

Growth & Regeneration Scrutiny Commission

6th January 2021

Public Forum



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Questions

Q1: David Redgewell

What progress has been made in discussions with secretary of state for local government, Robert Jenrick MP and ministers for local government, Luke Hall MP on a second Devolution deal to allow North Somerset Council to join WECA mayoral combined authority?; so that the deal can cover improvements in public transport and fund investment in such schemes; Regeneration of Bristol Temple Meads station and Temple quay; the light railway scheme to North Bristol Cribbs Causeway, East Bristol via Lawrence Hill, Easton, Eastville, Fishponds, Downend, Warmley, Oldland Common Bitton, Kelson, Weston, Bath city centre transport interchange; Route to Kingswood area via M32 and UWE Bus station; South Bristol loop via Bristol city centre Bristol Temple Meads, Cumberland Road metro bus route through North Somerset south Bristol link to Bristol Airport and via Withywood Hartcliffe, Hengrove, Whitchurch, Brislington Callington Road link on the North Somerset Railway to Temple Meads interchange and Bristol Broadmead and city centre.

Improvements to Passengers with reduced mobility on local railway stations such as Weston Super Mare Nailsea and Backwell, and Parson street, Bedminster, Lawrence Hill, Stapleton Road; all these station need lifts which will require full Government support for the Department for Transport, Railway improvements and set up a Passengers Transport authority including setting up a Railway executive and full public transport functions including bus infrastructure such as bus station stops and interchanges as well as providing bus service.

This would allow North Somerset Council to join the West of England region plan, investment requires a second Devolution deal.

Answer

- We wanted a meeting but it was cancelled. Twice. We've written to Luke Hall and not had a reply.
- You're right to point to the investment we need in the region in relation to transport. This is something all leaders had agreed should form the basis of any expansion deal with government, as can be seen by reading the prospectus we developed ahead of the meeting with government that never happened.
- Our priority is the mass transit scheme for the transformative effect it will have on our transport network, supporting inclusive economic growth and low carbon.

Q2: David Redgewell

In view of the local government reorganisation of the Somerset region including North Somerset and Bath North East Somerset, with Somerset County Council having requested a delay in the local elections until May 2022, what discussions have taken place with secretary of state to delay the West of England combined authority elections in May 2021 to 2022 to allow a Devolution deal and allow Parliament orders to be laid in the House of Commons and House of Lords, so North Somerset Council can join the combined authority?

In the long term we need to bring Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire and Swindon in the Western Gateway Partnership; and should join WECA mayoral combined authority.

Answer

- Government wrote to Somerset councils to discuss unitary council – before he wrote to WECA leaders about expansion.
- I'm not aware of any conversations regarding delaying the metro mayor elections.
- I agree that in the longer term we should be looking to take a truly regional approach.

Q3: Councillor Huw James, North Somerset Council

Is delaying the May 2021 WECA Mayoral Elections, allowing relevant parties to come to an agreement on governance structures, a new financial deal, and a clear business case for North Somerset's expansion into WECA, now the most realistic way to ensure that the region can prosper together before 2025?

Answer

- There are a collection of assumptions in here that need testing/scrutiny. North Somerset does get funding – and the region can prosper – for example the Portishead line. WECA was able to contribute to this without North Somerset being a member, which I hope you agree will help the region prosper.
- I would stress that new Political organisations are not solutions themselves. It seems people are losing sight of the bigger picture. We joined WECA so we could get stuff done.
- Bristol economy is more important to the region's success than the administrative discussion. More important to the regional economy is houses, mass transit, adult education and skills training. While we want more co-operation, not less, it cannot come at the expense of Bristol's economy.

Q4: Councillor Clive Stevens

Dear Marvin - I hope you are well and had a good break. My questions are about your wish to improve governance at WECA.

In your letter to Tim Bowles of 5th October (p29) you wrote, "our concerns have been growing, and over the past 18 months we have made several requests to review the governance arrangements to ensure that the views, expertise and resources of the constituent councils are leveraged."

And in your email to all WofE leaders on 5th November you listed governance as one of the four key issues that needed improvement before you would allow WECA expansion.

Tim Bowles replied on 10th November saying that a Governance Review had been agreed at the 19th July 2019 WECA meeting.

What do you think is lacking from the WECA Governance process (19 July 2019, Agenda 10, Appendix 1 - attached) for governance to be fit for purpose in an enlarged WECA?

Answer

- Criteria by which funding is allocated, for example in relation to the investment fund – it cannot be a simple division as we are so much larger as a population and economy.
- Recognition of Bristol’s economic driver - a successful Bristol economy leads to a successful regional economy.
- How we ensure that our progressive urban voice is not drowned by conservative rural voices.
- A governance review was required by government as part of the expansion process, yet was never done.

Q5: Councillor Clive Stevens

As a Councillor I feel WECA suffers a democratic deficit. For example if I submit questions I usually get very general replies and am not permitted to ask follow up questions. To me this is the absence of a basic requirement for democratic accountability, which the WECA mayor is able to avoid.

What are your views on this?

Answer

- “Democratic deficit” can be an overused term – what we use can miss the point. With any institution, there is a danger of creating a bureaucracy that it feeds itself, asking questions of itself that don’t mean anything.
- There are big questions “what is to be done?” And “is it being done?”
- For our part, we have been frustrated by the lateness, size and format of the papers for meetings.
- As you know, receiving large papers at a late stage undermines the ability to review and then advocate for Bristol

Q6: Councillor Paula O’Rourke

Can I have a précis on the background to the Somerset reorganisation that has been and is still (I believe) in progress? Particularly, a timeline of events, communications received, etc. Also, what bearing does this have on the expansion of WECA?

Answer

- We wouldn’t hold that information. However some of the reported context is:

- Originally, Somerset County Council put forward a “One Somerset” model, for one large unitary authority.
- However last summer there were further proposals, made by the district councils, for two new unitaries to be formed: Mendip and South Somerset merging, and Sedgemoor joining Somerset West and Taunton (which has only existed since 2019).
- Following this, in October, government wrote to the councils in Somerset (Somerset County Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council, North Somerset Council and district councils in the area: Mendip; Sedgemoor; Somerset West and Taunton; South Somerset) to invite them to submit proposals for unitary local government.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-invites-cumbria-north-yorkshire-and-somerset-to-submit-locally-led-proposals-for-unitary-local-government>
- There was press coverage of the reaction by Dine Romero at her cabinet on 5th November:
<https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/local-news/bath-north-east-somerset-residents-4691314>
- The letter from government inviting Banes and North Somerset to join unitaries in Somerset predated the letter from Luke Hall regarding WECA expansion.
- A time line of communications regarding expansion can be found in the documents shared alongside my blog published on 16th December on the topic.

Q7: Councillor Paula O’Rourke

Have Gloucester expressed and appetite to join WECA - again, information on the background to this would be useful. There seems to be a lot of restructuring or desire to restructure in the boundary authorities and it would be useful to understand how this affects any possible new devolution deal.

Answer

- The prospect of them joining was never put to WECA Leaders and CEOs in formal way.
- My understating is that since 2016 when they investigated joining, it wasn’t progressed.

Q8: Councillor Paula O’Rourke

How much regional planning has Bristol done since 2016? Was an officer appointed with responsibility for driving a devolution deal?

Answer

- WECA should be leading that work.
- In light of concerns about finance and governance our aim has been to have an outstanding authority is driven by our need to drive delivery.

Statements

S1: David Redgewell, South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside.

We wish to see North Somerset Council join the West of England combined authority as soon as possible to include in a public transport Authority that can cover a devolution deal which will allow the regeneration of Bristol Temple Meads station and the quays area to fund public transport interchange facilities St Phillips Marsh and Temple Meads area regeneration; to improve bus services in the West of England combined authority and into North Somerset council area. In North Somerset council area money is required to fund the infrastructure for new housing at Yandley and Long Ashton on metro bus routes to Bristol Airport with bus priority on the A38 using Cumberland Road and the south Bristol link; a new metro bus link to Nailsea and Clevedon. Metro bus link from Weston Super Mare to Locking Banwell, Winscombe Cheddar and Wells bus station, to allow for more housing in the Locking Banwell area, any new road here needs to include a metro bus route.

Park and ride facilities for Weston super mare.

New bus interchange to be completed.

Fixed link from Yatton station to Clevedon or improve bus service; Providing a new station at Ashton Gate for new developments in Ashton Vale; Along with Pill and Portishead station and transport interchange.

Upgrading of Weston Super Mare station for disabled passengers access with lifts and public transport interchange facilities.

At Nailsea and Backwell we need to see a fully accessible station along with accessible station at Bristol Parson Street and Bedminster, including CCTV.

The main part of the Devolution deal is a light rail system for Greater Bristol and Bath city region and North Somerset council area .

BRISTOL mayor and Metro mayor Rapid transit light rail project.

4 line on Bristol Temple Meads station to Old Market Broadmead Cabot Circus city centre Redcliffe, Cumberland Road south Bristol link, metro bus route to Bristol Airport, south Bristol via Witherwood Hartcliffe, Hengrove Whitchurch Brislington, Callington Road link to North Somerset Railway to Bristol Temple Meads and the city centre.

Line from Bristol to Bath via Brislington Keynsham and Saltford.

Bristol city centre to Temple Meads Lawrence Hill station Easton, Eastville, Fishponds, Staple Hill Mangotsfield Warmley Oldland Common Bitton Kelson Weston and Bath Bathford;

Bath spa to Peasdown St John Midsomer Norton and Radstock Shepton Mallet.

Bristol city centre Broadmead M32 UWE bus station to Emerson Green Lydd Green Kingswood and Longwell Green Keynsham using the ring road.

North Bound to Bristol Parkway Filton Patchway and Cribbs Causeway bus station Henbury loop station.

The devolution deal would pay for a light rail mass transit system. As in Tyne and Wear metro expansion the Northumbria line .

The setting up of a full ITA at WECA mayoral transport authority including North Somerset council will allow fully staffed integrated transport authority with a bus infrastructure and operation department. Light rail and Railway Executive. Roads Division to look after the trunk roads and the M32 downgraded, so public transport lanes can be added and park and ride interchange.

With staff being transferred to WECA mayoral transport authority from Bristol City Council South Gloucestershire Banes and North Somerset.

We need to deliver Portway Parkway station and Metro West.

The Bristol Henbury Loop railway with station at Ashley Down Filton North and Henbury; Portishead to Bristol railway line with station at Ashton Gate and Pill. Severn Beach Avonmouth Clifton Down Bristol Temple Meads Bath Spa Westbury railway service. Bristol to Gloucester and Cheltenham Spa railway service with new stations at Ashley Down, Charfield Stonehouse Bristol Road; So Peter Mann Director of public transport and David Carter Director of planning and transport have the resources to deliver planning and transport services like the other combined authorities.

The concern we have as the Government started local government reorganisation in Somerset including North Somerset and Banes councils; the government plan supported by Somerset County Council is a number of unitary authorities with a merger of North Somerset Council with Sedgemoor and Banes with Mendip District Council.

The other option is Somerset West and Taunton council to merge, with South Somerset District Council Sedgemoor. Somerset county council want a unitary council. The council have asked for a delay in the local Elections in the region of Somerset until May 2022 for the new Authorities to be set up and this could allow WECA mayoral combined authority which includes Bath and North East Somerset and North Somerset council Election to be delayed. Both councils have written to Robert Jenrick MP secretary of state and Luke Hall MP local government minister on local government reorganisation. Banes does not want to merge with Mendip or Somerset County Council and has told the secretary of state and North Somerset council does not want to join Somerset county council. The Somerset MPs Liam Fox MP, John Penrose MP, Jacob Reece Mogg MP and James Hepp MP wish to see Banes, North Somerset and Mendip merge with Somerset County Council.

North Somerset Council, Banes and South Gloucestershire with the city and county of Bristol add North Somerset council and former a stronger WECA mayoral combined authority; This is very important as the city and county of Bristol only covers a small part of the city region with North and East Bristol in south Gloucestershire Council south east Bristol in Banes and the Keynsham, Whitchurch, Hengrove, Brislington Hick Gate growth area. South west Bristol in North Somerset with Ashton gate, Yardley Ashton Vale Highridge and Long Ashton area; So for city region planning and travel to work area we need a strong city region Government like the west Midlands with mayor Andy street and mayor Andy Burnham in Greater Manchester, and Steve Rotterdam in the Liverpool city region. In fact priority to Gloucestershire local government reorganisation proposed Gloucestershire County Council wants to join WECA mayoral combined authority. But Gloucestershire is now looking at 2 unitary Authorities Stroud District Council, Cheltenham and Cotswolds District Council, Gloucester City Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council and the Forest of Dean being the other. No proposals have yet gone to the secretary of state Robert Jenrick MP; But Stroud District Council has looked at a merger with South Gloucestershire County Council. We need strong regional government in the west country; we need to merge WECA mayoral combined authority with the Western Gateway Partnership of Gloucestershire Wiltshire, Swindon and Somerset in the longer term.

The regional transport board need to be reviewed. This covers Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Dorset, WECA mayoral transport authority and North Somerset Council , Dorset, Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch.

Successful south west transport board.

Somerset, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay and Cornwall form a separate Board and have just got money from Dawlish sea wall, Plymouth Railway station and St Ives Branch being rebuilt.
New train service on the Newquay par line. Exeter to Okehampton rail services starts in 2021.
One voice for south west England and cross party support and MPs have managed to get government funding.

We need a strong regional government in Great Bristol and Bath city region with North Somerset Council joining in April 2021 with Parliament order through the House of Lords and House of Commons with public consultation. We need to delay the election in 2021 like in Somerset to do Mayor Rees city mayor and mayor Bowles metro mayor; And the leaders of Banes Council, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset Council wish to; Or find a way with Government in to WECA mayoral combined authority by writing to Robert Jenrick MP secretary of state and Luke Hall local government minister and Grant Shapps secretary of state for transport. We need to have a lead Director for Region affairs report on the Western Gateway Partnership and Transport Board with proper scrutiny.

And as Councillor Steven Clarke chair of WECA mayoral combined authority scrutiny and Councillor Mhairi chair of WECA mayoral combined Authority councillor and transport scrutiny commission have pointed out open Government at WECA mayoral transport authority and planning authority. Full public consultation including on Devolution deals like the west Midlands North Tyne and Great Manchester; And cabinet and full council report of Regional authority as at full councils at South Gloucestershire County Council and North Somerset Council. We do not know at present which Councillors after Region Governments or Director?? Councillors Kye Dudd and Nicola Beech do a good job but the role of regional and city Region Government is very very important to Greater Bristol and Bath city region. If were to level up south Bristol Southmead, Lockleaze, Cheswick, Lawrence Weston, Avonmouth, Lawrence Hill, Kingswood, Hillfields, Staple Hill, Patchway, Filton, Cadbury Heath, Twerton, Southdown in Bath, Bournville in Weston Super Mare, we need to find a way forward with North Somerset Council joining WECA mayoral combined authority.

Make it clear that the city and county of Bristol metro and council do not support Greater Somerset. We must form a strong city region with a strong metro to compete with the west Midlands Greater Manchester North Tyne Cambridge and Peterborough and Liverpool city region. We need to build back better in WECA mayoral combined authority and North Somerset council area. A name change to Greater Bristol and Bath city region Authority would help.

S2: Lucy Travis, Somerset Catch the Bus Campaign

We would like to support North Somerset council joining the West of England Mayor combined authority. We feel that by North Somerset council joining this will improve bus and coach services across city region and into Somerset. We need to put together a strong integrated transport authority with all the staff move from North Somerset council, Banes, South Gloucestershire council and Bristol city council to WECA mayoral combined authority. With staff to plan bus and service contract service maintenance of bus stops information shelters, bus stations and interchanges. To maintain metro bus infrastructure and I point provide new routes to Yate Thornbury and Clevedon via Nailsea and Backwell. The Authority need to take responsibility for the main road bus lanes and priority measures and bus interchanges. We also need to set up a railway executive to work with the

Department for Transport and Network Rail western routes to oversee existing railway management contacts and to develop Metro west railway services from Bristol Temple Meads to Ashton Gate, Pill and Portishead to the Henbury loop from Bristol Temple Meads to Ashley Down Horfield Filton North and Henbury for Cribbs causeway. The improvements on the Bristol Temple Meads to Gloucester and Cheltenham line with new stations at Charfield and Stonehouse Bristol Road. We welcome important on the Bristol Temple Meads to Severn Beach line; with a new station at Portway Parkway. Bristol Temple Meads to Bath Spa Westbury Frome and Warminster; With new stations at St Anne's park and Salford. As a passengers transport campaign we welcome the plans by WECA a mayoral transport authority and Bristol city council, Network rail western routes and First Group to provide a bus rail interchange facilities for bus connection in the city region and Somerset towns of Keynsham 178 349 39 to Paulton Midsomer Norton and Radstock 178 376 to Wells bus station change for Cheddar 126 and 174 to Shepton Mallet Glastonbury and Street for Taunton 29 77 Yeovil bus station; With North Somerset council money needs to be sent on a metro bus route to Bristol Airport or light rail system.

Improve bus services or a fixed link between Yatton station and Clevedon.

Improvements in the bus service 126 between Weston Super Mare and Wells bus station via Locking Banwell and Winscombe.

New bus rail interchange at Weston Super Mare railway station and the bus station.

Park and ride site at Weston super mare; And a light rail system in the Bristol Bath city region.

By having an effective city region for Bristol and Bath city region and with North Somerset joining the Authority; the government will invest more money in the region.

We would like to see regional bodies like The Northern Powerhouse and Transport for the North and the Midland Engine.

In the future we would like to see Gloucestershire county council Wiltshire county council, Swindon and Somerset county council or the new unitary councils all join a merged western gateway partnership and WECA mayoral combined authority; with one region transport board for the south west transport Authority; With the Government supporting devolution and the Labour and Liberal Democrats and Green parties all look to see powers and service transferred from London we need a strong planning and transport authority for the city region and a metro mayor to fight for this part of the south west.

Please bring our statement to Bristol City Council special meeting on the future of the West of England Combined Authority.

We need to get the Parliament order for North Somerset Council to join the West of England Combined Authority; and for the secretary of state to carry out community consultation in the West of England combined authority area at the same time he carries out public consultation in the Somerset region about local government reorganisation involving Banes, North Somerset and Mendip District Council.

These proposals are supported by the Somerset MPs. We would like to see the WECA Mayor Elections put back to 2022 in line with the proposals for election for unitary authorities Election in the Somerset region; and for a second devolution deal to improve public transport network and Bristol Temple Meads station as regional interchange; and for public consultation and order to extend the Authority Boundaries within the House of Commons and House of Lords.

We would ask Bristol City Council and the city mayor support North Somerset council joining WECA mayoral combined authority.

Please put this public statement to the Bristol City Council Growth and Regeneration committee.

S3: Gordon Richardson, Chair, Bristol Disabled Equalities Forum

We would like to fully support North Somerset council joining the West of England combined authority in April 2021 in order for North Somerset council to take part in 2021 mayoral elections. We need a devolution deal with the Government to fund public transport, like the regeneration of Bristol Temple Meads station and a transport interchange and a light rail system. Disabled people find it very difficult to access many parts of the station especially via the ramps the station has no disabled accessible public transport interchange. There are no modern disabled toilets changing places. We need a modern station for a fully accessible train service and stations; with the new metro west railway services from Bristol Temple Meads to Henbury loop railway.

Bristol Temple Meads to Portishead via Ashton gate and Pill station.

Beside new stations which need to be fully accessible at Ashley down, Filton North platform for the arena Henbury for Cribbs causeway the line needs to continue to Avonmouth and St Andrews Road which is not accessible. We need new stations on the Severn Beach to Clifton Down, Bristol Temple Meads to Bath Spa and Westbury; with new stations at Portbury Parkway St Anne's park station and Saltford. On Bristol Temple Meads station to Gloucester and Cheltenham Spa service at Charfield and Stonehouse Bristol Road. At present we have no station disabled access at Lawrence Hill only Seven Beach line direction. Only ramps no proper access at Stapleton Road Person Street Pilning, Avonmouth no access rails; Nailsea and Backwell and Weston Super Mare station has no lifts; there is no access to the Westbury platform at Freshford.

Only a strong Integrated Transport authority in WECA mayoral transport authority with North Somerset council; WECA needs a Railway executive.

Bus routes planning and infrastructure officers and metro bus routes; we have no accessible railway replacement coach service and school coach service in 202, these should change in September 2021; we also have fleets of none accessible taxis in South Gloucestershire; if WECA took over licensing like Transport for London, for Banes, North Somerset Banes and the city and county of Bristol we have a fully accessible taxi fleet.

Disabled public toilets at all public transport interchanges.

Trunk Road planning and maintenance and future light rail delivery team. We need full equalities officers at WECA mayoral transport authority; and public transport equalities panel with disabled passengers. We welcome the opportunity to develop a light rail system for Bristol and Bath city region; but this need to be overground as much as possible to allow disabled access with lifts into station in tunnels.

We support Mayor Bowel metro mayor and Mayor Rees city mayor on their plans for a light rail system, with a line from Bristol Temple Meads and city centre to south Bristol and the Airport.

Bristol to Bath and Bathford via Brislington, Hick Gate Park and ride.

Keynsham and Saltford, Bristol city centre to East Bristol and Bath.

Bristol Temple Meads Bristol city centre via the M32 to Cribbs causeway via Bristol Parkway station and Emerson Green and Lydd Green to Kingswood.

We also need North Somerset council to be part of the Region planning for the Bristol Bath city region; especially on planning south west Bristol around Highridge Yardley Ashton Vale and Long Ashton.

The city and county of Bristol is a small unitary authority with a lot of Greater Bristol being Banes North Somerset and South Gloucestershire county council area. The port is in South Gloucestershire city and county of Bristol and North Somerset. The Airport in North Somerset. We have 2 clinical commission groups, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire and city and county of Bristol and Banes clinic commission group. We have seen that with Covid-19 the very difficult and council and hospital in Bristol Royal infirmary, Weston Super Mare, Southmead south Bristol all being in different tiers to Bath Royal United hospital and Paulton. We need a strong city regional authority in the form of WECA to improve planning Transport Economic development and Health care.

We see strong city regions in Greater Manchester with Mayor Andy Burnham, Liverpool city region with Mayor Steve Rotherham and the West Midlands with Mayor Andy Streets. We need a strong city regional authority in the Bristol Bath city region with North Somerset council to join by 2021, with public consultation and orders in the House of Commons and the House of Lords; if this cannot be achieved then the Election for the Mayor should be delayed until May 2022 so a devolution deal can be reached.

In long term we would support Somerset, Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire joining WECA mayoral transport and planning authority.

We need strong regional and city regional governments to level up Greater Bristol and Bath city region and to compete for fund with the Northern power house and Midlands Engine.

S4: Christina Biggs, Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways

1. Preliminary comments

FoSBR, amongst others, consider that it was a missed opportunity when North Somerset did not join WECA at its inception. However there is now a chance to put this right as the Council, under new leadership, has applied for incorporation into WECA. We strongly support this proposal. Apparently there is a very limited time period, by the end of next February, for this to be approved and the current impasse threatens this opportunity. We understand that there are issues with the financing of a larger WECA - but also continuing concerns, whether or not N Somerset joins, about the fair distribution of the available WECA monies between the different authorities. It is not for FoSBR to involve itself with these political issues but we urge all parties to come together to resolve these issues.

We believe that the current situation, with North Somerset being outside of WECA, is inefficient and wasteful. As far as public transport, especially rail, is concerned, it makes it much more difficult to plan and deliver improvement projects - and also to get funding for the projects. Because of this we also urge WECA to set up an **Integrated Transport Authority (ITA)** to cover the immediate Bristol travel to work area - which would of necessity have to include North Somerset. Such a transport body, configured along lines such as the SouthWest Peninsula Task Force, the West Midlands Rail Executive and the Northern Powerhouse, should have sufficient rail and bus powers to co-ordinate not only the current individual projects but also the day-to-day running and co-ordination between different types of transport. We list below some of the current rail projects and the timeline, many of which fall within the next 4-year time period which we understand is at stake here. With the continuing climate crisis and the necessity to be zero-carbon by 2030, the importance of maintaining momentum with these WECA public transport projects in the next few years cannot be underestimated.

2. MetroWest Phase 1a - Severn Beach and Westbury lines

We are pleased to see continuing support for this service enhancement and that money from the Investment Fund is to be released for infrastructure improvements to accomplish this. FoSBR has called for a half hourly service on the Severn Beach (and other) lines for many years and at last there is the possibility of it being delivered by December 2021, and mention in Network Rail plans of bringing forward delivery to May 2021. As there is also the possibility of introducing MetroWest branded zero-carbon rolling stock, it remains vital that there is an assured revenue and capital funding stream. There is also the JLTP4 aspiration of a twenty-minute service on the Severn Beach Line and the further possibility of a 15-minute service, using and extending the Montpelier to Narrowways Junction double-tracking specified in the new Strategic Rail investment Plan.

3. MetroWest Phase 1b

The benefits to North Somerset of formally joining WECA should be obvious – notably, the Portishead Line cannot continue on piecemeal funding. Although MetroWest Phase 1B has now passed GRIP 4, we would remind members that there are ten GRIP stages, and the current PACER proposals will only be streamlining the process up to GRIP 4. As the Portishead Line is currently due to be completed in 2024, any uncertainty around funding will directly impact on the delivery of this project.

4. MetroWest Phase 2

The Henbury Spur line forms part of MetroWest Phase 2. We understand that this scheme, too, is due to be delivered in the next four years, and we welcome the proposal in the new WECA Strategic Rail Investment Plan to extend this line to Severn Beach by means of a new chord at Holesmouth Junction. This seems to be a good solution to the problems that caused the deferral of the Henbury Loop earlier.

5. Strategic Rail Investment Programme and Covid-19

FoSBR welcomes the further proposals laid out in the 10 year delivery plan for Strategic Rail Investment that was approved by the WECA Joint Committee on 4th December. Obviously public finances in the future will be challenged by the large national debt being built up as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, but FoSBR considers it essential that public transport, including rail, is maintained and improved. Thus we commend the statement in the SRI report that 'The infrastructure works referenced within this report will contribute positively to the post-Covid-19 economic recovery'.

6. Ashley Down station

The 10 Year Rail Plan suggests that the proposed Ashley Down station could be delivered early, before the Henbury Line MetroWest Phase 2 works, and could be served by existing services on the Filton Bank route. The Henbury line is initially proposed to be an hourly service whereas the Temple Meads to Filton Abbey Wood and onwards has a half hourly service. This raises the possibility of a half hour frequency at Ashley Down station from the time that it opens. Again this will be in the next four year time period which is at stake.

7. Ashton Gate station

We are told that a station at Ashton Gate will be considered as part of the South West Bristol Infrastructure Investment Strategy. The Ashton Gate stadium has desperate need of good transport facilities within what is a very congested area around Winterstoke Road. We urge WECA to ensure that the need for this station is looked at urgently. Again we cannot wait another four years before advancing this as provision needs to be made as part of the Portishead Line.

8. Other proposals of new stations

We welcome continued mention of new (re-opened) stations such as Charfield, St Anne's Park, Saltford and Ashton Gate. FoSBR also advocate for Constable Road, Thornbury and Coalpit Heath as they would serve the newly approved housing in Bonnington Walk, and the current proposals for housing in South Glos. Again, assured funding is required to plan and deliver these schemes as stations now cost around £10 million each.

9. Mass transit

We await with interest the preliminary report due at the January 2021 WECA meetings, and continue to commend the plans presented by the Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance, especially their suggestions for a complete light rail network which uses and builds on the existing rail infrastructure, with extensions to Clevedon, Radstock and Thornbury. We cannot simply wait ten years while such plans are worked up, as the evidence shows that car use will otherwise continue to escalate, to continued detriment to air quality and climate emissions.

10. Summary

There is much at stake here and it is essential that sufficient investment funding for the next four years is secured. We urge the members to come up with a concrete proposal for consideration by the Department for Transport, and to press for a meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport before the February deadline expires.



S5: Councillor Jerome Thomas

1) It appears from the papers for this meeting, that subject to the relevant change in national legislation, that the expansion of WECA to include North Somerset can take place at any time and does not need to wait until 2025 (when the WECA election falls due).

2) Leaving aside the question of whether the Government has shelved plans for the creation of new unitary authorities, It does not appear from looking at the business case for a new single unitary authority for Somerset (v1.3 December 2020) that any of the shortlisted options for creating a new Somerset unitary authority will include either North Somerset or Bath and North East Somerset. Therefore it seems very unlikely that the unitary proposal will have a significant impact on any separate proposal for North Somerset to join WECA.

I hope that this Scrutiny meeting will be able to clarify these points.

S6: Martin Garrett, Transport for Greater Bristol

Governance and Transport-

Transport for Greater Bristol has campaigned for many years for the effective governance of transport in this region. This would serve to promote modal shift and connectivity for all which is good for the economy, the environment, opportunity and social justice.

One of the many reasons why the West of England, despite its commercial vibrancy, lags behind other conurbations in its transport provision is that it does not have an Integrated Transport Authority. The former West of England Partnership and now WECA have declined to take this positive step, leaving it instead to light touch, market initiatives, and primarily road building and enhancement; an approach which is inconsistent with environmental stewardship, economic opportunity and social justice. All the other Combined Authorities and some other local government entities benefit from having an ITA.

We share the misgivings of Bristol's administration about the capacity and intentions of the present WECA leadership, and the need for a proper financial settlement.

We wish to simply point out the positive advantages of an Integrated Transport Authority, something that might be achievable if North Somerset were to be included within WECA.

It is vital that transport is organised regionally. This must include the whole of the region, including North Somerset. Travel patterns in our region cross city borders, many existing bus services serve more than one authority, and a local rail network should operate on a regional scale. This lack of co-ordinated planning is one of the reasons why our networks are so poor.

Without an ITA there will be little opportunity, for example, to integrate the West's MetroWest rail improvement with the Rapid Transit development needed in non-rail urban routes, nor is the Government likely to fund such schemes; nor will there be the regional planning able to achieve the reopening of the Thornbury, Yate and Clevedon-Yatton rail lines both of which would reduce Bristol's congestion and pollution; the prospect of an Ashton Gate station is far less likely without a full WECA with an ITA; an ITA would be the way to overcome the lethargy in developing a transport hub at Temple Meads and bus-rail connectivity at other Bristol stations. etc., etc.

The Local Transport Act (2008) offers an opportunity through an ITA to effect control, organise and promote local passenger transport, including bus and rail, and to promote active travel.

Please read the following information on Integrated Transport Authorities.

Integrated Transport Authority/Passenger Transport Executives. Explanatory Notes

Many ITA's started out as PTE's, Passenger Transport Executives, in the late 1960's before widening their powers to become Integrated Transport Authorities which might cover more than passenger services.

Generally this long history has promoted a level of co-ordination and co-operation between local authorities and transport providers which means that there is a capacity and tradition of organization and co-operation that has weathered various changes in the political climate including the impact of deregulation. Their transport culture and their approach can be very different to that found in the West of England and they achieve significant results.

It has been suggested that the West of England, especially Bristol, has recently witnessed unusual growth in public transport use (pre-Covid) achieved without an ITA but this is because it had to come from a very low base. This was largely precipitated by the introduction in the 2000's of a fragmentary network of bus lanes in Bristol (GBBN) combined with a special focus by First Bus Group to promote its ailing bus services. It was also the result of demographic changes especially the growth of the student market. It unlocked a potential untapped source of demand. Comparable evidence comes from the growth in the local rail sector, engendered by early efforts by local lobbyists to defend and promote rail services, as well as a national resurgence of rail travel. This catching up is not likely to be repeated without serious interventions. Recent local development has been lackluster and there is no equivalence to the pro-public transport culture and progress found in ITA's.

Some cities have achieved a progressive attitude to public transport without an ITA, notably Nottingham, but its history since at least the 1960's of positive action on environment and transport has developed the first class services we see today. Again the reasons are not straightforward. Though about 65% of its superb buses are still operated by an arm's length (largely) municipal undertaking, Nottingham City Transport, a further 30% approx. of services are private, notably Trent Barton, who are also award winning. Others include Community Transport. However Nottingham City Council has managed to weave a web of co-operation and co-ordination across providers and neighbouring local authorities without a formal ITA. Nottingham is a Unitary surrounded by suburbs which are in District Councils as part of Nottingham County Council. The fact that its major suburbs are in different local authorities is similar to Bristol. Nottingham's excellent buses and fast developing tram network reach out to those districts. They all share a culture of co-operation for progressive public transport, and for ancillary developments such as local transport hubs going back many decades. One result is that Nottingham City Council has not been required to produce a Clean Air Plan.

The West of England does not share the history or transport culture found in places like Greater Manchester, and West Midlands, or even Nottingham. Unfortunately Bristol does not have Nottingham's 60 year history of single minded modern transport development. To have a hope of catching up we require the mechanism of an ITA, the legal structure for organising transport across a region like ours. An ITA requires a dedicated team of specialist transport professionals of various disciplines combined under a single management. Here are some answers to help us to achieve this.

1. When were ITA's created?

First created by the 1968 Transport Act to coordinate transport services in the UK's largest urban areas (West Midlands, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Tyneside and Glasgow). The 1974 local government act reorganised the boundaries of these ITA's to match the newly created metropolitan counties. Additionally, South and West Yorkshire ITA's were created. The Local Transport Act 2008 granted ITA's capacity to take power over roads, rails and local highways. This also allowed for the creation of new ITA's, given it will improve efficiency and effectiveness in transport.

2. How are ITA's funded?

Funded by council tax and national grants. PTE's are governed by councilors representing the areas served by the ITA. These councilors are responsible for funding and making policies for ITA's/PTE's.

3. What does an ITA do?

- contribute to the planning of local rail services (in partnership with the Department for Transport);
- plan and fund (via subsidies) socially necessary bus routes;
- work in partnership with private operators to improve bus services - for example through bus priority schemes;
- run concessionary travel schemes - including those for older, disabled and young people;
- invest in local public transport networks - including new rail and bus stations;
- develop and promote new public transport schemes - like light rail and guided bus networks;
- provide impartial and comprehensive public transport information services - including by phone and internet;
- manage and maintain bus interchanges, bus stops and shelters.

4. Are they responsible for running the public transport/highway services?

They might also run the public transport services, but in most cases this is done by a private company. Similarly, they are not always highway authorities, with this responsibility often given to district councils.

5. How are ITA's organized?

Each ITA is made up of representatives from the local councils in the areas they serve. Each ITA has Passenger Transport Executive (PTE) made up of officers under a Chief Executive to undertake the actual work.

6. Where are there currently ITA's?

Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands and West Yorkshire

7. What if any is the formal legal relationship between an ITA and a Combined Authority. Do they exist separately? Can they be together in the same legal entity?

In West Yorkshire and the West Midlands, the ITA has been absorbed into the Combined Authority. Making the authority itself the executive. Other ITA's exist separately from the Combined Authority.

8. What are the potential benefits of creating an ITA?

- Provide robust governance for planning, delivery and management of transport in the area.
- Transport for London style 'Overground' with ITA setting rail fares, timetables and quality standards.

- One brand for both rail and bus services with integrated ticketing, smartcards and London style 'Oyster' cards.
- Take over strategic roads as well as rail.
- Extend ITA into neighbouring authorities to cover full travel to work areas at District or County level. Note this would mean the whole area of a county or district or unitary.
- Powers over traffic management measures and maintenance.
- Franchised bus network through Quality Contracts – specify and regulate bus services across the whole of the West of England.
- Set bus fares and frequencies through Quality Partnerships.

9. What are the potential disbenefits?

- Costs of setting up, operation and funding.
- Additional tier of administration.
- Loss of some local authority highway powers.
- Weaker geographical and transport links if ITA covers too great an area.

Important resources:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/26/notes/division/8/5> 2008 Local Transport Bill

http://www.westofengland.org/media/67030/meetings_pteg_29-02-08_itapaper.pdf WECA Paper on ITA's

<https://www.urbantransportgroup.org/about-us/who-does-what-transport>

S7: Dick Daniel, Bath Area Trams Association

Bristol needs an Integrated Transport Authority

Bristol, Bath and the wider region need an Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) to make transport work as a complete system.

Other regions around the UK already have Integrated Transport Authorities.

An ITA can see the 'bigger picture', can argue the case with central government for funding and can make it happen.

An ITA can start the work of building an integrated public transport system based on a back-bone of trams/light-rail lines fed by a linking network of bus routes, as well as providing for active travel.

This is a real opportunity

- * There is an acknowledged climate emergency, 'Transport was the largest emitting sector of UK greenhouse gas emissions in 2018',¹ 'three-quarters of road traffic in 2018 was from cars and taxis'.²
- * Around 1000 people a year are dying of air related illnesses in Bristol, much of this air pollution is from PM10 & PM2.5's cause by transport exhaust, tyre and brake dust, trams have been shown to actually attract drivers out of cars in a way that no other form of PT does.⁵
- * Lack of physical activity is contributing to the rise of major illnesses, such as heart disease, strokes, type 2 diabetes and even exacerbating Covid-19, regular daily exercise,³ good integrated public transport encourages exercise by walking to the bus & tram stop and avoiding using the car, especially the 3 out of 4 car journeys of under 5 miles.⁴

An ITA can raise the money, plan for and install the means for high-quality public transport, based on trams/light-rail and create the means for active travel, walking & cycling.

This will transform the region, regenerate the economy and give the boost Bristol needs to take its place alongside the other major cities of the UK.

Please watch this short 6 minute video of what the city of Ghent has done, it is inspiring.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgbIBIAFHXM>

1 – Dept for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2018 UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/863325/2018-final-emissions-statistics-summary.pdf

2 – Office for National Statistics 3. Road traffic increased by 29% from 1990 to 2018

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/roadtransportandairemissions/2019-09-16>

3 – NHS Benefits of exercise, Step right up! It's the miracle cure we've all been waiting for.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/exercise-health-benefits/>

4 - DfT National Travel Survey, England 2014

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/457752/nts2014-01.pdf

5 - <https://bathtrams.uk/evidence-that-car-drivers-will-switch-to-trams-but-not-buses-1/>