

David Redgewell statement

Dear Councillors

We are still very concerned about the west of England bus recovery plan but we are pleased with the progress being made by the on bringing back bus services.

From the 2nd August 2020 the 37 trunk route service between Bath Spa bus and coach station to Weston, Kelston, Bitton, Longwell Green, Hanham, St George. Lawrence hill station, Bristol bus and coach station will be restored although

we still have 11 routes still not operational. including route 18 Bath bus and coach station via Keynsham, route 178 Bristol to Radstock via Brislington and Keynsham, route 96 Brislington to Hengrove via Knowle, X2 Bristol bus station to Yatton, Worle and Weston Super Mare.

With government instructions to bring the network level back to 80% we still do not have a proper bus service to Marshfield even after 4 months (route 35).

The Marshfield to Bristol City City Centre bus service stopped operation without any public consultation due to covid 19. As of the 31st March 2020 this was a South Gloucestershire council tendered bus service so can we again ask the WECA mayoral transport authority if this service is going to be retendered or reinstated

We want the Y2 Bristol bus and coach station to Yate bus station and Chipping Sodbury via Fishponds evening service reinstated as well as the T2 service from Bristol Bus and coach station via Gloucester road and Cribbs Causeway bus station to Thornbury as a matter of urgency.

There is an urgent need for these services to be reinstated for local journeys in the evening.

The WECA mayoral transport authority has a duty to provide services under Government guidance on Covid 19 by accessing the bus operators grant but is failing to carry this out with a passenger consultation like Somerset County Council Wiltshire or Gloucestershire County Council have done. The Government is not expecting the transport authority to reinstate evening and weekend services it seems.

Bus grants are helping to restore services in Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stroud, Swindon, Bournemouth, Poole, Christchurch, Cornwall and Plymouth in the South West region.

It is very disappointing that we still have no public enquiry line at the WECA mayoral transport authority.

Since public transport services transferred from Bristol city council, South Gloucestershire County Council and Bath and North East Somerset enforcement of face coverings is required on public transport but it is also the case that exemptions do apply for those who have respiratory/ health conditions including hypertension and masks should be made available to vulnerable public transport users by transport staff to those have been unable to obtain one. The mask wearing opt out is not well publicised by local authorities at bus stops or in the local new media and rigid mask wearing enforcement without the general public being informed of their rights could mean that vulnerable customers being refused travel. Can the issue of proportionate enforcement be raised with Sue Mountstevens, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and Chief Constable Andy Marsh, Bristol Port Police and the British Transport Police.

As bus regulations have changed to allow 18 passengers on a single decker and 35 on a double decker bus and 60 on a 3 car train on the Bristol Temple Meads, Filton Abbey Wood, Bristol Parkway, Yate, Cam & Dursey, Gloucester and Cheltenham services, the Severn Beach line and the main line to South Wales via Patchway and Pilning we need regular deep cleaning of buses and trains, bus shelters, bus and railway stations and enforcement on face coverings.

Realtime information is still not operational on bus stops, interchanges and bus stations.

We note that there are issues with bus and cycle lane paint markings fading on Metro bus routes and elsewhere which make them unclear for cyclists and other transport users and urge that an audit is carried out to rectify any problems. An example of this at the Lawrence Hill inbound bus lane by Ducie Road on the 37 route. It also appears that not all BANES bus shelters are being cleaned and that the passenger information points at Bath Spa bus and coach station and Wells bus station are still closed even though others at Stroud, Gloucester and Cheltenham have reopened.

Tourism is worth 1.4 billion pound to the economy of Greater Bristol and Bath and is important to public transport.

Western Gateway transport board.

We are also extremely concerned about the consultation of the western gateway transport board plan and the lack of public consultation on this vital regional plan during the covid 19 emergency.

The fact that the region has 2 transport boards is not supported by any environmental or transport group holds us back in the view of the regional Travel Watch South West organisation. We are unhappy that Somerset is split in half as a county a bit like East and West Germany. Partition is good in British history and now exists in the 7 countries of the South West.

This will also impact on local government proposed reorganisation in Somerset.

The issue that concerns us the most is the lack of a clear regional bus and coach network policy. There is no clear investment strategy for Transport interchanges such as Bristol Temple Meads station as a major station in the South West of England or Bristol Parkway, no clear regionally important bus or coach links such as Bristol bus and coach station to Cribbs Causeway bus station and Chepstow bus station, or Bath Spa bus station to Trowbridge, Warminster, Salisbury, Bristol Airport, Churchill, Bridgwater, Taunton, Cullompton, Exeter, Newton abbot, Plymouth apart from the limited South West Falcon coach services or Chepstow bus station to Gloucester bus station link nor are there services from Thornbury to Gloucester bus station. The 376 service from Bristol bus and coach station to Wells, Glastonbury and Street is now running at increased frequency.

We welcome the reference to the Bristol Bath city region bus network and Gloucester Cheltenham bus network.

Bournemouth Poole and Christchurch network.

The plan has no rural transport policy. We welcome the railway policy and reference to Metro West and Regional railway routes but we appear to have no clear priority on station investment with Greater Bristol competing with Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch Dorset for public transport network investment.

There is again a wish list of rural road improvements in Wiltshire and Dorset. The main railway network from London Paddington, Bristol Temple Meads to Penzance via Taunton, Exeter and Plymouth is seen as less important than a road from Bristol and the M4 to Poole.

Ports and Airports investment are not made clear. Is investment more important in the port of Poole than Weymouth or the port of Bristol, or Bournemouth Airport, Bristol Airport or Exeter Airport.

The region's main focus is not Bristol to Bath and Bournemouth-Poole's road system as the main road and Rail links go to Gloucester Cheltenham, Birmingham, Bristol, Taunton, Exeter, Plymouth and Cornwall or from Bristol to Newport and Cardiff.

Having seen clear investment plans by the Northern Powerhouse and The Midlands Engine, this plan needs considerable work on it and integration with the South West transport board plans. This not a region transport plan for investment post covid 19 having read the West Midlands plan. These concerns are also expressed by Sera South West and Transport for Greater Bristol. The closing date for the consultation is 31st of July 2020.

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