

South Gloucestershire PTC on 7 May and next Full Council

BaNES Full Council on 8 May

BaNES Cabinet on 14 May

BaNES PTSE on 19 May

BaNES Major Projects at end of May

Bristol City Council next Cabinet and Full Council (probably in June)

Transport Infrastructure for Rail and Bus Metros and Public Involvement in the Planning Process

We would like to cite a number of examples in the city region where passenger groups and stakeholders have not been consulted about the decision processes in transport planning and bus routing. An obvious example of this is Dorchester Street in Bath where the busgate was summarily removed and the first that stakeholders knew about the decision was when they heard about it on the BBC local news. This was despite publication of the Bath Transport Strategy which talks about bus priority measures and interchanges, as well as far greater use of bus transport in Bath, investment in a modern bus fleet with wifi and realtime information, and integration between bus and rail at Bath Spa, with a new station and Park and Ride at Bathampton. Sadly the documents fail to mention the proposed MetroWest stations at Saltford and Corsham, despite the fact that BaNES has endorsed these at Cabinet.

Dorchester Street was always shown as a bus/rail interchange, not as a through route for cars. The volt-face on this plan has created a sense of disillusion and disengagement amongst public transport users.

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The Avon Ring Road/M32 junction cycleway scheme seems to have disintegrated cycling and public transport use in a way that is contrary to the planning principles of encouraging greater use of both buses and bike routes. More needs to be done to integrate walking, cycling and disabled access to the bus network here, particularly in view of the MetroBus proposals which fall far short of any kind of integrated strategy. We will be making more detailed comments on this in response to the published planning application.

The reconfiguration of the local bus network in support of the new Southmead Hospital development has brought many benefits to bus users across the Greater Bristol and Bath city region. However, there have also been rail and bus network casualties arising directly and indirectly from the changes. In particular, the loss of bus services from Filton Abbey Wood rail station (other than at peak times) has isolated the hospital from its most obvious railhead. The alternative bus (the rerouted 501/502) Bristol Parkway to Westbury, Shirehampton and Avonmouth sails past Filton Abbey Wood without stopping (just as it does in Filton town centre). This makes disabled access very difficult (particularly bearing in mind the lack of disabled taxi services from Bristol Parkway station).

As an aside, attention needs to be drawn to the outdated and incorrect bus timetables, service numbers and map plans around Southmead, Bristol Parkway (and all the other stations across Greater Bristol), Cribbs Causeway, the UWE bus station and Cossham Hospital. These need to be updated urgently to reflect the new routes and service patterns.

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Another major casualty has been the loss of the 25 route through St Pauls to Lockleaze and Horfield via the Eastgate Interchange. Whilst we accept that there are plans to reinstate this service over the Romney Avenue bus link, we believe that this example disjointed transport planning has resulted in people losing their bus service (on however temporary a basis, but with the inevitable consequence that passengers seek other means of transport). The other part of the route provided important bus links from St Pauls and Montpelier to Bedminster, Southville and Ashton Gate (and onwards) which has now been cut off, leaving only an inconvenient change in the city centre for any cross-town travel (without a good weatherproof interchange or through ticketing).

It would appear that a small minority of vociferous residents in both Romney Avenue and Creswicke have so far defeated the will of public transport passenger groups such as TfGB, South West Transport Network and Rail Futures as well as the bus operators to develop a bus-only link between the city and the north fringe involving UWE, the railway stations and Southmead Hospital.

There is also a question about the future of Ikea at Eastgate. Congestion and the lack of a proper bus and coach interchange here is hampering retail development and investment. Just like at Creswicke, there is also a need for road remodelling at Eastgate to facilitate a proper and functional interchange which should also include the MetroBus project (currently unconnected from Eastgate).

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At Weston-super-Mare there needs to be better intermodal integration at the railway station particularly with links to the Airport, Cheddar, Wells and Clevedon.

We hope the lessons learned from the Southmead reorganisation will be picked up in the consultation paper on bus service regulation and competition and will result in closer more joined up co-operation between the local authorities, the bus industry and the health authorities.

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