



Public Transport Policy and Public Realm Policy in Greater Bristol and Bath City Region, against the background of Public Spending Cuts by the DfT as a result of Rail-Franchising Remodelling.

There is a great deal of concern amongst the travelling public about proposed changes to the bus, rail and ferry networks. Whilst we welcome the Bristol Mayor's decision to review the Bus Rapid Transit network through the harbour and over Princes Street Bridge, the Park and Ride proposals at Stapleton/Frenchay and the route from Bristol Parkway to Cribbs Causeway and Henbury, our main concern is to see the Greater Bristol Bus Network maintained and funded within the city region and into Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire.

Since the last BANES Cabinet meeting the council has taken the decision to save a number of key bus routes serving Bristol, Bath and Somerset. These include the 376 (Bristol to Yeovil via Knowle, Whitchurch, Wells, Glastonbury, Street, Yeovil, Bridgwater and Taunton) which is actually funded as far as Wells by the City of Bristol. Off-peak services on 338/339 (Bristol to Bath via Temple Meads, Brislington, Keynsham and Saltford), the 178 service (Bristol to Radstock and Bath via, Old Market, Temple Meads, Brislington, Timsbury, Paulton, Midsomer Norton, Radstock and Bath) and the limited 636 (Keynsham to Whitchurch via Stockwood) have also been saved, though the future of this last service could be further enhanced by merging it with the 515 from Stockwood to the South Bristol Hospital.

Future Bristol City Council proposals in their zero budget-setting process for 2014-15 also threaten a number of routes in the East of the city including the 533 (Keynsham to Mangotsfield via Hillfields and Kingswood) and the 507 (Keynsham to Southmead via Longwell Green, Kingswood, Hillfields and Fishponds, Eastville, Lockleaze and Horfield).

South West Transport Network Statement to BANES Cabinet on 10 April and the West of England Partnership and West of England Transport Board May meetings :: issued 6 April 2013
with the support of the BristolGayVillage.org



There is a real need to find funding for these services and others across the city region. On this matter we welcome the Bristol Mayor's new working relationship with First Group, A-Bus, Wessex and the other operators. We are particularly concerned about the investment in the 4, 5, 36, 309, 310, 311, 327, 329 and 354 routes where the current bus stock are non-low floor, which in the case of the 4 and 5 routes provide the main services to Frenchay and Blackberry Hill hospitals respectively. These routes and the 36 (serving large parts of South Bristol) along with service 6 (to Kingswood) also have very low frequencies in the evening and (worse still), limited to no service on Sundays. If we are to persuade people to use these routes, the service frequency needs to be radically improved and the vehicle quality must be brought up-to-date. The Mayor will need to work with operators on marketing (in the style of London Transport campaigns led by the Mayor), customer service, accessibility, high quality cleaning programs, revenue protection, policing, real-time information, maps and timetable displays across the city region jointly with BANES, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

As a matter of long-term strategy the bus network needs to be seen to serve the new hospitals at Southmead and Frenchay which will require continued support from the City Region if it is to be carried forward in action.

The City Region needs to maintain support for the night bus network and consider improving access to these services by routing them through significant areas of the night-time economy: Temple Meads, Old Market (the Gay Village), Cabot Circus, the Centre and College Green. Furthermore, providing a night service between Bristol and Bath via Keynsham seems to be such an obvious addition to the network that it deserves urgent consideration.

More work needs to be done on fares, -- ticketing, youth fares, travel cards and ticketing integration across bus, rail and ferry modes. This in part may be achieved by taking direct control of the government's bus operator grant (currently centrally managed and planned by the DfT).

***South West Transport Network Statement to BANES Cabinet on 10 April and the West of England Partnership and West of England Transport Board May meetings :: issued 6 April 2013
with the support of the BristolGayVillage.org***



We are very concerned about the need to protect local rail services and to protect the local subsidy to First Great Western for the Severn Beach line and the associated subsidy on the Severn Beach to Taunton services and the Bristol to Bath, Trowbridge, Westbury, Warminster and Frome services. It is important to continue with the plans for building new stations at Salford Parkway and Bathampton (as part of a 30 minute service between Bristol and Westbury serving Keynsham and Oldfield Park) and at Shirehampton Parkway in 2013 whilst maintaining and improving services across Bristol between Cardiff and Taunton – particularly adding extra stops at Pilning, Patchway, Filton Abbey Wood,, Stapleton Road, Lawrence Hill, Bedminster, Parson Street, Nailsea and Backwell, Yatton (for Clevedon), Worle, and Weston Milton, In the long term this service will require quadruple tracking between Temple Meads and Parson Street, extra stations at the new Stadium (in addition to the station at Ashton Gate on the Portishead line) and Flax Bourton.

We believe the City Region and the West of England Partnership should also be putting pressure on the Department for Transport and the West of England Transport Board for electrification of local lines: Bath to Westbury and Newbury (supported by Wiltshire County Council), Bristol to Weston and Taunton, Bristol to Pill and Portishead, the Severn Beach line, the Henbury loop, and the Bristol to Parkway, Yate, Gloucester and Cheltenham line. It is also important that all City Region planners and strategists be aware that following the withdrawal of freight services on the branches to Thornbury, Berkeley and Westerleigh (as well as the short spur to Avon Street) the West of England Partnership needs to protect these routes from any closure proposals by Network Rail, and any track recovery plans such as have been visited on lines in the Tyneside area and around Nottingham.

We urge the City Region local authorities to continue with the CCTV program on the line between Clifton Down and Severn Beach, between Bedminster and Parson Street and between Bristol and Bath. In addition we hope work will continue with BANES, FGW and Network Rail to complete the disabled ramp and CCTV at Keynsham (as this grant has been allocated by the DfT) as well as pressing ahead with plans to install ramps at Lawrence Hill, Stapleton Road and Parson Street stations.

***South West Transport Network Statement to BANES Cabinet on 10 April and the West of England Partnership and West of England Transport Board May meetings :: issued 6 April 2013
with the support of the BristolGayVillage.org***



The award of a contract extension to First Great Western carrying through to August 2016, does not include any provision for the Greater Bristol Metro other than a non-frustration clause. In the light of this, negotiations need to be pursued with the Department for Transport over priced options for the Greater Bristol Metro involving new services (specifically including routes from Portishead and Severn Beach via Bristol Temple Meads and Bath through to Bathampton Trowbridge, Westbury, Warminster and Frome in conjunction with Wiltshire County Council) and reopening of stations/opening of new stations as part of the City Deal. All these Metro Plan Developments are outside the scope of the franchise/concession and must therefore be pursued directly with the Secretary of State and the DfT.

David Redgewell

(with support from
Martin St Amant, Bristol Gay Village Org and Equalities Issues,
Norman Brown, Save our Buses
and George Bailey, South West Transport Network)

.....

Ongoing Issues regarding the Bath and West of England Bus Network which will need to be addressed over the next few months (in the case of South Gloucestershire services this is a matter requiring immediate resolution).

Whilst we welcome retention of the Bristol-Bath services (338 and 339), we are still concerned that the Sunday evening service is being withdrawn from the Park Estate section of the route, and we are also unhappy that the service 12 is being withdrawn on Sundays which leaves parts of Oldfield Park and Twerton without bus services,

***South West Transport Network Statement to BANES Cabinet on 10 April and the West of England Partnership and West of England Transport Board May meetings :: issued 6 April 2013
with the support of the BristolGayVillage.org***



which is especially significant as a problem since this is an area of the city with some of the highest levels of social deprivation with all the attendant issues of lack of access to affordable transport.

It is also a matter of grave concern that services 375, 376 and 377 will no longer provide any onward journeys beyond Wells on any evenings. This inhibits social access to the night time economy from Glastonbury, Street and Shepton Mallet, and equally people from villages in the southern part of BANES cannot visit Glastonbury or Street for an evening meal or other social events. This matter has been raised with the night time economy businesses in Bristol, including Bristol Gay Village Org, Destination Bristol and the Purple Flag Group, as well as the Radstock Public Transport Forum (where it was also raised as an issue especially with respect to the lack of links between Radstock and Midsomer Norton and onward services to Glastonbury, Street and Shepton Mallet which makes access to the two respective hospitals impossible outside office hours).

The following services need to be retained: 267 Bath to Frome evenings and Sundays, 264/265 Bath to Warminster via Bathampton and Trowbridge evenings and Sundays, 507 Keynsham to Southmead via Kingswood, 533 Keynsham to Mangotsfield via Kingswood, 42 Keynsham to Bristol via Kingswood. All these services provide significant social benefits to the outer suburban areas of greater Bristol and Bath, and if they are currently underused, this is really a function of the lack of realistic and enthusiastic marketing by BANES and the other West of England Partnership authorities. This needs to be addressed. The excellent operating partnership between BANES, First Group, A-Bus, Wessex, Bath Bus Company and Somerbus (to say nothing of the other small operators), should be built on by investing effort and focus on marketing and promotion.

The subject of the Keynsham to South Bristol Hospital link needs to be resolved between Bristol City Council, BANES and the NHS in Bristol. There are currently two services (515 and 636) which operate on very much the same route, but are not coordinated in timetable nor do they provide a link between the Hospital, Whitchurch Village and Keynsham.

***South West Transport Network Statement to BANES Cabinet on 10 April and the West of England Partnership and West of England Transport Board May meetings :: issued 6 April 2013
with the support of the BristolGayVillage.org***



With South Gloucestershire now retendering services 332 (Bristol to Bath via Hanham and Kelston), 620 Bath to Yate, Tetbury and Stroud and 319 Bath to Cribbs Causeway and UWE via Kingswood, 308 Bristol to Gloucester, 310 and 311 Bristol to Dursley via Thornbury, 84 and 86 Yate to Wotton, Nailsworth and Stroud, there needs to be greater coordination between BANES, Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire for these contracts which will be awarded in September. It is worth noting that these services all require to be converted to low-floor vehicle operation to comply with the forthcoming DDA regulations which become binding in 2015/2017.

Please also bear in mind that all service provision for public transport contracts requires a realistic equalities impact assessment and evidence of discussion with hard-to reach groups including BME, LGBT and disability groups.

.....

As a footnote we would like to voice our support for the closure of Dorchester Street/Manvers Street to all traffic except buses, coaches, taxis and private vehicles bound for the railway and coach station. We are also very happy about the work done in remodelling the booking hall and retail units and would like to see the bus stops outside the station brought back into use as soon as possible.



***South West Transport Network Statement to BANES Cabinet on 10 April and the West of England Partnership and West of England Transport Board May meetings :: issued 6 April 2013
with the support of the BristolGayVillage.org***