

West of England Partnership
5 February 2009

Weston Package and Rapid Transit Transport Major Scheme Bids Update

Purpose

1. To inform the Partnership of the major scheme submissions for the Rapid Transit route from Ashton Vale to Temple Meads and Weston Package Phase 1 and seek their views, prior to consideration of the bid by the cabinets of Bristol City Council and North Somerset Council, on 2 February 2009 and 17 February 2009 respectively.

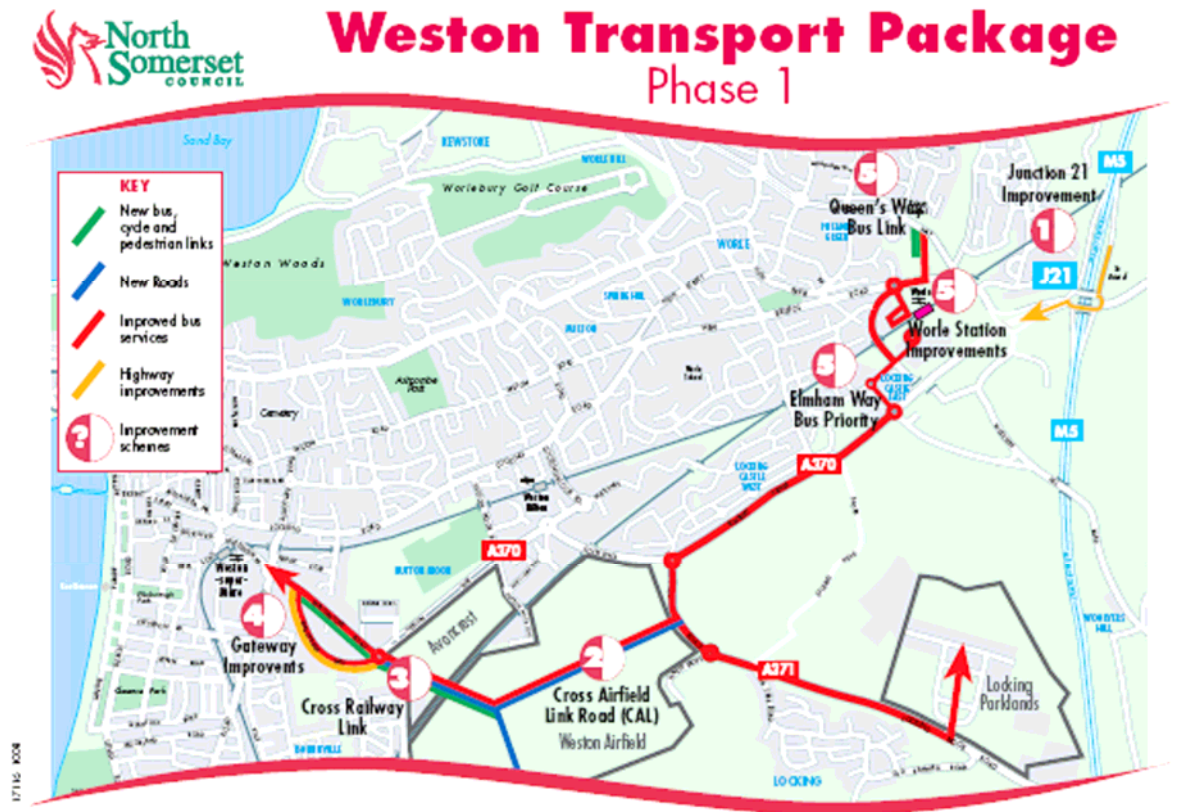
Background

2. Major schemes costing more than £5m require funding from the Department for Transport (DfT), supplemented by a 10% local contribution. The DfT has very detailed guidance for promoters of major schemes. Consequently significant time, funding and effort are required to develop major schemes to a standard that is acceptable to the DfT.
3. Schemes have to go through the major scheme bidding process comprising 3 stages: programme entry (the stage being sought here for the Weston Package and Rapid Transit), conditional approval and full approval. To achieve programme entry schemes have to demonstrate that they meet DfT appraisal criteria including value for money, risk, deliverability and a benefit to cost ratio of at least 2.0. In addition major schemes must first be prioritised by the South West Regional Assembly through the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) process. These priorities are currently subject of a review known as RFA2.
4. An extensive programme of major schemes was set out in the Joint Local Transport Plan. The first of these, the Greater Bristol Bus Network gained full approval in May 2008. Implementation has now started. The second bid, the Bath Package gained programme entry in October 2007. Both schemes demonstrate to the RFA2 process the West of England's commitment to and progress with delivery.

Weston Package

5. In the last two decades Weston-super-Mare has seen significant residential development on its eastern fringe. The demand for travel in Weston will significantly increase with the development proposed in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy. Hence the Weston Package seeks to address both existing and future transport problems and issues.
6. Total estimated cost of Phase 1 (for construction 2011-2016) is £67.6 million of which £33.9 million would be sought from the DfT with the remainder from local contributions. Proposed schemes are listed below and shown in Figure 1.
 - Improvements to M5 Junction 21 – widening slips and traffic signals.

- Cross Airfield Link - new strategic highway to improve access to existing and future employment areas.
- Airfield Bridge Link - all purpose highway link over the main railway line between the Cross Airfield Link and A370 Gateway.
- A370 Gateway – improve area between the town centre and proposed urban extension for all road users.
- Worle Station – new car park, bus interchange and passenger facilities.



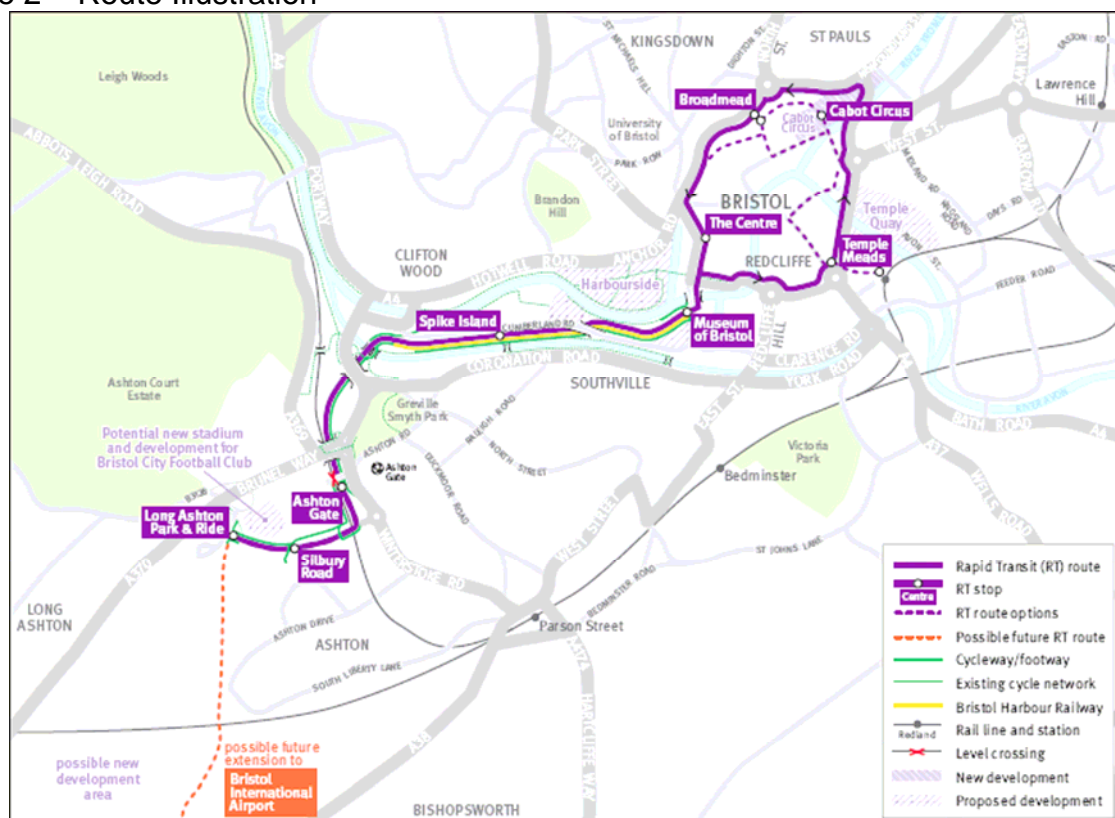
7. At the inception of the Weston Package it was anticipated that the local contribution would be secured from developer contributions. The recession has made this assumption very problematic and the short-term prospects for further contributions are not good.
8. In consequence, North Somerset Council is discussing options with the DfT. The Council is proposing that the bid for the Weston Package Phase 1 would have two phases:
 - a) M5 Junction 21, A370 Gateway and Worle station (£14.1m total, of which £11.05m sought from DfT, constructed 2011-15); and
 - b) Cross Airfield Link and Airfield Bridge Link (up to the total cost described in paragraph 6 plus inflation from 2015 to date of construction post-2016).
9. Public consultation was undertaken in Autumn 2008. The consultation was web-based and advertised in North Somerset Council's magazine, which is distributed to all households and businesses in North Somerset, as well as through the local media. The feedback received was generally positive.
10. A bid for the Weston Package Phase 1 will be submitted to the DfT in early 2009.

Rapid Transit

11. The Greater Bristol Strategic Transport Study, June 2006 included a network of rapid transit corridors, three of which are included in the South West Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) and the Joint Local Transport Plan. Rapid Transit will offer a real alternative to the car, promoting public transport, tackling congestion, supporting the sub-region's economy and improving quality of life. As well as encouraging the use of public transport, the parallel provision of walking and cycling facilities will encourage healthier lifestyles and improve air quality.

12. A major scheme bid for the first route from Ashton Vale to Bristol Temple Meads will be submitted to the DfT in February 2009 is shown in Figure 2. Key features include:
 - Segregated route to minimise journey time and maximise reliability
 - Every 5 minutes service in the peak
 - Modern 'Streetcar' style articulated vehicles with capability for hybrid power source
 - Parallel walking and cycling infrastructure
 - Link to potential new Bristol City Football Club stadium and future Portishead rail line interchange
 - Shared use of the Harbourside Railway retaining steam on Sunday
 - Prince Street Bridge rebuilt or modified to accommodate Rapid Transit
 - New interchange at Bristol Temple Meads
 - North Somerset bus services will use the Rapid Transit route subject to quality controls.
 - Potential future expansion to Bristol International Airport and possible new Ashton Vale community
 - £47.3m cost with 10% local contribution.

Figure 2 – Route Illustration



13. Public consultation on the proposals was undertaken during October/November 2008. 36,000 invitation flyers were sent out to households within all wards along the proposed corridor. A series of exhibitions was held and attended by approximately 900 people. Additional meetings have also been held with interested groups in response to the exhibitions.
14. In total 112 paper questionnaires and 169 on-line responses were received. Of these 65% were in favour of the scheme and 20% against, with 15% undecided. The most common concern is that the proposal is not rail based. The Business Community, GWE Business West, Broadmead Board and Bristol Alliance, are all supportive.

Summary

15. With the Weston Package and Rapid Transit bids the West of England has two strong schemes for tackling congestion and improving accessibility. Bus users, cyclists, pedestrians and car drivers will all benefit. The schemes demonstrate the West of England is working together. Both bids build on the West of England's track record with the Greater Bristol Bus Network and Bath Package. It is to be hoped that the DfT look favourably on both the Weston Package and Rapid Transit and progress towards programme entry is quick and smooth.

Recommendation

That the Partnership give their views on the major scheme submissions for the Weston Package and the Rapid Transit route between Ashton Vale and Temple Meads, prior to consideration of the bid by the cabinets of Bristol City Council and North Somerset Council, on 2 February 2009 and 17 February 2009 respectively.

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