

Adam Reynolds statement to CES Panel 9th November 2023

Panel Members,

Your attention is drawn to Item 11, the Journey to Net Zero Update. Paragraphs 3.7 to 3.11 of the report discuss the benefits of the CRSTS program and specifically how they deliver on the JtNZ Strategy 3.5.

At the West of England Combined Authority Committee held on Friday, 6th October, 2023 (<https://westofengland-ca.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=141&Mid=613>), the Transport Infrastructure Projects report (Item 14) removed key elements of the Somer Valley Links (SVL) project (paragraph 4.8, Appendix 2 – Table of CRSTS Scope Amendments p38), the Bath Riverline Project, and bodes poorly for elements of WECA's A4 Bath to Bristol (B2B) and the upcoming Bath City Centre (BCC) transport improvement consultations.

It appears that within WECA, arbitrary decisions have been made on what schemes should or should not be delivered are part of the Department For Transport submitted CRSTS 2023 re-baselining exercise conducted due to forecast cost increases.

There are also elements where, even though costs have almost doubled, the split of the funding allocated to BaNES SVL, B2B, and BCC have been maintained evenly spread rather than combining all funds and then prioritising high impact high quality schemes across the region as a whole.

It is also evident that WECA has not followed the sustainable transport hierarchy, by prioritising bus infrastructure over walking, wheeling, and cycling infrastructure, and this approach has continued in its re-baselining exercise.

It is suggested that this panel consider raising the following issues as it considers appropriate:

1. Given that the Journey to Net Zero Update was issued one month after the WECA Transport report, why have the CRSTS scope changes above not been identified as a risk to delivering the JtNZ strategy?
2. Given how the re-baselining exercise was badly executed, resulting in poor value for BaNES, WECA be invited to initiate a 2024 CRSTS re-baselining exercise that restructures the funding allocated to BaNES and other authorities in a more appropriate manner to deliver on the JtNZ Strategy.