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For the attention of Jason Humm

West of England Joint Local Transport Plan 4 Consultation

I am pleased to attach Railfuture's response to this Consultation. Our comments are cross-referenced with the page and section numbers in the Documents.

If anything requires clarification, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Bray
Railfuture
Secretary, Severnside Branch

Section 2 Transport challenges in the West of England

1. We strongly agree with the comments on transport impacts on air quality and public health on page 16. The sentence, “high car dependency, poor air quality and inactive lifestyles pose a major threat to public health” hits the nail on the head.

Section 4 Embracing technology and partnerships

2. If driverless cars (page 21) really do appear on Britain’s roads by the end of 2019 as forecast in the *Times* on 6 February, it becomes more urgent than ever to invest in sustainable modes to reduce the risk of modal shift towards cars. However, the same article quotes Railfuture President Christian Wolmar and Charlie Henderson, a roads specialist with PA Consulting, doubting whether the technology for autonomous vehicles was sufficiently advanced for safe operation in the near future.

Section 6 Connectivity beyond the West of England

3. In principle we support policies B1 (to enhance the competitiveness of major gateways) and B2 (to improve the strategic resilience of the network) stated on page 29. However, we believe the Document has underestimated the role of surface transport gateways, not least rail, for the economy of the region.

Rail access to Bristol Airport

4. We agree with the need for direct rail access to Bristol Airport, as suggested on pages 30-31. The difference above sea levels between the airport (622 feet) and a main line station such as Yatton (16 feet) would favour light rail. Any rail link needs to be capable of conveying light freight into the airport with a view to reducing lorry and van movements.

Supporting the role of Bristol Port, pages 32-33

5. We would support measures such as gauge clearance to increase the capacity of rail links to the port. Enhanced capacity on the lines serving Avonmouth is the way to remove potential conflict between freight and passenger services. As well as being the main rail freight artery to and from Avonmouth, the Henbury loop could carry direct trains to the Bristol Cruise Terminal from outside the region. The Shirehampton park and ride will have direct rail access when Portway Parkway station opens in 2020.

6. The Portishead line is important for freight via Royal Portbury Dock. MetroWest is designed to enable this to continue when the line is reopened to passengers.

Improving strategic resilience of the network, page 33

7. The quadrupling of the main line on Filton Bank, completed in December 2018, has increased the resilience of the rail network in the region. It is indeed a major gateway between the West of England, South Wales, the Midlands and the North. The increased rail capacity through North Bristol presents an opportunity to mitigate the impacts of toll-free Severn bridges.

8. We agree with the comments about the role of Bristol Temple Meads station. We hope the masterplan to be produced by Network Rail will address the need for better weather protection on Platforms 3 and 4 which have no waiting room other than Bonaparte's café. These platforms are a wind tunnel in cold weather and the draught affects not only passengers but staff working at the help desk. NR should consider lowering the roof shrouds to reduce the ingress of wind.

9. Bristol Parkway and Bath Spa stations are examples of best practice in interchange between rail and bus services. Our only criticism of the bus shelters outside Parkway station is the lack of seats. We hope that the current refurbishment of the toilets at Parkway will result in a much needed improvement in their ambience.

10. The range and frequency of train services at Weston-super-Mare could be improved by redoubling at least the eastern section of the loop between the station and Worle Junction. The Weston loop was singled in the early 1970s when BR had to make economies to secure Government funding for the resignalling of lines in the Bristol area. It should not be difficult to introduce an hourly service between Weston and London because this operated in the late 1970s, largely to reduce platform occupation at Temple Meads. We agree that Worle station could become a gateway for Bristol Airport but it will need an upgrade of the present minimal passenger accommodation.

11. We strongly support completion of the deferred sections of Great Western electrification to Temple Meads, via Bath Spa and Parkway. It is scandalous that a core UK city has no electrified main line and WECA should press for the scheme to be completed as soon as possible, with priority for the short section (about 5 ½ miles) from Parkway to Temple Meads.

12. We agree that a major upgrade of train services between Bristol, Bath and the South Coast is needed. To attract business travellers, the Cardiff- Portsmouth route needs faster schedules and First Class accommodation. There is a strong case for some express services calling only at the cities (of which there are seven along the route) plus one or two key junction stations such as Westbury and Fareham. Our preferred solution is a hierarchy of services, ie fast, semi-fast and all stations. Extension of MetroWest to Westbury would benefit stations which could be omitted by the fastest trains.

13. Direct trains between Bristol and Bournemouth or Poole are highly desirable and would be best provided by the South West franchise.

14. The Bristol- Weymouth service is too slow and infrequent to attract business passengers. It needs to shake off its branch line image, although the recent deployment of 90 mph Class 166 trains will help. An hourly service at least as far south as Yeovil should be seriously considered when more rolling stock becomes available.

15. Bridgwater needs faster trains to /from Bristol. It is an anomaly that the 33-mile journey by stopping train takes longer than the 45-mile journey on Cross Country from Taunton.

Managing the impact of Severn Bridge tolls removal, page 37.

16. The high cost of housing in Bristol has encouraged commuting from outside the West of England. This does not have to be by car if rail services are developed, eg at Severn Tunnel Junction, which serves a growing area of South Monmouthshire and offers connections to stations in the Bristol area from Chepstow and Lydney.

Section 7 Connectivity within the West of England

Mass transit, pages 42-43

17. In the longer term, light rail or trams could provide high frequency services on corridors not served by MetroWest. An obvious candidate is Bristol- Mangotsfield, serving a heavily populated area and Emerson's Green business park. It is vital that disused rail formations, even if partly obstructed already, are safeguarded as potential routes for light rail with some degree of street running if necessary. For this reason we oppose the Callington Road link, which would make it very difficult to create a light rail route on the former Bristol- Radstock line.

18. Bath is a strong candidate for a light rail or tram system and consideration should be given to using part of the former Midland Railway formation in any scheme.

19. Given the very long timescales for delivering mass transit routes, they should not be planned in detail until after MetroWest Phases 1 and 2 are delivered.

Saltford bus priorities, page 48

20. Reopening Saltford station would be a quicker and more effective way to improve connectivity with Bath and Bristol than spending years and millions of pounds on a Saltford bypass.

Rail, pages 49-50

21. We would not disagree with any of the plans and aspirations listed under this heading. However, delivery will be an issue because WECA will no doubt be competing for funds with other core city authorities. There need to be contingency plans to keep the programme on track in the event of a funding shortfall.

22. The statement (page 50) that extension of services beyond Henbury and new stations at Ashton Gate, Charfield, Constable Road, St. Annes Park and Saltford will be considered "during the life of JLTP4" is too vague. This could be interpreted as being any time up to 2036. The success of existing stations has been well demonstrated by Office of Rail and Road Station Usage figures. A much clearer commitment to these additional stations, with timescales, is needed from WECA.

23. The proposed Bristol Sport arena, which would have 4,000 seats, is another strong reason for a bus/ rail interchange at Ashton Gate, where a station needs to open as soon as possible after the Portishead line is reopened to passengers. We understand that a planning application for the arena will be submitted in the near future.

24. A Henbury loop service would have the advantage of doubling the frequency of services between Bristol and Avonmouth or Henbury because passengers would be able to travel either clockwise or anti-clockwise. Established similar routes include the Cathcart circle (Glasgow), the North Tyneside loop (Tyne & Wear Metro) and the Chandler's Ford loop (Southampton).

25. Many existing stations are sorely in need of improvement to maximise their usefulness. Both Bedminster and Parson Street present a poor image which may discourage many potential users, particularly at night. Despite its importance in the local rail network and a footfall of over 1 million passengers in 2017/18, Filton Abbey Wood has minimal passenger accommodation, no toilets and no interchange with buses.

Rail freight, pages 67-68

26. We welcome the proposal to investigate use of passenger trains to carry freight. Bath Spa, Bristol Temple Meads and Bristol Parkway would be suitable railheads for onward distribution by electric vehicles or cargo bicycles.

27. Sidings at Bath Westmoreland Yard, Bristol East Depot and Bristol Kingsland Road need to be safeguarded for future use by heavy freight.

Section 10 Funding and implementation

28. The experience of the Nottingham workplace parking levy (page 112) is a good example of a virtuous circle of reduced car use, improved public transport and increased city centre trade.

29. It is very important to avoid further delays to MetroWest, as this may result in road schemes gaining priority by default and defeating the object of reducing car use.