

Statement from South West Transport Network to

- The West of England Partnership Transport Board and Joint Committee meeting 14 June
- Bristol City Council Full Council meeting on 18 June
- Bristol Cabinet on 27 June
- Bristol Transport Scrutiny on 20 June
- next BANES full Council
- next BANES Transport Scrutiny Committee
- next South Gloucestershire full Council
- next North Somerset full Council

Getting the Greater Bristol Metro on track and into Network Rail's Infrastructure Plans to secure ORR's final approval

Greater Bristol and South West transport groups welcome Network Rail's proposals for four tracks between Lawrence Hill and Filton Abbey Wood which will double capacity on both the InterCity lines to the North and West of Bristol as well as the Greater Bristol Metro routes to Clifton Down, Avonmouth, Severn Beach, Henbury, Yate/Gloucester/Cheltenham, Newport/Cardiff, Weston/Taunton and Portishead and hopefully eventually to Thornbury. For future development, the Midland railway via Fishponds, Staple Hill, Mangotsfield and Bitton (with the branch to Yate), and the Bristol Harbour Railway from Wapping Wharf to Ashton Junction via Ashton Gate Swing Bridge need to be protected for tram-train routes – such routes are already being developed by the DfT in South Yorkshire jointly with the South Yorkshire ITA.

Whilst the Department for Transport is funding the InterCity Express Programme of high-speed electric trains between London, Swindon and South Wales via Bath and Temple Meads and Bristol Parkway, funding is not currently confirmed for the Greater Bristol regional services which are

Getting the Greater Bristol Metro on track and into Network Rail's Infrastructure Plans

proposed as part of the Greater Bristol Metro. These local services include half-hourly services along the Severn Beach line with alternate services running through to Bath and Westbury. This, along with the reopening of passenger services on the Portishead line including a new spur to Portishead and new stations at Portishead and Pill constitutes Phase One of the Metro project. Phase Two (fundable between 2019 and 2023) includes a reopened passenger service from Bristol Temple Meads to Henbury and Avonmouth via Filton Abbey Wood, 30-minutely services between Weston-super-Mare and Yate/Gloucester/Cheltenham, and new stations at Ashley Hill/Horfield, Henbury, Filton North, Shirehampton Parkway, Saltford Parkway, Bathampton and Corsham.

Both of these phases are dependent on detailed business plans being submitted by the West of England Partnership Transport Board (with support from the train operator) to the Department for Transport, Network Rail and the Office of Rail Regulation as priced options.

At present the only submitted plans which feature in the Phase One of the Greater Bristol Metro (Control Period 2014-2019) are:

- Filton Bank (as part of the Inter City Electric Project which is itself a DfT/Welsh Government project to which the West of England Partnership are negotiating an add-on)
- The Bristol-Portishead railway line (with new stations at Pill and Portishead to be funded by North Somerset Council through the City Deal, whilst the Mayor has requested the inclusion of a station at Ashton Gate)
- Extra platform capacity and track at Temple Meads in the Brunel/Digby Wyatt Train Shed.

There may be a way of bringing forward work on the Henbury loop to allow it to take shape despite the privations of the current economic climate. This would involve diverting Severn Beach services to Henbury, Filton North and

Getting the Greater Bristol Metro on track and into Network Rail's Infrastructure Plans

Filton Abbey Wood, then onwards (back) to Stapleton Road, Lawrence Hill and Temple Meads, forming a North-West Bristol Loop. Connecting services between Avonmouth, St Andrew's Road and Severn Beach would be provided by a Perry People Mover, similar to the scheme by Centro between Stourbridge Junction and Stourbridge Town. This proposal could also incorporate staffing at Clifton Down, Avonmouth and Henbury stations with M-Shop style operations combining ticket office with sales kiosk. This could be truly revenue neutral as it would bring significant improvements to revenue protection and collection.

Not included in the Phase One submissions are:

- Bristol Temple Meads to Parson Street four-tracking
- Worle Parkway to Weston-super-Mare double-tracking and re-opening the Weston bay platform for passenger use
- Electrification of the Bristol to Taunton via Weston route
- Electrification of the Severn Beach, Henbury, Portishead and Yate/Gloucester/Cheltenham lines as well as the Bathampton to Westbury and Newbury line

Not included in Phase Two as yet are schemes supported by the adjacent local authorities:

- New stations at Charfield (for Wotton-under-Edge), Stonehouse Bristol Road (both of these proposals are supported by Gloucestershire County Council, though Charfield would be a joint scheme with South Gloucestershire where the station is physically situated)
- New station at Royal Wootton Bassett (supported by Wiltshire County Council)

A Third Phase needs to be incorporated into the planning to include the following schemes which help to make the Metro system a viable network

Getting the Greater Bristol Metro on track and into Network Rail's Infrastructure Plans

- Reopening to passenger services and reconfiguration of the line between Radstock, Frome and onwards to Bath
 - Bringing usable services and frequencies to the line between Trowbridge, Melksham and Swindon (or with the reinstatement of Bradford junction this line might operate as Swindon – Chippenham – Melksham – Bradford-on-Avon – Bath)
- Reopening the mothballed freight lines to Thornbury and Berkeley to passengers to serve the planned residential expansion of those towns
- Re-evaluation of station openings at Winterbourne and Hallam, both of which mark obvious gaps in the planned network

The Four-Tracking project is a vital element in facilitating a major Metro scheme for Greater Bristol as well as allowing significant service improvements to the regional rail network. It is essential to put pressure on the Office of Rail Regulation to ensure that funding for the project is approved with the Secretary of State for Transport (Patrick McLoughlin MP), but that funding should also be approved for necessary improvements to existing stations between Temple Meads and Pilning, as well as Oldfield Park and Keynsham.

At Temple Meads, additional bay platforms must be built in the renovated Brunel Train Shed and Midland Train Shed. At Lawrence Hill disabled access needs to be provided in place of the recently renewed steps from road bridge level to both platforms which will also help passengers with luggage and mothers with push-chairs.

At Stapleton Road the replacement footbridge has not been designed to accommodate the four-tracked layout which is proposed for the station, nor does it afford access to the two planned new platforms which will be required for the Bristol Metro and the InterCity Express programme. As it was in the

Getting the Greater Bristol Metro on track and into Network Rail's Infrastructure Plans

past, Stapleton Road could again become a real transport interchange, providing a hub for local Metro trains and buses to East Bristol.

At both Lawrence Hill and Stapleton Road (along with other stations on the Bristol Metro) CCTV, passenger waiting facilities and better information screens will be needed. Patchway and Pilning will also require suitable facilities if they are to play their part in generating passengers for the Metro and wider network. Neither of these stations is wheelchair accessible. As the coalition government has ring-fenced money under the Access for All station improvement programme, it is imperative that the West of England Partnership should bid for money from this fund so that the upgrading of these stations dovetails with the Department for Transport's funding of the Filton Bank four-tracking. In the case of Keynsham station, BANES Council have dovetailed the DfT's Access for All programme with the InterCity electrification project.

We sincerely hope that newly elected councillors as well as existing representatives from the West of England Partnership authorities, the Mayor, MEPs, MPs and all others who speak for the Bristol and Bath City Region will put aside party politics to unite behind this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to give Bristol the transport network it desperately needs. We encourage everyone to support The Bristol Post's Campaign to secure funding for this project which will bring real improvement to the quality of life throughout the city and region.

Whilst on the subject of funding we are aware of the Mayor's proposals to use part of the revenue from the Residential Parking Zones and Congestion Charging projects to help fund the Greater Bristol Metro. Whilst we are not in absolute principle hostile to either of these projects, we would urge caution and consideration in their implementation, particularly insofar as they

Getting the Greater Bristol Metro on track and into Network Rail's Infrastructure Plans

impinge on the quality of life and ease of access for people in the areas affected.

- In particular we urge the Councils who intend to implement these schemes to ensure that adequate public transport options are available BEFORE the schemes are instigated (“front-loading”), and especially longer-distance commuter bus services must be improved. Two specific suggestions would be the Portway Park and Ride rail station and fifty new electric or hybrid buses for commuter services to be negotiated with the bus operators.
- There also needs to be some kind of flexible parking exemption available for local tradesmen who will need to carry out their business in various (and essentially unpredictable) areas of the city region. As things stand, such people will be seriously penalised by the RPZ.
- The cost to residents in inner city areas where there is already considerable social deprivation needs to be kept to a minimum, otherwise there is a danger that the scheme will simply add an unacceptable burden to the cost of living without providing significant benefits to residents
- If the RPZ scheme is really intended to reduce casual commuter parking, the scheme better needs to address areas where this is actually a problem (such as Clifton or Horfield) rather than areas like St Pauls or Old Market where there is very little evidence to suggest that there is any significant amount of commuter parking.
- There needs to be better provision for tourists (perhaps an attractively-priced tourist day bus pass with a sensible family option) and trippers/shoppers (park and ride facilities to cover access to the city from the North and East). If these are not considered, there is a real danger that Bristol's hard-won status as a tourist destination will suffer significant damage.
- Areas with high student populations have quite different parking patterns from “normal” residential areas, and here the pressure is on leisure parking (i.e. for parties etc which is evening and overnight use). This is not addressed by the current proposals.

Getting the Greater Bristol Metro on track and into Network Rail's Infrastructure Plans

- The fifty free parking permits currently on offer to residents is woefully inadequate for many people. This needs to be closer to 150.
- When the new Southmead Hospital opens there will be considerable pressure on local parking. As services are moved from Bath and Weston as well as Frenchay, longer-distance public transport needs to be ramped up for Southmead. In the light of this an RPZ may be required in the Monks Park/Southmead area.
- There needs to be very close consultation with North Somerset and South Gloucestershire councils about parking overspill into Leigh Woods, Kingswood, Staple Hill.

As a footnote, we are very shocked to see that the ONLY infrastructure proposals by Network Rail for ANY development in the Greater Bristol Region other than the already agreed IEP project for four-tracking Filton Bank are the reopening of the Portishead route and the extra tracks at Temple Meads Station. This leaves the whole of the rest of the Metro project in serious jeopardy unless each part of it is submitted as a fully priced option to Network Rail, the Office of Rail Regulation and the DfT, and these bodies are persuaded to include provision for the Metro in infrastructure planning (as is the case with South Wales and most of the urban centres in the north of England).

Since last week, Phase One of the Greater Bristol Metro now appears to be featuring more fully in Network Rail plans, through the inclusion of City Deal and local authority funding. Other options for funding include Residents Parking Zones and Congestion Charging proposals across the whole of the Greater Bristol area.

Time to submit proposals for the 2014-2019 funding period is very limited and the West of England Partnership needs to act now because of the severe constraints on public money and cuts in the DfT budget (current and future).

Getting the Greater Bristol Metro on track and into Network Rail's Infrastructure Plans

All interested parties need to make sure that fully costed business plans are prepared and submitted without delay.

However, with the Office of Rail Regulation having just published proposals for control period 2014-2019 with a £2bn reduction and twelve weeks' consultation, we need to be sure that the Metro Phase One, the Portishead line, and four-tracks from Parson Street right through to Filton will be included in the final plan in September 2013 with ORR and DfT approval.

We understand that Patrick McLoughlin and Simon Burns have given what appears to be conditional approval to most of GBM Phase One, though clearly this needs to be pushed forward for final approval in October following more detailed work from the West of England Partnership.

David Redgewell

South West Transport Network – Tel 07814 794953

Norman Brown

Save Our Trains – Tel 01935 479129

The Filton four-tracking campaign is supported by:

Friends of Bristol Suburban Railway

Greater Bristol Transport Alliance

Rail Futures (Severnside)

The Portishead Rail Group.