

CAMPAIGN for BETTER TRANSPORT

STATEMENT to WoEP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 12.12.2008

Whilst mindful of the pressures faced by the West of England Partnership, Campaign for Better Transport continues to have concerns that the organisation's name does not reflect the area it serves – there being at least two other "West of England" organisations in the region. Perhaps at some future meeting consideration could be given to a name which the people it serves will understand, similar to the Greater Bristol Rail Network. A strap line "Serving Bath City Region", or "Travel Bath & Wiltshire" the latter similar to the West Midlands where one sees "Travel Wolverhampton" or "Travel Coventry".

Integrated Transport Authority :

A flyer is attached which succinctly indicates the numbers of cities with ITA type authorities and the benefits which could accrue to those living in, commuting to or visiting the Greater Bristol Travel Area – an area which is far wider than the present boundaries of the WoEP and will necessitate in depth co-operation with the authorities of Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Somerset. All three have to understand the contribution which their residents make to the congestion within the city region.

Failure to grasp the opportunity of forming the equivalent of a PTA will, in the opinion of CfBT, leave your authority and its officers, a legacy of problems in delivery of transport improvements. For instance, at present the Showcase Bus Routes stop short at the boundary between Bristol and S.Glos, a boundary which is invisible to the travelling public, but there is a sudden absence of timetables, shelters not cleaned or repaired, bus stops fallen to the ground – this on Routes 41, 43, 44 and 45 in the Kings Road, Hanham, Warmley areas. Similarly if you travel on the new X39 route where two and a half million pounds has been spent on new vehicles, most of the stops are damaged or graffitied and in the Brislington area, bus shelters wrecked and incorrect information whilst in that "village" two bus stops are standing, but buses only stop at one of them. These are examples of non-delivery from the point of view of the passenger. Those in Keynsham are also damaged and graffitied whilst in Saltford there are no bus timetables. There is also very little enforcement of bus lane measures by the police in Bristol or Bath, or traffic enforcement officers for example. Notification of any such situation on the part of the public is difficult – which of the four authorities should one inform and an answer is rarely given.

An ITA would give the passenger a clear focus for information, and as in Centro, any damage could be set right within three days.

On the local rail network, whilst we welcome the four extra carriages for the Cardiff/Taunton Cross City service (just some of the engines and coaches whose removal to New Zealand State Railway was halted by DfT), in Centro there are extra carriages on most of their lines, whilst the West Midlands have a new service from Worcester to Gloucester due in part to successful negotiations between Centro, Gloucestershire CC and Government, but also due to Centro employing railway planners and those experienced in rail franchising arrangements taking ultimate responsibility. However, in Tyne & Wear there are metro services based on the suburban lines around Newcastle and is about to upgrade its local railway with new trains and station improvements, all with Government grant.

Obviously, in order to create the type of metro system passengers enjoy in Tyne & Wear or Manchester, we need to bring into use not only the Portishead line, but that through Avonmouth and Henbury which would also serve Cribbs Causeway. Services of the same metro type also need to run on the suburban lines out to Warminster, Frome, Swindon, Gloucester and Taunton. This aim could come to fruition were Tram Train to be introduced through the centre of Bristol, from Portishead, through the Harbour railway, Cabot Circus to Temple Meads Plot 6 Interchange. It is critical to the metro that the rapid transit system does not undermine that goal. So important these elements are compatible, or else the latter takes alternative routes, in which case rapid transit needs to use the Long Ashton bypass, Cumberland Basin to Princes Bridge. The WoEP should bear in mind the

Government funding which enabled the Stourbridge line to become operational with light rail – Centro having a fleet of vehicles to serve this community.

CfBT also believe it is important that the WoEP participates in the PACT meetings recently set up by Sgt. Mark Harris of the British Transport Police. Banes has been represented at the first two meetings but vandalism and anti-social behaviour is unfortunately widespread across the entire WoEP travel area – for instance most of the vending machines on the suburban network are not working, i.e. Keynsham's is missing, and those at Nailsea and Bradford on Avon are often attacked. The Ticket Offices at Oldfield Park and Keynsham are not staffed in the morning, whilst car parks and platforms remain slippery and ungritted. This is all indicative of the lack of cohesion across the travel area and the public have a right to expect a far better standard throughout.

CfBT has grave concern at the WoEP's employment of a publicity officer, when there are but two Inspectors in the whole of Bristol, and four covering both bus and rail elsewhere – two part time. If there is money to be spent, we believe it should be spent on delivery.

Thank you.

Anne Lock/David Redgewell