

Decision Pathway – Report

PURPOSE: Key decision

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 05 March 2024

TITLE	A4 Portway Strategic Corridor OBC		
Ward(s)	Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston, Stoke Bishop, Clifton, Hotwells and Harbourside		
Author: Toby Clayton	Job title: Senior Public Transport Officer		
Cabinet lead: Cllr Donald Alexander, Cabinet Member for Transport	Executive Director lead: John Smith, Interim Executive Director Growth and Regeneration		
Proposal origin: BCC Staff			
Decision maker: Cabinet Member Decision forum: Cabinet			
Purpose of Report: To seek approval for the submission of an Outline Business Case (OBC) to the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) and progress to the Full Business Case (FBC) stage for City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) funding to deliver the A4 Portway Strategic Corridor improvements.			
Evidence Base: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> As explained within the Cabinet report considered in October 2021 and later updated in the 2 May 2023 Cabinet paper, the A4 Portway is a work package under the Strategic Corridor Programme. A programme seeking to make infrastructure improvements to key corridors across the city making public transport, walking and cycling people’s natural choice in mode of travel. Specific project aims and objectives can be seen in the OBC (Appendix A1) BCC’s Strategic Corridor Programme is within WECA’s CRSTS Programme. The objectives of the CRSTS programme are to; Deliver growth and productivity, level-up, and decarbonise transport in the region. The A4 Portway Strategic Corridor proposals demonstrate a strong strategic alignment, seen in Appendix A1. Contributing towards delivering policy and targets set out in local and regional strategies. Current issues on the Portway include congestion and bus delays, lower bus patronage since the COVID pandemic, high dependency on private vehicles and lower modal share on sustainable transport modes, air pollution, safety and poor perception of safety. The key infrastructure proposals being put forward within the OBC (Appendix A1) include new 24-hour bus lanes along the Portway, wider paths for shared use between pedestrians and cyclists, speed limit reductions, and various junction improvements along the route. The new 24-hour bus lanes will present benefits vital to encourage the modal shift to increase bus patronage. The wider shared infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists will improve the safety and perception of safety for those walking and cycling and contribute to the uptake of active travel. The reduction of speed limits will contribute to improved road safety and perception of road safety while minimising the impact on journey times along the route. Other benefits will include an uplift in the quality of the highway through resurfacing and environmental benefits by encouraging a modal shift and reducing the levels of carbon emissions and air pollution along the route. Reduction in levels of emissions will have knock on benefits to habitats and wildlife in the environmentally sensitive areas along the corridor (Appendix F1). 			

7. The infrastructure changes present benefits to users of the A4 Portway which are captured in Appendix A1, the benefits have been monetised so that a comparison can be made with the current scheme outturn cost estimate of £12.753mn. The core BCR for the project is currently over 2 and considered 'high' value for money. Further appraisal work and cost refinement will be completed at the FBC stage.
8. Early engagement in August 2022 over 1,000 residents and local stakeholders identified key themes such as poor perception of safety, need for improved cycle infrastructure, better maintenance and additional crossings. These themes can be seen in the report in the Early Engagement Report (please see hyperlinks below), which was used to help inform the design optioneering.
9. A further public consultation period was then held on the concept designs over the Autumn of 2023 where over 1400 residents, stakeholder groups, ward members and MPs commented and provided feedback on the concept designs. A detailed report can be found in Appendix B1.
10. To access the CRSTS funding, Bristol City Council are required to submit an Outline Business Case (OBC) and Full Business Case (FBC) compliant with the Department for Transport's Transport Appraisal Guidance and WECA's Assurance Framework before commencing with construction. The OBC and its appendices for this project can be found in Appendix A1. The project will return to cabinet when an FBC has been prepared.
11. The current cost estimate of the A4 Portway proposals is £12.753mn. The breakdown of this £12.753mn can be seen in Appendix I1. The cost estimate for the project will be refined in the FBC and detailed design stage. The sunk costs at the time of submitting the report will be £993,076.88 which covers the time spent on project management, business case preparation and design, the funding for the sunk costs has been derived from the CRSTS under approvals granted at BCC Cabinet in May 2023.
12. The table below summarises the Bristol City Council CRSTS programme allocations. The A4 Portway and Hub has been allocated £13.76 million. A cabinet report seeking approval on the FBC to spend £2.006 million of this allocation on the improvements of the bus junction at the Portway Park and Ride site was approved at BCC Cabinet in October 2023:

PROJECT TITLE	BCC CRSTS Funding	BCC Local Contribution	BCC Total
	£m	£m	£m
Long Ashton Metrobus Improvements	36.84	6.77	43.61
Bristol to Bath (Bristol to Emery Road)	44.98	-	44.98
Bristol to Bath (Keynsham to Bath)	-	-	-
Bristol to Bath (Transport Hub)	17.67	-	17.67
M32 Sustainable Transport Corridor and Hub	3.39	20.00	23.39
A4 Portway Sustainable Transport Corridor and Hub	11.28	2.48	13.76
Stockwood to Cribbs Causeway (central part possibly straight to FBC)	31.44	5.00	36.44
Bristol to Hengrove Metrobus extension A38 South (incl. Bedminster Green)	16.82	1.75	18.57
Bristol City Liveable Neighbourhoods	9.10	2.00	11.10
Integrated Smart Ticketing	0.69	-	0.69
Regional Transport Branding	0.67	-	0.67
Total	172.89	38.00	210.89

13. The table below summarises the Bristol City Council CRSTS spend across the programme to date.

CRSTS Programme		£210.89mn (total BCC allocation)
Name of project	Stage of project	CRSTS Spend to date
Bristol Bridge	Construction	£661k
Victoria Street & Colston Avenue (A37 WP1)	FBC	£157k
A37 South - Temple Meads to Stockwood (A37 WP2)	FBC	£78k

A37 OBC and A37 North FBC (A37 WP3)	OBC & FBC	£90k
A4018	Tender preparation	£47k
A4 Portway Strategic Corridor	OBC	£479k
Portway P&R Bus Access	Detailed design (FBC Approved)	£55k
East Bristol Liveable Neighbourhood	FBC	£341k
Bedminster Green	Construction	£3.527mn
City Centre Strategic Corridor	Option Assessment	£574k

14. One key risk for this project is that the scheme cost does not decrease naturally with the progression of the design. The mitigation for this risk is to enhance the detail of the design and complete another cost estimate at the FBC stage. If the scheme value is still more than the amount allocated for this project following detailed design the project will look at de-scoping elements to bring the outturn cost within the allocated amount prior to seeking approvals on the FBC. The project team will also continue to seek opportunities for additional funding. Full risk registers and corresponding mitigations can be seen in Appendix D1, and a Quantitative Risk Register can be seen in the appendices of the OBC (Appendix A1.6)

Cabinet Member / Officer Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the previous Cabinet approvals granted on Item 9 at the Cabinet Meeting on 2 May 2023 to develop business cases for the Strategic Corridor Programme.
2. Approves the submission of an Outline Business Case (Appendices I1 and A1.1-A1.11.3) to the West of England Combined Authority (WECA).
3. Authorises the Executive Director of Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Director of Finance and Cabinet Member for Transport to take all steps required to submit the OBC and develop the Full Business Case for the A4 Portway Strategic Corridor including the acceptance and spend of up to £0.85m CRSTS funding as per the approvals granted on Item 9 at the Cabinet Meeting on 2 May 2023.
4. Notes the consultation report in Appendix B1.

Corporate Strategy alignment:

1. Children and Young People: Better public transport connectivity increases independence particularly among younger people and helps to maintain social inclusivity. Whilst improving the provision of infrastructure for active travel is beneficial in promoting health and wellbeing among younger people.
2. Economy and Skills: Improved transport connectivity, be it by public transport, walking or cycling, has benefits to improving access to employment opportunities. Better public transport will also assist in enabling development and economic growth.
3. Environment and Sustainability: Making infrastructure improvements that make public transport, walking, and cycling people's natural choice in mode in travel can help encourage the modal shift away from cars, and subsequently reduce congestion and vehicle emissions. This can help Bristol achieve its target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.
4. Health, Care and Wellbeing: Improving infrastructure for active travel is beneficial in promoting health and wellbeing among citizens. Additionally, there are health benefits of improving the air quality by reducing the congestion and vehicle emissions.
5. Homes and Communities: Improving connectivity of all neighbourhoods will help to improve community participation, enabling citizens to maintain inclusivity in all aspects of life.
6. Transport and Connectivity: By improving the public transport infrastructure the reliability of bus services is improved, and opportunity to increase frequency and facilitate additional services is safeguarded. Upgrading transport interchanges and improving the frequency of bus stops will contribute to the improvement of safety, and perception of safety for citizens. Making improvements to the walking and cycle infrastructure will encourage the uptake in active travel.

7. A Development Organisation: In following the Department for Transport’s Business Case process, we are demonstrating the characteristics of an Effective Development Organisation, specifically by using research and data to inform decisions.

City Benefits:

1. Provide greater bus service frequency, reliability, and punctuality through bus priority measures.
2. Improving the physical accessibility of public transport modes such as bus and rail, and wider connectivity to jobs, education, and other opportunities across the city for all citizens.
3. Promoting the use of more sustainable travel including bus, rail, walking, and cycling as preferential modes. Subsequently delivering better air quality by reducing the reliance on private vehicles, and improving the health and wellbeing of the population, and especially for those living with a pre-existing health condition
4. The delivery of walking and cycling infrastructure improvements will help to contribute to the uptake in active travel methods which offers social value benefits, including health and wellbeing.
5. The delivery of improvements that benefit the safety of all road users, including speed limit reductions, more space for those walking and cycling, improved and additional crossing points, street lighting improvements.
6. Highway improvements that will contribute to the reduction in community segregation through the improvement of public transport services.
7. Contributing to improving the air quality in the area through improvements to sustainable transport infrastructure, encouraging modal shift from private vehicles to more sustainable transport modes
8. Improvements to the urban environment including enhancing the public realm, creating more green space and planting trees where possible.
9. Better public transport interchange points, ensuring that the bus stop waiting environment is of high quality and where possible improving the trip chain to the bus stop. Making improvements at bus stops and to the trip chain can have indirect benefits including bus patronage growth, improved perception of safety, active travel uptake for the first and last mile of one’s journey.
10. Upgrading and maintaining council assets where possible such as the surface of the carriageway, bus stops , and signals.

Consultation Details:

1. The wider A4 Portway Strategic Corridor was subjected to an early engagement activity with residents and local stakeholders during July and August 2022. The report from this engagement section can be found using the hyperlinks in the background documents below.
2. The concept designs were then subjected to further consultation with residents, local stakeholders, ward members and MPs in Autumn 2023.
3. The designs have been subjected to review by internal Bristol City Council Quality Assurance colleagues at various points throughout the project lifecycle.
4. The scheme has been discussed with local operators, including First Bus, Stagecoach, and some coach operators at the early engagement in summer 2022 and then again at the consultation in 2023. Stagecoach and First Bus have both provided support for the proposals. Discussions with these operators will continue as the project progress’.
5. WECA have also been consulted on these proposals.
6. The proposals will be subjected to further consultation by means of the Statutory Consultation period as part of the Traffic Regulation Orders process.

Background Documents:

Bus Deal / Strategic Corridors Update – Item 10 at the October 2021 Cabinet Meeting: [ModernGov - bristol.gov.uk](https://moderngov-brisol.gov.uk)

Bus Deal / Strategic Corridors Update – Item 9 at the May (2nd) 2023 Cabinet Meeting: [ModernGov - bristol.gov.uk](https://moderngov-brisol.gov.uk)

Portway Park and Ride Bus Access Improvements Full Business Case (FBC) – Item 14 at the October 2023 Cabinet Meeting: [ModernGov - bristol.gov.uk](https://moderngov-brisol.gov.uk)

Early Engagement Report for the A4 Portway Corridor – Item 14, Appendix B1 at the October 2023 Cabinet Meeting: [ModernGov - bristol.gov.uk](https://moderngov-brisol.gov.uk)

West of England Bus Strategy: [West of England Bus Strategy \(westofengland-ca.gov.uk\)](https://westofengland-ca.gov.uk)

West of England Joint Local Transport Plan: [Joint Local Transport Plan 4 2020-2036 \(westofengland-ca.gov.uk\)](https://westofengland-ca.gov.uk)

West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan: [West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan \(westofengland-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk)

West of England Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan: [Local cycling and walking infrastructure plan - West of England Combined Authority \(westofengland-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk)

Bristol Transport Strategy: [Bristol Transport Strategy](https://www.bristol.gov.uk)

National Bus Strategy for England – Bus Back Better: [Bus Back Better \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Department for Transport Business Case Guidance: [Transport business case guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

CRSTS letter confirming the delivery plan for The West of England Combined Authority, 29 July 2022: [Finalised city region sustainable transport settlement: letter to Mayor Dan Norris \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Revenue Cost	£N/A	Source of Revenue Funding	N/A
Capital Cost	£12.753m	Source of Capital Funding	City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) – Grant funding from the Department for Transport
One off cost <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ongoing cost <input type="checkbox"/>		Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/> Income generation proposal <input type="checkbox"/>	

Required information to be completed by Financial/Legal/ICT/ HR partners:

Finance Advice:

The report among other requests, seeks approval for the submission of the OBC to the West of England Combined Authority (WECA). This would further progress this phase of the works on the Strategic Corridor and deliver the objectives associated with the A4 Portway.

The latest estimated costs of this work phase as outlined in the OBC is £12.753m. These costs have been developed by the Council’s in house team and reflect the latest estimates of the available costing assumptions. It includes allowances for contingency and inflation that are reasonable relative to the assessed risk of each cost element. This is summarised as follows:

Item	Amount £’m
Direct Costs	(Please refer to Appendix I1)
Indirect Costs	(Please refer to Appendix I1)
Risk & Inflation	(Please refer to Appendix I1)
Total	£12.753

These costs are expected to be funded from the £13.76m set aside within the Council’s CRSTS programme. This is funded from already approved CRSTS funding of £11.56m plus a local contribution of £2.48m.

Cabinet agreed in October 2023 to spend £2.006m of the £13.76m funding for this scheme on the improvements of the bus junction at the Portway Park and Ride site. This means that a total of £11.75m is now available to cover the costs of this work phase which is estimated at this stage at £12.753m

It is anticipated that this cost estimate will be reduced at the next business case stage so that the estimated costs will fall within the available funding envelope. Should this not be the possible the service will look at de-scoping some elements of the scheme to bring the final cost estimate within the funding available. This will be necessary as there are no funds set aside within the Council’s revenue or capital estimates to cover any costs that are not funded by the approved CRSTS funding already available.

Finance Business Partner: Ben Hegarty, Finance Business Partner Growth and Regeneration, 16 January 2024.

2. Legal Advice: The consultation responses must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising the decision. The leading cases on consultation provide that consultation should occur when proposals are at a formative stage, should give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration and should allow adequate time for consideration and response. There must be clear evidence that the decision maker has considered the consultation responses, or a summary of them, before taking its decision.

Legal Team Leader: Husinara Jones, Team Manager/Solicitor, 4 January 2024.

3. Implications on IT: I can see no implications on IT in regard to this activity.

IT Team Leader: Alex Simpson, Lead Enterprise Architect, 4 January 2024.

4. HR Advice: Having read the report I can confirm that there are no HR implications evident in these proposals.

HR Partner: Chris Hather, HR Consultancy Manager – Growth and Regeneration, 8 January 2024.

EDM Sign-off	John Smith, Interim Executive Director Growth and Regeneration	13 December 2023
Cabinet Member sign-off	Cllr Donald Alexander, Cabinet Member for Transport	11 January 2024
For Key Decisions - Mayor's Office sign-off	Mayor's Office	5 February 2024

Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal	YES
Appendix B – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external	YES
Appendix C – Summary of any engagement with scrutiny	NO
Appendix D – Risk assessment	YES
Appendix E – Equalities screening / impact assessment of proposal	YES
Appendix F – Eco-impact screening/ impact assessment of proposal	YES
Appendix G – Financial Advice	NO
Appendix H – Legal Advice	NO
Appendix I – Exempt Information	Part
Appendix J – HR advice	NO
Appendix K – ICT	NO
Appendix L – Procurement	NO