



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE SOUTH WEST

Mr Terry Wagstaff
Chief Executive
West of England Partnership
Wilder House
Wilder Street
Bristol
BS2 8PH

2 Rivergate
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6EH

tel: 0117 900 1819
fax: 0117 900 1916
date: 31st December 2008
e-mail:
hilary.neal@gosw.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.gosw.gov.uk

Dear Terry,

**DEC 2008 JLTP2 MID-TERM PROGRESS REVIEW - WEST OF ENGLAND
PARTNERSHIP**

Thank you for submitting your mid-term progress report describing the first two years of delivery of your Second Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP2). The report has provided Government Office for the South West and the Department for Transport with a good opportunity to see how the objectives and targets set out in your JLTP2 are being progressed. On 12 December I met with Barbara Davies and the Heads of Transport in the 4 authorities in the West of England to finalise discussions about progress, and this letter summarises the position.

The main focus of the review has been to ascertain how well you are meeting the objectives and targets you set in your JLTP2 and also a consideration of the opportunities or threats to delivery. This letter does not form a detailed assessment with associated grading mechanisms and performance funding, but is a means of providing support and challenge to help you meet the stated aims of your JLTP2. Overall we consider that your LTP2 strategies are being delivered and that you have made considerable progress in the first two years of LTP2 both in delivery and keeping the majority of your targets on track.

We are very pleased about the considerable progress you have made in overcoming the complex legal and financial responsibilities required in order to set up an enhanced governance procedure, with the expectation of a Joint Transport Committee being established in January 2009. Together with the planned joint delivery vehicle this should give you much greater capability to progress the key transport projects that are necessary to support the needs of the West of England sub-region. The creation of enhanced governance for transport will provide greater confidence (both at national and regional level) in the ability of the sub-region to deliver key transport infrastructure to support wider economic growth, especially if this is combined with similar strengthened governance arrangements for associated areas of partnership activity, such as in planning and housing delivery. We consider that the opportunities that could be provided

by a Multi-Area Agreement for the West of England, including transport as a key theme, should be grasped as a priority for action in the new year.

You will have seen the guidance issued by the Department for Transport under s96 of the Local Transport Act 2008 about governance reviews and the publication of governance schemes which gives advice on the possibilities available for providing new arrangements for integrated transport, including the creation of joint committees. We consider that your planned new joint committee will already provide substantial advantages for the West of England, but the partnership might want to reflect on whether a review, within the terms of the Act, could build further on these improvements in due course.

At the meeting on 12th December 2008, we discussed positive outcomes where delivery was on track or ahead of schedule. The Partnership Office has helpfully prepared a summary identifying three categories of performance for the 21 JLTP2 mandatory and local indicators compared to their trajectories for 2007/08 –namely: (i) those targets ‘on track’; (ii) those where there is ‘no clear evidence’ and (iii) those where you are ‘not on track’. 18 of the indicators are reported as being ‘on track’ which shows a considerable progress over the first two years of JLTP2.

There are some limited areas of concern where we consider mitigating measures need to be put in place to ensure your JLTP2 is fully implemented by the end of its five-year term in March 2011. A key focus of our comments is the extent to which your report matches the original aims set out in your JLTP and how its delivery coincides with the priorities set out in your recently signed Local Area Agreements (and the emerging Multi-Area Agreement), local development frameworks, sustainable community strategies and other relevant corporate/local strategies.

We are pleased to see that, as a Partnership, you have made considerable progress in your area in relation to three of the four “shared priorities for transport”, namely *Delivering Accessibility, Tackling Congestion and the Network Management Duty and Road Safety*. You are to be congratulated on these improvements, which will help to enhance the lives of residents of the four unitary authorities covered by the West of England Partnership.

Your work on improving accessibility to healthcare and employment is highly commendable. Coupled with your partnership delivery of bus showcase corridors you have achieved a small but significant increase in patronage, even though the return for 2007/08 was 2% less than for 2006/07. It is more than likely that the 2008/09 patronage figure will show a significant increase as a result of the national concessionary scheme which came into force last April. There is a continued need to monitor the situation and respond accordingly. As the Greater Bristol Bus Network and Bath Package schemes are progressed, we will expect to see the more stretching targets agreed in JLTP2 come into play.

Congestion is obviously still a major concern to central government in the 10 largest cities, of which Bristol is one. You are well on track to achieve the target of limiting journey time increases to 14% between 2005/06 and 2010/11, with a small reduction in 2006/07 despite a 1.2% increase in person miles over the same period. We were particularly pleased to see the continued increase in cycling – a trend generally not found

elsewhere in the South West. Especial praise is due for your successful bid for Bristol and part of South Gloucestershire to become the first 'Cycling City' in June this year and we look forward to seeing an accelerated increase in cycling and potentially a suitably stretching target set for JLTP3. It is generally acknowledged that 'the school run' is a major cause of congestion, at least in the am peak, so it is gratifying to see that you have already met your 2010 target from a relatively high percentage of >40% only 5 years ago. We and DfT colleagues are continuing to support you as you develop your potential TIF bid. As you know the Government continues to be committed to supporting local schemes that combine public transport improvements with demand management through congestion charging and to working closely with you over the coming months..

We were pleased to see that you are intending to use the Local Area Agreement legislation to not only progress your response to the requirements of the 2004 Traffic Management Act, but also to deliver improved bus punctuality. We would urge you to ensure that the embryonic Multi Area Agreement is seen as a key delivery mechanism and should be used to fully support the cross cutting role transport has in delivering wider sub-regional objectives. We look forward to seeing a finalised Joint Network Management Plan in the next year or so.

Your *Road Safety* performance over the sub-region is now back on-track and you look like achieving the revised, albeit minimum, targets agreed in negotiating JLTP2. It is perhaps unfortunate that recent press coverage highlighted Bristol as one of the worst performing authorities when benchmarked against the 1994-98 KSI baseline. The article failed to acknowledge that road safety was now very much a function of the recently formed West of England Road Safety Partnership which is adopting a much more holistic approach to casualty reduction. While pleased to see that by 2007 you had already achieved your JLTP2 targets for road safety, we are keen to encourage you to continue to give this area its fair share of available resource in order to achieve even better results.

Our main area of continued concern relates to is the impact of traffic on *Air Quality*. The removal of the Avonmouth area from the Bristol AQMA, while welcome, has been offset by the need to declare an additional area around the Fishponds Road corridor. With the showcase corridor bus strategy for this corridor now in place, coupled with the increased powers you have to control illegal parking, we look forward to seeing improvements in this corridor over the remainder of the JLTP2 period. Similarly, it was disappointing to learn of the need to considerably extend the Bath AQMA. Again, we look to the improvements to congestion that will flow from the implementation of the Bath Transportation Package delivering a step improvement in air quality within the city. It is recognised that the relationship between traffic and air quality is very complex and requires a considerable effort in terms of data collection and modelling to provide rigorous results. That, coupled with the pressures on growth in the urban core areas, is a considerable challenge and you are not alone in finding the targets set difficult to achieve.

You have made good progress in gaining Full Approval for the Greater Bristol Bus Network in May 2008 and Programme Entry for the Bath Package in October 2007. DfT has provided feedback on Major Scheme progress in the letter to you from Bronwyn Hill dated 25th November 2008. The increasing challenge faced by the West of England in developing and accelerating delivery of the programme of major transport schemes

needed to meet the needs of the sub-region cannot be overstated. It will be important to realise the capacity necessary to meet the challenge both within the individual authorities and at partnership level.

At the recent Network Management Duty event, colleagues from DfT confirmed that they will send regional summary reports to authorities on the Network Management Duty and Guidance Intervention Criteria by 31 December 2008. These should be taken into account as you deliver the remaining elements of your LTP2 and be incorporated in your next progress report which it is anticipated will be requested at the end of the plan period in 2011. As with this review, that progress report is likely to be approached as a tool for analysing progress and supporting future delivery, rather than as a formal assessment.

I hope you have found our comments helpful and I look forward to a continuing dialogue with you. If you would like any further advice or support in carrying out your planned schemes or monitoring targets please do not hesitate to contact peter.bartlett@gosw.gsi.gov.uk.

I am writing in similar terms to Jan Ormondroyd, Amanda Deeks, John Everitt and Graham Turner.

Yours sincerely

HILARY NEAL
Deputy Regional Director
Environment, Transport and Climate.