

**West of England Partnership
Joint Scrutiny
13 March 2009**

Greater Bristol Metro

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of the Greater Bristol Metro scheme for half hourly cross Bristol services and to seek views.

Background

2. The West of England area has witnessed substantial growth in rail travel with passenger doubling over the last ten years. The Office of Rail Regulation's 2006/07 figures indicate continued growth in rail use as the following examples show:

Yate +18.33%
Bristol Parkway +9.59%
Patchway +25.05%
Filton Abbey Wood +2.32%
Worle +10.41%
Bristol Temple Meads +7.96%
Keynsham +11.67%
Oldfield Park +13.09%
Bath Spa +8.70%

3. Existing services have suffered from short formed trains leading to overcrowding and even passengers left behind on stations.
4. To address these issues an expression of interest to develop the Greater Bristol Metro scheme was submitted for consideration by the South West Regional Assembly as part of the Regional Funding Allocation 2 (RFA2) process. The RFA2 is a source of funding available for major transport schemes costing more than £5m and covers the period up to 2018/19.
5. The concept of a Greater Bristol Metro was first mooted by Andrew Haines, the then Chief Operating Officer of First Great Western at their Stakeholder event on 5 March 2008. This bid draws upon that concept backed up by work undertaken by the Rail Project Group made up of officers from Network Rail, First Great Western, Department for Transport, Government Office for the South West, West of England Partnership and the four unitary authorities.
6. The bid links to the Joint Local Transport Plan (March 2006) Rail Action Plan proposals for enhancing cross Bristol rail services and Policy HMA1 in the draft revised Regional Spatial Strategy (July 2008). This Policy identifies tackling congestion on the corridors between Yate, Bristol and Weston-super-Mare as a priority with the need for targeted new infrastructure to unlock pinch points.

Aims

7. The Greater Bristol Metro aims to deliver an enhanced local rail network of half hourly cross city services into and across the West of England (see Figure One). It will increase patronage, reduce car use and congestion on key corridors, improve the reliability of services and provide additional capacity.
8. Through new infrastructure and rolling stock it will support housing and employment growth along the key rail corridors of Weston-super-Mare to Yate and Cardiff to Bath both via Bristol Parkway, Filton Abbey Wood and Bristol Temple Meads.
9. The Greater Bristol Metro will help facilitate the levels of development set out in the draft revised Regional Spatial Strategy 2006 – 2026 (July 2008) of up to 12,000 new households in Weston-super-Mare, 10,500 in the South West Urban Extension to Bristol, 3,000 at Yate and Keynsham, 8,000 in Bath and a further 51,000 within the Bristol urban area. Without it existing train services will struggle to meet the increased demand from rail travel arising from the Regional Spatial Strategy.

Features

10. The Greater Bristol Metro (RFA 2 proposal) focuses on providing:
 - Enhanced half hourly clock face services on Yate to Weston-super-Mare and Cardiff to Westbury via Bath and Bristol corridors
 - New high capacity rolling stock – faster acceleration, more economical, multiple doors. This is additional rolling stock and it is not to replace existing units
 - New infrastructure including Weston-super-Mare bay platform and Yate turn back to enable trains to turn around. New infrastructure to be Disability Discrimination Act compliant and CCTV provided as appropriate.
11. It would link to:
 - Cardiff to Portsmouth inter urban service via First Great Western's bid to the Department for Transport for a fleet of 11 new four carriage trains
 - Capacity improvements - 4th platform at Bristol Parkway and resignalling between Bath Spa and Bristol Temple Meads through Network Rail's Business Plan (2009 – 2014)
12. Future development, although not included in this scheme and all subject to funding, could include aspirations for:
 - Half hourly services on the Severn Beach line linked to reopened Portishead (separate RFA2 bid and possible Transport Innovation Fund) and Henbury lines
 - Possible extension to end points of Taunton, Gloucester, Chippenham, Trowbridge and Frome.
 - Double line between Worle and Weston-super-Mare, third line on the Filton Bank, Westbury station improvements and Chippenham third platform via the Route Utilisation Strategy (consultation draft expected April 2009)
 - Four car trains standard with possible extension to six along with platform lengthening

13. The Greater Bristol Metro will seek to follow the examples set in the West Midlands, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and Merseyside for networks of frequent, cross city and suburban rail services.
14. Figures provided by Network Rail (2007) give expected costs of:
- Weston-super-Mare bay platform £2.95m
 - Yate turn-back £2.75m
15. It is estimated that 5 new trains will be required to operate the additional services. Based on figures for the new trains to be built for the Huddersfield to Sheffield line rolling stock costs are estimated at £9m for 5 new trains (2007 prices).
16. If the Greater Bristol Metro bid were successful a local contribution of at least 10% (from developers and/or local authorities) would be required.

Timetable

17. The RFA2 list of schemes was considered by the South West Regional Assembly's Executive Board and the Leaders' Board on 13 February 2009 followed by the South West Regional Development Agency's Board on 16 February 2009. A final list of schemes was then submitted to the Government on 27 February 2009.
18. The Greater Bristol Metro (£17.3M of RFA funding) is included in the RFA2 list of schemes with start date of 2017/18. Further work will be required to start to develop a full business case for submission to the Department for Transport (DfT). This is a 3 stage process: programme entry, 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.
19. The DfT has very detailed guidance for submitting major schemes. Consequently significant time, funding and effort are required to develop major schemes to a standard that is acceptable to them. No resources are currently identified for this work. Network Rail and the train operating companies will need to be full partners in developing the business case.

Comment

20. Whilst the bid is relatively modest with its focus on half hourly cross Bristol services on existing lines it does represent a first major step towards enhancing the local rail network. A realistic bid to the RFA2 process stands a far greater chance of receiving funding as well as being deliverable and giving value for money.
21. With congestion costing the local economy £350m a year the Greater Bristol Metro will reduce congestion, improve rail journey time reliability and punctuality and improve access into, out and across the West of England area. New housing and employment areas will benefit through improved access thereby increasing the attractiveness and sustainability of living and working in the sub-region.

Recommendation

Members views on the Greater Bristol Metro bid are requested.

Report presented by: James White, West of England Partnership

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