

The West of England Partnership

Joint Transport Executive Members Meeting

20 October 2008
Emersons Green Village Hall

Present

Cllr Charles Gerrish, Bath and North East Somerset Council
Cllr Mark Bradshaw, Bristol City Council
Cllr Elfan Ap Rees, North Somerset Council
Cllr Brian Allinson, South Gloucestershire Council

In attendance

David Trigwell, Bath and North East Somerset Council
David Bishop, Bristol City Council
Colin Knight, Bristol City Council
Karuna Tharmanantha, North Somerset Council
Peter Jackson, South Gloucestershire Council
Stuart Hook, South Gloucestershire Council
Terry Wagstaff, West of England Partnership
Bill Davies, West of England Partnership
James White, West of England Partnership
Pete Davis, West of England Partnership
John Malyckyj, West of England Partnership

The Chair, Cllr Gerrish, reminded Executive Members that the meeting could not yet make formal decisions. However, members' opinions were important in guiding sub-regional schemes and initiatives.

1. Public Forum

David Redgewell, Campaign for Better Transport (CfBT), congratulated Bath and North East Somerset Council and First Great Western for their management of the improvements being made to Bath Spa over the previous two weekends and commented on the following:

- The possible use of any ex-rail track bed for bus rapid transit, which CfBT oppose;
- Use of the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) money to fund rail improvements and he sought reassurance that the West of England would seek funding for rail schemes through that mechanism;
- A suggested meeting between the Partnership and Wiltshire County Council to discuss the funding of rail projects within that authority;
- Consideration given to the formation of a Transport Board;

- Support for the Callington Road Link, provided it includes public transport;
- That, in considering the Weston Package, the plan should include the provision of a new bus station for Weston-super-Mare;
- That travel information at stations across the sub-region should be of uniform appearance.

Keith Walton, Severnside Community Railway Partnership stated that the information displayed at railway stations needed to be as comprehensive as possible with all modes of transport covered.

2. Transport Major Scheme Bid – Weston Package

Karuna Tharmananthar outlined the progress made and the future programme for the development of the Weston Package Bid.

Executive Members then commented on the following:

- The proposed new road across the airfield, which had been outlined in the presentation, but did not form part of the package. It was explained that funding was being sought from the Regional Infrastructure Fund and North Somerset officers had entered into preliminary discussions with the funding body.
- The provision of a Park and Ride. It was clarified that only one site would be used, and that the preferred option was still to be confirmed.
- Members expressed their support for an approach that used transport measures as a means for tackling social and economic deprivation.

3. Transport Major Scheme Bid – Rapid Transit: Ashton Vale to Temple Meads

Cllr Allinson expressed disappointment at the way the item was headed as he felt that it should be called “Ashton Vale to Emersons Green Phase One” as this would emphasise the further phase and the idea that it was a wider sub-regional scheme. Colin Knight noted Cllr Allinson’s comments and explained that part of his report would set the wider context of the rapid transit network. He then outlined progress in terms of the proposed route and technology to be used.

Cllr Allinson felt that the report settled some concerns that he and South Gloucestershire colleagues had about the latter phases. He was pleased that progress had been made and asked if it was planned that the vehicles described would be used in the latter phases. Colin Knight said that it was possible that would be the case but with each phase there would be the need to re-examine the options.

Cllr Bradshaw welcomed the report and supported the previous remarks by saying that the first phase was part of an aspiration to create a rapid transit (RT) system that would serve the whole sub-region. He asked that officers clarify the position of the utilities in relation to the possible provision of light rail. It was explained that the issue was one of access to equipment when slabs were laid to accommodate such a system if lines could not be diverted. The layout and space of the current road layout meant that the utilities would need to have their equipment buried beneath tracks.

Cllr Ap Rees was encouraged by what he had seen and said it was good to see that there was the possibility of the X1 service connecting to the RT system and also a connection to the Portishead rail line. He asked about the capacity of Long Ashton Park and Ride and whether it would be able to cope with increased use generated by the RT system. Colin Knight responded by explaining that usage was currently running at 700-800 vehicles per day with a capacity of 1,500, so it was felt that this would be adequate to meet the needs of the RT system, but longer-term expansion would be a possibility.

The Chair observed that there was the potential to extend the RT system yet further with the possibility of the expansion of South Bristol and this gave the potential for co-operation between North Somerset and Bristol Councils to ensure that developers would contribute to costs through Section 106 agreements.

4. Rail Update

James White provided an update on current and upcoming rail issues in the West of England. Cllr Allinson asked if it would be possible to use the term "Greater Bristol Metro" rather than "Bristol Metro". It was explained that the term had been chosen by First Great Western (FGW), but it was agreed to feed this back to FGW.

Cllr Allinson asked if any thought had been given to promoting tourism along the Portishead line in the way that the West Somerset line used steam and modern trains to transport commuters. Cllr Ap Rees said that it hadn't been considered, and if a group of steam enthusiasts came forward then he felt that there would be issues to overcome with Network Rail.

Cllr Bradshaw welcomed the increased use of the Severn Beach Line and supported the provision of the Clifton Down turnback as a means of increasing reliability. Once the Joint Committee had been established he suggested that Network Rail and the Department for Transport be invited to a meeting to discuss rail issues affecting the sub-region. He also highlighted the need for inter-modal facilities at Temple Meads or nearby to provide a passenger interchange.

Cllr Gerrish noted the 27% increase in the use of the Severn Beach line, but asked if there was any information available which would indicate a drop in the use of parallel bus services. He also raised the issue of access at Keynsham Station for people with disabilities. Although the principal for improvements had been accepted, nothing had yet been done and he felt that the Partnership could make representations to Network Rail, whilst acknowledging that the railways are exempt from the provision of the Disability Discrimination Act. He was concerned that increased use of Portishead Station could create parking problems on the surrounding roads and this needed to be looked at further to cope with any future, further expansion.

The Chair commented that as the sub-region was considered to be second in the country in terms of growth it should have a rail infrastructure to reflect that. Cllr Bradshaw said that he felt that the Partnership should make direct contact with the new ministers that had been appointed following the Government reshuffle to emphasise the points made by the Chair.

The Executive Members agreed to endorse First Great Western's bid to the Department for Transport for 11 new carriage trains on the Cardiff to Portsmouth line (via Bristol and Bath) route.

ACTION:

James White to arrange meeting between Ministers and Executive Members.

5. Regional Funding Advice – Regional Funding Allocation for Transport Major Schemes

Pete Davis outlined the Government guidance and timetable for the extension to the Regional Funding Allowance (RFA). The Chair felt that it was not sufficiently clear that the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the RFA were linked and the Partnership needed to emphasise this link more clearly. Cllr Allinson supported this, stating that the North Fringe to Hengrove Package was crucial if the proposed number of new homes were to be built in line with that proposed in the RSS. Cllr Bradshaw shared this viewpoint; delivery of that package would be crucial to maintaining a vibrant local economy.

6. Joint Local Transport Plan – 2008 Progress Review

Bill Davis presented a working draft of the Joint Local Transport Plan (LTP) Progress Review 2008 to be submitted to the Government Office of the South West in November. Executive Members then commented on and welcomed the increase in the use of buses, it was acknowledged that the methods for counting were now more robust and therefore more accurate.

Cllr Bradshaw welcomed the improvement in accident figures but wondered if the four authorities were doing enough to target the groups that were most at risk, highlighting people living in the most deprived areas and young moped riders as most at risk of being involved in a road traffic accident. He wondered if too much reliance was placed on speed cameras and if there were other effective methods of improving road safety; for example, further investment in car activated road signs, which seek to change driver behaviour. Cllr Ap Rees said that in North Somerset the use of enforcement cameras had been greatly reduced with investment now being directed into vehicle activated signs.

Bill Davis explained investment was usually targeted on accident hotspots where injury had occurred; it was something that the Road Safety Partnership was continuing to review.

Executive Members then discussed air quality and agreed that driver education could be used to improve both driving habits and fuel economy whilst having a positive impact on air quality.

David Bishop said that, with the completion of Cabot Circus, the new traffic control measures in place and First Bus investing in 46 new buses, it was expected that the air quality in central Bristol would improve and the target would be met within three years. It was reported that the Joint Scrutiny Committee on 10 October had suggested a more challenging approach to targets in the next plan. Officers' advice was that a pragmatic approach was more appropriate as the first LTP had taken the

former approach and targets had been missed. Executive Members indicated their support for this advice.

7. Transport Projects

The planned use of the style and theme for West of England transport projects was discussed. There were two options available in terms of promoting the concept: either an incremental approach adopted by using the proposed logo and theme as each new project was launched or one event to launch the “travel+” brand. Several opportunities were identified which could take advantage of the brand including GBBN, the Severn Beach line, FGW’s Bristol Metro, Rapid Transit and the Weston Package using a step by step approach. The first use of the brand would be for GBBN and for rapid transit consultation in late October.

Next meeting:

Thursday 22 January 10.00am, Council House, Bristol

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