

Statement from SWTN on public transport cuts, budgets and devolution - Bristol City Council, BANES and South Gloucestershire Councils meetings on Devolution in November 2016

Whilst we welcome the Devolution deal the issues about transport powers are a concern on how it will be possible to operate and franchise a bus network that does not cover the four unitary authorities in terms of a franchise or a quality partnership where buses operate between UWE - Portishead and Clevedon would be outside the agreement. Similarly bus services through Hotwells, Clevedon and Weston would have to operate under the permit system under the Buses Bill or would require a separate quality partnership covering North Somerset by the new combined authority to cover North Somerset either as an advanced quality partnership or an enhanced quality partnership. It would also require a different agreement for a multi-journey, multi-operator and multi-modal ticketing scheme and North Somerset would still require referral to the Traffic Commissioner for services whereas the Metro-Mayor would have full control over the bus services through contracts or partnerships. Of course this would also apply to a Planning or Transport Commissioner.

On rail it would be very difficult to arrange improvements to services without the full Portishead line being in the deal and the line from Gloucester to Weston-Super-Mare. This would make station improvements very difficult or to seek rail powers for Metro-West with the franchise and Network Rail. Access for All programmes could be carried out at Lawrence Hill, Stapleton Road, Patchway, Pilning, Filton and Parson Street but would leave the situation of station improvements in North Somerset outside the power of the combined authority. This would affect bus/rail interchange improvements at Weston-Super-Mare and Nailsea and Backwell and also electrification of the line between Bristol to Taunton.

If a new rail authority is set up as part of the combined authority, then while improvements would take place at Bath, Keynsham and Temple Meads, Filton, Patchway and the Henbury loop North Somerset would remain outside the combined authority area and rail investment programmes would still have to be agreed with the DfT. Similarly, decisions on housing and planning matters on South Bristol expansion or Weston-Super-Mare, Clevedon or Portishead and the MetroBus extensions to Clevedon and Weston would again be outside the control of any planning, transport authority commissioner or Metro-Mayor. Delivering a new interchange at Weston would be more difficult.

Currently, the Bristol Port and airport remain outside of the combined authority which makes improving public transport to Bristol airport and reopening the Henbury loop very difficult as the port is in three authorities - Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset.

Bus Service Reductions from 4th September 2016

Passenger groups are concerned about the following loss of services :-

- 2 Stockwood - City Centre (no night buses)

- 17A Keynsham - Southmead via Hillfields and Cadbury Heath (now retained from November 2016)
- 37 Bristol - Bitton - Bath (no service to Bitton or RUH) now planned to be restored to its original route from November 2016)
- 38 Bristol - Keynsham - Bath (Sundays and evenings)
- 48/49 No night buses beyond Downend and Staple Hill
- 51 Bristol - Knowle - Whitchurch
- 178 Bristol - Radstock via Keynsham (no estate service evenings and Sundays)
- 173 Radstock - Chillcompton (no Sunday service)
- 207 Thornbury - Berkeley (loss of service)

Whilst we are pleased to see some services retained from September and November we are still concerned about the level of services in Kingswood and Keynsham along the routes of the 17A (now 19B) and 38/178 around the Keynsham estates with no evening and Sunday services after 9pm and a limited service around the Chandag Estate, together with the 6 & 7 around Larkhall, Bath.

The larger budget for buses and public transport in BANES, Bristol and South Gloucestershire is alarming. Whilst we welcome the bid for sustainable money from Government the loss of bus service support money is of great concern especially on the Bristol - Radstock corridor through Brislington and Whitchurch.

Any powers should allow for any new tram/light rail routes in Greater Bristol and Bath, transport interchanges, control of bus stations, one brand for bus and rail services and powers under Section 21 of the proposed 2017 Transport Act to operate buses similar to what BANES does now with full consultation on budgets.

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