

Agenda Item 7 (i) – Supplementary Paper

Response to the West of England Joint Transport Study proposals

Bishopston, Cotham and Redland Neighbourhood Partnership

This is a proposed submission from the Bishopston, Cotham and Redland Neighbourhood Partnership to the West of England Joint Transport Study. Approval for it is requested at the Neighbourhood Partnership meeting on 25th January 2016.

Our neighbourhood comprises three of Bristol's inner-city wards, spanning transport corridors that include the A4018 Whiteladies Road, the A38 Gloucester Road, and the Severn Beach and Filton Bank railway lines. One of the main transport problems in our area is the overcrowded roads. It affects not only ease of travel within our area, but also the health of our residents and the efficiency of our local economy. In particular, the A38 Gloucester Road is a main shopping high street whilst also being one of the most congested routes into and out of the city. On the positive side, our area also has one of the highest levels of cycling to work in the region.

We are particularly likely to be affected by developments to the north of Bristol, including the Cribbs Patchway New Neighbourhood, unless significant improvements are made to the transport infrastructure. Primarily this must be based on bus and rail links to avoid increasing road congestion, plus direct, quality cycle links to the city.

We agree with the overall policy objectives of the Joint Transport Study. In particular, we would emphasise the following:

- Reduce carbon emissions
- Improve quality of life and a healthy natural environment
- Promote accessibility

Here are our specific responses to the 13 concepts drawn up for consultation.

#1. Strengthen and enhance public transport corridors

We agree that this is necessary. In particular, the existing local rail network could be much better used to carry a far larger number of passengers if provided with more frequent services, more stations and better local links to those stations.

For those travelling in to the city from areas not well served by public transport, the expectation should be to transfer from car to train or bus, with better park and ride connections on the urban fringes.

However, it is important not to turn urban shopping streets, such as Gloucester Road, into major through-routes for buses. Road space should be reserved for local transport, especially local buses, local delivery services and cycles.

#2. Extended MetroBus network

Special-purpose routes for buses should not require major road-building, nor the turning of local urban districts into bus-only highways. Rather than spending money on more construction, it would be better spent on improving the general bus infrastructure, including more bus shelters, more reliable travel information, evening services etc.

#3. Extend MetroWest

The highest priority affecting our area would be to build a new station at Ashley Hill. This would be used not only by commuters from Bishopston into Bristol centre, but also for sports fans attending the Gloucester County Cricket Ground, as well as students at local schools and colleges. The growth in use of the Severn Beach line shows that, given frequent enough services, local rail is a very attractive option.

Avonmouth is one of the few areas around Bristol with space for further industrial growth. It is therefore important that the Henbury loop is completed, rather than left as a spur.

#4. MetroWest ++

There is unlikely to be either space or funding to extend the rail network within the Bristol urban area. Therefore the focus should be adding further stations where possible and on improving the local station facilities, such as easy access, service information, ticketing, cycle parking, local shuttle bus connections etc.

#5. Walking and cycling superhighways

We agree that increasing the already high levels of walking and cycling in parts of the area is likely to be highly cost-effective and ought to be a top priority. With the existing density of inner-city areas, however, 'superhighways' is a misleading term - there will not be scope for giving one form of travel exclusive road space at the expense of another. And there is little point in providing walking and cycling routes that do not reach into the denser areas.

What is required is better separation of existing walking and cycling routes from other traffic (and where desirable from each other), through better use of existing road space, traffic signals, road segregation etc.

Cycle routes must be contiguous and high quality - there are too many places where cycle tracks suddenly vanish. Walking routes must also be high quality - unobstructable by parked vehicles, bins, signs etc, and whenever possible not directly adjacent to traffic fumes.

#6. Better connectivity

Under this heading the example is given of "new links could be built to take pressure off key points in the network". This perpetuates the myth that building new roads will help reduce congestion. A requirement for all new housing to have superfast broadband as standard

would genuinely improve 'connectivity' allowing work from home and thus reducing the need to travel.

#7. Pinch points and bottlenecks

Better layout and prioritisation at key junctions may help throughout the road network, not only at the examples mentioned, but the main emphasis should be on reducing the overall amount of motorised traffic and ensuring that pedestrians and cyclists (at both current and desired future levels) are given full consideration in the modelling of these intersections.

#8. Strategic corridor packages

This mentions "improving main highway corridors such as the A38, which could include improved environments for pedestrians and cyclists, linked signals and bus priority".

A corridor is usually seen as a means of getting from one place to another without stopping. This is the wrong approach to roads such as the A38 through Bishopston where local shops and businesses depend on customers and deliveries being able to stop. This is a place where people live and work. The need is to reduce the quantity of motorised traffic, especially during commuting peak hours.

#9. Working better together

Travel in the Greater Bristol region has been blighted by disagreements between local authorities for too long. We would therefore support the goals, as stated, of "Closer integration between the local authorities, de-trunking of highway routes to allow for local control and bus franchising which could contribute towards improving services and regulatory regimes."

One key element in providing better integration would be a shared contactless ticketing system that worked across all the bus and rail operators. As well as making life simpler for travellers, this could be used to provide detailed statistics on travel behaviours that would be shared across all local authorities to help improve schedules and timekeeping.

#10. Local Sustainable Transport Fund

Many of the ideas mentioned under this heading are essential, including smart and multi-modal ticketing, wider use of broadband and home working, and shared mobility such as public cycle hire, car sharing, and car clubs. Initiatives to change attitudes towards travel deserve more attention, including promotion of walking/cycling to school and more diverse business working hours, both of which could be a major help in reducing peak congestion.

Such initiatives should be a core and detailed part of the overall transport strategy, rather than simply relying on bids from interested groups to carry out small-scale improvements.

#11. Regional connectivity

We already have good regional road connectivity, and improvements to the rail network over the next few years should further support inter-regional travel. We do not see the need for significant further expenditure on connections to other regions.

#12. Freight

With the increase in deliveries from internet purchases, both local and remote, there might be great opportunities for consolidating deliveries to residential addresses, not only for consolidated deliveries to retail centres from distribution centres.

Recent developments in cycle courier and delivery services show this can also play a much greater part in getting goods and shopping to people and employment sites, and growth in this area should be supported, including staging points providing interchange, storage and rest facilities for diverse payload carriers.

#13. Travel demand management

We are seeing the gradual extension of residents parking schemes outwards from Bristol centre. That, combined with a workplace levy charge and higher charges for long-stay city-centre parking, may reduce the case for congestion charging - but it still needs to be explored to see how it can support the aims of reducing traffic.

We would like to see transport policy based much more on gathering evidence about the real needs of people, and effects on their health, rather than the supposed needs of current vehicles. In the 20 year period of this study, there are likely to be radical changes to the capabilities of vehicles and to the provision of transport services. For example, on-demand door-to-door services could be possible in selected local areas, and may start to rival mass public transport. Local authorities should look for opportunities to pilot new approaches.

Within the 20-year timeframe, the accepted UK goal is to reduce carbon emissions by 50% below their 1990 level by 2025. All party groups and the current Mayor in Bristol are committed to zero carbon by 2050. It is clear that moving people around must get a lot more carbon efficient. To get people to give up their inefficient and polluting cars requires fast, frequent, comfortable alternatives, including reducing the need to travel. These are unlikely to be provided purely on the basis of large, competing, profit-driven companies, such as existing rail and bus operators. The aim should be to provide a coordinated, integrated, cost-controlled transport framework within which operators can negotiate to provide cost-plus packages of services.

BCR NP Sustainable Travel working group - 14 January 2016