence base, a further cycle of meetings is likely to be necessary.

### **Environmental Impact Assessment**

18. The Joint Local Transport Plan includes an environmental impact assessment. The development of individual Major Transport Schemes also includes the preparation of an environmental impact assessment.

### **Recommendation**

That the Board note the progress made with the West of England Transport Major Schemes Programme, and give its views.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - West of England RFA2 Prioritised Major Schemes Programme

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# Appendix 1

## West of England RFA2 Prioritised Major Schemes Programme

