

Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FOSBR)

Statement to Full Councils of four Unitary Authorities on Devolution.



BANES: Thursday 12 May 2015, Council Chamber, Guildhall.

1. Devolution: FOSBR cautiously welcomes the proposed devolution deal for the West of England, and would encourage the four councils to negotiate now for the governance they want to see so as to make the deal acceptable to them. FOSBR notes that the text of the devolution document specifies that the Metro Mayor will act as a Chair and will only have one vote, the same as the four council leaders, and therefore it will be possible for elected leaders in the four UAs to outvote him or her.

2. MetroWest Phase 1 Development Consent Order: (MetroWest Phase 1 = Portishead and half-hour “Unite the City” through services between Portishead, Severn Beach and Bath) ***FOSBR notes that in order for MetroWest Phase 1 to progress to schedule, the Development Consent Order needs to be approved by all four Full Councils at meetings held between 3 October and 4 November.*** FOSBR would encourage the four councils to expedite this process and time the Full Council meetings accordingly.

3. Possible delays to MetroWest Phase 1 and 2: The Hendy Report has some worrying omissions for the prioritised Network Rail projects in the West of England area. In particular, Filton Bank four-tracking lacks specific detail on timescale, and Bristol East Junction, which is necessary to improve services between Bristol and Bath, is omitted altogether. Together with the current delays in the MetroWest Phase 1 development, this means that the MetroWest Phase 1 could slip drastically in timing and in turn this would jeopardise the whole of the MetroWest scheme.

We would therefore urge all councillors and MPs to press the Secretary of State for Transport and DfT to ensure that Network Rail honours its contribution to MetroWest Phase 1 and 2 and that the key projects of Filton Bank four-tracking and Bristol East Junction are delivered to schedule, so that the MetroWest projects can be delivered on time. FOSBR would like to record our unequivocal support for the existing plans for MetroWest Phase 1 and 2, as well as for further development of the MetroWest network.

3. MetroWest Phase 3: FOSBR has drafted a MetroWest Phase 3 proposal which sets out further station reopenings across the West of England and the services which would serve the new stations. We hope this would be an acceptable use of the devolution funds, and we hope that this will inspire the four councils to see the potential for good in the devolution deal and negotiate accordingly. In summary, we propose:

MetroWest Phase 3 Executive summary:

- ***Reopen stations at Charfield, Coalpit Heath, St Anne’s, Chittening, Saltford, Corsham and Ashton Gate***
- ***Extend the MetroWest Phase 1 and 2 train services to provide three local services to serve these stations: Henbury Loop plus Clifton Down return; Weston super Mare to Chippenham via Corsham; Portishead to Cheltenham.***
- ***Upgrading of existing stations across the MetroWest area with disabled access and CCTV, with M shops on key local stations;***
- ***Promotion of rail-bus interchange so that there is complete coverage of the West of England area for commuters wishing to travel to work by public transport.***