

West of England Joint Spatial Plan

Consultation response by North Bristol SusCom January 2016

North Bristol SusCom Ltd. is a group of major employers, located in North Bristol, promoting **sustainable commuting** to our 40,000 employees, 30,000 students and visitors. We are working together to influence and improve local sustainable transport provision to **combat traffic congestion** and reduce the impact upon our environment.

North Bristol SusCom welcomes the strategic, joined up approach the four West of England Unitary Authorities are taking to ensure the West of England is adequately planning for its housing and employment needs both now and into the future. We particularly welcome the approach that will integrate the Joint Spatial Plan with a Transport Study that will help ensure that appropriate transport investment and infrastructure will be put in place to address current deficiencies and future requirements.

As a group focused on promoting sustainable transport, we are supportive of the spatial planning scenarios that concentrate development in locations already served by, or that could be served by, sustainable transport infrastructure. It is essential that we not repeat the mistakes of the past and that we adequately provide new and existing housing and employment areas with a comprehensive package of sustainable transport options. Some of these will be capital investments and other will focus on behaviour change and smarter choices activity.

West of England Joint Transport Study

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North Bristol SusCom welcomes the Joint Transport Study work the four Unitary Authorities in the West of England have committed to undertake. Although we are primarily a North Bristol focused organisation, North Bristol SusCom's members' employees travel from across the



West of England and beyond as part of their daily commute to/from work. It is vital that we look at transport infrastructure and investment across the wider West of England area and beyond if we want to reduce congestion and make sustainable transport the preferred mode of travel.

We are very pleased the four Unitary Authorities are undertaking this Joint Transport Study. North Bristol SusCom is taking an active role in the Joint Transport Study, and, along with Business West Chamber of Commerce and Initiative, we are helping to represent the business community in the Transport Study Steering Group. We have also helped to organise a number of consultation sessions with businesses on the JSP and JTS during the current consultation period.

These comments made here represent a collective view of our membership and should not solely be attributed to any individual member organisation. Our members have been encouraged to make company specific representations and to encourage their staff to make individual representations also.

There are a couple of general points we want to make before going into specifics about issues and concepts.

It is very important that the JSP and JTS are closely linked and we are pleased to see that is the approach that is being taken. The timing of the delivery of transport improvements will be very important and we need to take advantage of key transition points in people lives to encourage them to travel more sustainably – when they move to a new house, start a new job, start a new school.

It is important that strategic transport corridors, like the A38, are assessed as full corridors that cross administrative boundaries. The interventions along the route may vary but it should be tackled as a whole. We also need to address the unique characteristics of the areas that make up the West of England. Solutions for the City Centre of Bristol may be different to those in North Bristol where car dependency is higher and transport options are lower.

Greater emphasis should be given to Smarter Choices/Behaviour Change Measures. Attempts have been made through smaller funding streams to promote active travel and influence behaviour but it has been small scale and resources have been limited. There is a real chance that with some significant investment in this area and in improving active travel choices (MetroCycle for example) we could see a significant shift in modal choice in a quicker period of

time. The Fairer Fares campaign which reduced pricing for First Bus services led to a significant increase in bus patronage in a short period of time. We need to commit dedicated resources over a longer period of time to build momentum and consistency in this area.

The Consultation document mentioned the Transport Mode Hierarchy but it doesn't seem to have translated into the concepts. It would be good if the Study could be clear on the transport mode hierarchy as that will also help prioritise what is funded and delivered. It feels at the moment that motorised transport (cars, buses, trains) is prioritised above active travel – cyclists and pedestrians. We need to rebalance that and put people first and that could be shown better in the final concepts.

Joint Transport Study Issues

The transport issues listed in the consultation document are pretty comprehensive. The only point we would add (perhaps as part of the Limited Travel Options issue) is the current lack of truly integrated transport both physically and in terms of ticketing. We have lots of examples of good infrastructure but they tend to be single or dual mode focused only. We need better connectivity across all modes – for example a Park & Ride becomes a Park & Change where it incorporates and promotes car sharing, buses, cycling, walking etc.

Cost/affordability should also be noted as a significant issue in regards to public transportation. We need to deliver a more affordable public transport offer if we are going to get many more people to stop using their car.

Joint Transport Study Objectives

The objectives outlined are also very comprehensive. We would suggest that the “Contribute to better safety, health and security” is amended to not solely focus on reducing road traffic collisions but also look to reduce off-road conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians and look to reduce near misses not just collisions for both on and off road.

Health also seems to be missing as a key objective. It is referred to but could be an objective on its own. Any society that encourages and increase the number of people travelling by public transport or active travel (cycling and walking) is a healthier society. The positive implications on a healthy more active population are a significant objective that sustainable transport can contribute to.

Joint Transport Study Concepts

Traditionally transport funding has tended to focus on large-scale capital projects. Many of these projects are vital to our network, but on their own don't have as much impact as when they are combined with other measures. The West of England has been fortunate

enough to have been successful in securing significant investment through the Government's Local Sustainable Transport Fund. This funding has been a fantastic way to engage businesses, new developments and schools in behaviour change activity to change the way people travel on a regular basis. The importance of having dedicated funding to promote behaviour change should not be underestimated. It is a very cost effective way of introducing quicker change and needs to be maintained and developed over a longer period.

We have some general comments about the transport concepts outlined in the consultation document as well as suggestions for additional ones.

#1 Strengthen and Enhance Public Transport Corridors – as mentioned earlier we would prefer to see park & rides as more like park & change sites to encourage greater modal choices. Also Station parking should include secure and general cycling parking and not just car parks.

#2 Extend MetroBus network – as well as new MetroBus routes existing public transport corridors/showcase bus routes should be considered for MetroBus upgrades – routes like the A38, A370, A4, A37, A4174 M32-Filton etc.

#3 Extend MetroWest and #4 Metro West ++ - in the consultation workshop events attended these two concepts were often joined together into one. Their value was highlighted but it was recognized that there are many areas (Emersons Green, Aztec West, Cribbs Causeway) where traditional rail options cannot be achieved.

#5 Walking and Cycling Superhighways – this concept was very popular in the consultation events. We know through the annual travel to work survey that the main mode people are considering changing to, from all other modes, is cycling but it is lack of infrastructure and safety concerns that put many off doing so. Segregation between pedestrians and cyclists is also an issue (the Bristol Cycling Campaign articulates the issue well) with many people put off walking due to potential conflict with cyclists and many road users unwilling to share space with cyclists.

The Bristol Cycling Campaign argues that the JTS needs to deliver three continuous highway networks. Cycling, walking and driving need different networks with different design requirements. Walking and driving networks are largely in place albeit needing

improvements. It is the cycling network that is largely missing and perhaps this concept should focus on cycling – a MetroCycle project perhaps.

#6 Better Connectivity and #7 Pinch Points and bottlenecks – in the workshops these two concepts were interpreted to be primarily about building new roads. We would suggest that any new road building be kept to a minimum (obviously new developments and missing strategic corridors will need to go ahead) but the emphasis should be on building sustainable transport corridors. If new strategic corridors are put in place to reduce through traffic, say through city centres, then the road space in those existing but soon to be lesser used locations should be reconfigured to increase priorities for public and active transport.

#8 Strategic Corridor Packages – again a very well received concept in the consultation events. It will be a package of measure that will have the biggest impact rather than single mode improvements on their own.

#9 Working Better Together – The four West of England authorities have been very successful in working together on the current round of transport packages. This can and should be taken a step further and should include options for a Joint Transport Authority that can implement traffic and transport measures across the area and include bus franchising options.

#10 Local Sustainable Transport Fund – Smaller pots of revenue and capital funding can have a significant impact in how people choose to move around the area. Smaller pilot projects like the North Bristol Business Shuttle, the car sharing service Join my Journey, the development of the X18, the Big Commuting Challenge etc. would not have happened without this funding. Not all transport investment needs to be expensive and take years to put in place. Resources like the Travel Roadshow Team, employer grants, employer engagement have been vital in working towards a culture change and helping people understand and take up more sustainable travel choices. This needs an ongoing programme of investment – not piecemeal funding.

#11 Regional Connectivity – This concept focuses on road and rail. This is important but will require outside intervention/investment so this is more of a lobbying/influencing role and should not be expensive for us to do.

#12 Freight – In North Bristol this is not as big an issue as it may be in town and city centres. It requires lots of negotiation with national chains and should be pursued but we remain uncertain what the scale of impact could be. There has been a significant increase in smaller van traffic on the roads which is not being picked up in any of the concepts. Perhaps some sort of demand management system could be applied to freight – low emission vehicles, restricted delivery hours etc.

#13 Travel Demand Management – Many of our members already operate demand management systems at their businesses. Some charge employees for car parking on site and use that income to improve public transport to site and cycle parking and changing facilities on site. This could work on a larger area scale but should also look at perhaps rewarding those who travel sustainably rather than simply punishing those who drive. It will also be important that there are alternative options in place for the majority of people.

Other concepts that should be considered include:

Innovation and Technology – there is a real opportunity through new technologies to change the way we use existing road space. Driverless cars, electric vehicles, on-demand travel could revolutionise the way we travel around and whether or not we need to own our own vehicles. Innovations in ticketing, transport information could also have a significant impact.

Transport Interchanges – We need to do some work on developing a seamless journey for people – making it much easier to transition between modes. Park and Rides should also encourage Park&Share, Park&Stride, Park&Cycle; Railway stations should be more accommodating to cyclists with secure facilities on site; buses should connect with trains; ticketing should be smarter etc.

Thank you for enabling us to participate in these two exciting consultations. We look forward to working with you over the coming months and years on this exciting agenda.

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