

West of England Local Economic Partnership
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For the attention of James White

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Dear James

Joint Transport Study Consultation

Please find attached Railfuture response to the Joint Transport Study Consultation. I have used the Questions in the Transport Vision Summary Document as headings for the response. Should anything require clarification, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Bray

Railfuture
Secretary, Severnside Branch

Railfuture response to West of England Joint Transport Study Consultation Questions**1. Is the level of ambition for the Transport Vision about right?**

Yes, in so far as it seeks to reduce car dependency by improving public transport and helping to inform people's travel choices. However, an objective-led approach is needed, including the improvement of air quality and health benefits from a shift to sustainable modes.

2. Do you think we are proposing the right mix of public transport investment?

It is unclear whether the £1bn for Rail includes investment in the Great Western Route Modernisation, which would be paid for by Central Government. Public transport schemes need to be prioritised and fast tracked, otherwise road projects may get priority through being "shovel ready".

3. To what extent do you agree with the principle of diverting non-local traffic, including on to new roads, to accommodate public transport and cycling schemes?

Any such plans need to be examined on a case by case basis. New bypasses have not always helped bus services run more efficiently over the original road. In Gloucester the former A417 (Barnwood Road and Hucclecote Road) is still congested in the peak hours despite the construction of the Barnwood bypass in 1996. In this particular case, the additional traffic attracted to the new road has created congestion on the old road where the two intersect.

If LRT routes involve using existing roads, there would almost certainly have to be some degree of traffic management to enable the trams to run efficiently. In places this may possibly require some new roads, not necessarily major ones, to divert through traffic.

We would oppose road schemes which would destroy rail formations which have potential to form LRT routes. For instance, the Callington Road proposal would use part of the trackbed of the former Bristol- Radstock line. A LRT route, offering faster journeys than buses, may be feasible in this corridor with a combination of street running and the remaining trackbed.

4. Do what extent do you agree with the concept of a light rail (tram) solution on some rapid transit corridors?

Light and heavy rail cater for different travel markets. The Nottingham tram network has interchanges with heavy rail at Nottingham station and along the southern end of the Robin Hood line. Light rail generally offers more frequent stops than would be desirable on a heavy rail line and its maximum speeds tend to be lower because trams are driven by line of sight rather than in response to signalling. Because trams and light rail vehicles are relatively short, they tend to operate at greater frequencies than on a conventional railway.

For these reasons, we do not recommend conversion of existing rail routes to LRT where these have substantial freight and longer-distance passenger trains. It is unclear from the maps whether the Severn Beach line would continue in its present form or become part of a Henbury loop LRT service, which would appear to use new alignments in the Clifton area and south of Filton. Most freight on the UK rail system is long-distance and might become uncompetitive if it were delayed to fit around frequent LRT services. Freight has shared LRT tracks on the Tyne & Wear Metro in the past, although the freight volumes there were smaller and more intermittent than those currently using the Henbury line.

We hope some of the £2.5bn earmarked for LRT will be used to create routes where there is no existing railway in areas of high traffic potential. These could include a link to Bristol Airport; Bristol- Mangotsfield via Emersons Green; Temple Meads- Bristol Harbour; and routes within Bath including towards Radstock and along the A4 corridor.

5. To what extent do you agree with using financial incentives and financial demand management at a local level to help pay for the transport vision?

Workplace parking levies in Nottingham have helped fund extensions of the Nottingham tram system. A cultural change is needed away from the tendency to regard a car as essential for all journeys. Greater awareness and higher status of the alternatives will help bring this about.

6. What kind of schemes would be most appropriate to deliver an upgrade to sustainable travel between the East Fringe and Bristol City Centre?

The East Fringe needs a railway because bus journeys, eg Kingswood to Parkway station, can be very slow. The former Midland line to Mangotsfield runs through a heavily populated area and should be reopened as a single track to accommodate the cycleway.

7. We'd like to know how much you agree with the following elements of the package:

Marketing and education to change travel behaviour: Travel Plans could be devised with major employers and timetables could promote using trains, trams and buses as a sociable and agreeable choice.

Area improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and buses: Safer cycling routes should aim to reduce illegal pavement cycling which is a hazard to pedestrians.

New railway stations: All those proposed are supported except for the suggested relocation of Keynsham station. The existing station is central for the town, convenient for bus connections and has recently been upgraded with level access between platforms. More work will be undertaken on it to prepare it for the deferred GW electrification scheme.

Freight management: Consolidation centres need to be capable of being rail served. The map appears to show one at Bathampton, which is on a railway as well as near major roads.

8. Are there any other schemes you would like to see in the package?

Rail electrification provides opportunities for new stopping services, eg Bristol- Swindon via Parkway, with stations at Coalpit Heath and Chipping Sodbury. The Weston-super-Mare loop should be redoubled, at least between Worle Junction and Weston, because the single track constrains service enhancements.

A case can be made for reopening the line from Yatton to Clevedon. It would connect with Yatton's half-hourly train services and almost certainly be faster than Metrobus via Nailsea.