

North Bristol SusCom Response to Joint Transport Study Consultation

Question 1: Is the level of ambition for the Transport Vision about right?

We are pleased to see that the West of England Authorities are being ambitious in terms of the level of resources they are looking to invest to tackle the current transport infrastructure deficit. We believe the funding needed to support sustainable transport infrastructure for new developments will need to be reviewed, in line with the Joint Spatial Plan consultation, as we do not believe that the all the development locations identified in the JSP are the best option in terms of encouraging and increasing the use of sustainable transport (those that jump the Green Belt appear to rely heavily on road infrastructure).

The Authorities may also want to ensure they have the flexibility to re-allocate funding between modes (i.e. reducing the amount for highway investment and increasing walking and cycling funding, bus improvements – better cost benefit ratio). There is also a need to identify specific allocations for smarter choices/revenue funded activity and for developing more extensive infrastructure for greener and autonomous vehicles.

All transport funding packages must be costed to include funding to deliver complimentary but vital infrastructure. For example, we are aware there is a project being developed for a funding bid to help ensure all the MetroBus stops are accessible by walking and cycling – this should have been part of the core MetroBus project. All projects need to look beyond the immediate investment required to also address connectivity issues, which can help ensure the project is delivered more successfully. There should also be revenue funding included in projects bids to promote and help people to use the new infrastructure (a revenue funded bid has gone in for Access funding to help promote Metrobus – if this is not successful what are the plans to promote the service and how would it be funded?).

We also need to be smarter about how we manage the construction phases of these major transport projects and support people who are most affected by the works to use alternatives during the disruption. Metrobus is the prime example – the delays the works have caused to the current bus infrastructure are significantly affecting people's



perceptions about MetroBus and putting current and potential users off taking the bus. More support could have been given to minimise the impact for Stoke Lane residents (why wasn't a car sharing scheme put in place for the duration of the works to help reduce the numbers of vehicles travelling in the area, did we offer loan bikes to residents and employees, etc.). One of our members has found their numbers of cyclists have increased due to people's frustration with the roadworks – they have supported them by making loan bike available and to they set up lots of temporary cycle parking to address increased demand. We are missing a trick by not helping people better explore the alternatives to car use during these construction periods.

Question 2: Do you think we are proposing the right mix of public transport investment?

We need to be careful that we invest in those modes that will deliver the most modal shift from single car occupancy and that we don't spread resources too thinly. We need a proper integrated transport systems so all modes need to interchange seamlessly and use smart ticketing.

We have some specific concerns about Park and Rides – do these take more cars off the road or do they shift people who already use the bus (often on more indirect routes) into their cars to get on a more direct bus? The title "Park and Ride" doesn't reflect the ambition for these sites to become multi-modal interchanges where people can travel to them by car, local bus, walking or cycling and then transfer to a more direct bus into the City Centre/North Fringe etc. or get into a car-share vehicle or cycle onto their final destination. If we are to deliver modal shift and get people out of their cars than it will be onto trams and other forms of rapid transit.

The Vision includes a proposal for a network of Park and Ride around the urban area – we need to ensure the network is comprehensive (people have one on their route) or else it will encourage people to drive longer distances to get to them. The location and purpose of the M32 P&R is important – is it to help reduce M4/M5 motorway traffic from entering the city or is it aimed at stopping North Fringe commuters from driving in – need to ensure it's location does not encourage more people to drive to it instead of using local services.

Question 3: To what extent do you agree with the principle of diverting non-local traffic, including onto new roads, to accommodate public transport and cycling schemes?

We need to deliver an overall reduction in car use – the priority has to be to re-allocate space to public transport and cycling on existing highways before building any new roads (and we really need to question whether we do need to build new roads) otherwise you increase road capacity before you provide alternatives and everyone defaults to the car. Some of the major orbital links that will be expected to take non-local traffic are also some of our most congested routes. Orbital connectivity is as important in North Bristol as radial activity is and our fear is that the A4174 and A38 corridors could become even more congested and therefore also less attractive for people to use to cycle and for public transport.

Question 4: To what extent do you agree with the concept of light rail (tram solution on some rapid transit corridors)?

We need to ensure that we invest in an integrated transport systems – having a mixture of Metrobus and tram routes may make it difficult to provide a seamless journey for people. Need to be careful we don't spread ourselves too thinly so we end up with a sub standard tram network and a sub standard MetroBus network. Trams are preferable as they represent a greater step change in the transport offer and therefore will be more likely to attract car users out of their car.

Question 5: To what extent do you agree with using financial incentives and financial demand management at a local level to raise funds to help pay for the transport vision?

Our biggest reservation is that workplace car charging only impacts commuters and not other regular road users (including those from outside the area, those doing the school run etc.).

Road charging is likely to be a more equitable form of demand management.

A number of our businesses already charge employees to park at work. They use this income to invest in sustainable transport services to/on their sites (bus services, cycling facilities etc.). One unintended consequence these businesses have found is that this approach can actually lock people into car driving (especially if they pay an annual fee/annual percentage of their salary) as they

have already paid for the privilege to park so are less likely to travel by other means.

Our members have expressed some concerns about a workplace charging model – if it were to go ahead they would like to retain control of the income to re-invest in services and infrastructure that will directly benefit their employees. As it is unlikely the sums raised will be vast it would be important to link any charges collected through a workplace scheme to local investment.

Either way, detailed consultation needs to take place.

Question 6: What kind of scheme would be most appropriate to deliver an upgrade to sustainable travel between the East Fringe and Bristol City Centre?

Better orbital links are needed to connect the East Fringe and North Fringe as well as connectivity to the City Centre. Multi-modal interchanges and trams are the preferred schemes. Businesses in the East Fringe want to see the local Park and Ride expanded into a multi-modal interchange to support various onward modes including cycling.

Question 7: How much do you agree with the following elements of the package?

Support Fully – Marketing and education; Area packages of improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and buses; Strategic cycle Routes; Bus Network improvements, trams (over MetroBus), Freight Management.

Have some concerns – park and ride sites (see response to Q2), railway stations (trams may be better options as they can reach areas not near railway lines – Airport, Emersons Green, A38 North Bristol corridor, Cribbs Causeway etc.), road improvements (usually focuses on getting more cars through rather than promoting modal shift), new roads (only where absolutely necessary), expansion of MetroBus network (prefer trams).

Question 8: Are there any other schemes you would like to see in the package?

Would like to see better links between investments and health and air quality improvements.

Behaviour Change - The importance of behaviour change and smarter choices activity is mentioned in the document but there is no financial allocation for it.

Just because we will not be spending hundreds of millions of pounds doesn't mean we shouldn't include indicative amounts of funding. We should be committing resources and funding for behaviour change/smarter choices activity throughout the whole plan period so we can get momentum going and avoid the drip-feeding situation we have now, where no long-term planning or on-going investment can be made.

Question 9: Any other comments

We need to reduce the number of car movements and increase car sharing: We think the Transport Study could be much bolder, both in its language and prioritization, about wanting to reduce the number of cars on our roads, particularly for shorter journeys. The modal targets to 2036 indicate that although there is a 14% decrease in modal share for car journeys the actual number of journeys car remains relatively unchanged to today's (or 2011's figures). If we are serious about reducing congestion, improving air quality and having a much healthier population then we need to tackle unnecessary car use and be quite honest and clear about it.

Where vehicle travel is necessary we want to see people using greener fuels and sharing their journeys – electric cars, electric buses, Join My Journey etc.

Infrastructure in first: There needs to be a commitment to delivering sustainable transport investment upfront, before new major developments are underway otherwise we end up in our current lose-lose situation - the alternatives aren't in place so people continue to drive and the lack of priority bus and cycle infrastructure prevents people, who want to travel by those modes, from safely doing so.

We know behaviour change is most effective during periods of transitions (starting a new job, moving house and starting school). It is therefore vital that sustainable transport infrastructure is in place early enough to encourage modal shift. We need to include in the Strategy some clarity on how projects and which modes will be prioritised.

Sustainable Transit Corridors vs. Highway Infrastructure: Lack of transport investment, over decades, has created a very car dependent culture to grow unchecked. There seems to be an over-emphasis in the Study on the dependency between investment in sustainable transport corridors and investment in highway

infrastructure. This will probably lead to highway infrastructure being implemented and funded first, risking the possibility that funding cannot then be found for the sustainable transport corridors and therefore further increasing the dependency on cars to travel around the area. We must prioritise sustainable transport corridor investment first (which will reduce the number of cars on a given route) and then see if we still need the additional highway capacity.

Many Strategic Development Sites in JSP not sustainable in transport terms: The conclusions from the initial consultation on the JSP are stated as: “most respondents considered the best spatial scenario to be transport focused development and protection of the greenbelt”. Yet if you look at the current JSP document, the strategic development locations that jump the green belt are not sustainable in transport terms. The transport investments suggested are primarily road based i.e. increase junction capacity. The only way they can become more sustainable is if significant additional sustainable transport infrastructure is identified. Improving junction capacity in a couple of locations for the M5-A38 corridor’s 5,400 new homes is not sustainable in transport terms – it just means we will have 5,400 households using the car at their main mode to travel around the area. We would suggest that these locations need reviewing and we look to more sustainable urban extensions, which can provide better transport options or look at fewer locations and invest more in them.

Schemes in neighbouring authorities: The plan needs to address transport options outside the geographic boundaries of the West of England. We need better public transport/transport interchanges where our employees live at key locations in South Wales, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Somerset.

The interventions outlined in the vision are all located within the West of England boundaries. Through the annual travel to work survey and our own employee postcode analysis we know that there are significant clusters of people commuting to the West of England from outside the area (mainly using the motorway or rail network).

We know many of our commuters from South Wales operate informal car sharing arrangements to share the cost of commuting across the bridge (the Bridge Toll is a useful stick in encouraging this behaviour). We should be looking at setting up commuter shuttles/park and shares on the Welsh side of the bridge to help reduce the number of people driving to the West of England in single occupancy

vehicles.

Revenue funded activity - Most of the funding allocated in the Vision is for big capital projects and not enough clarity or emphasis is given to behaviour change, better journey planning, smart ticketing across modes and up-to-date transport information to help people make better choices.

Orbital and Radial Connectivity – The plan focuses on radial activity into the major urban areas across the West of England. Little emphasis is given to orbital connectivity, expect for through traffic. We already have a significant issue with bus services in the area where often you have to go into the city centre and back out again as there is lack of orbital connectivity.

Orbital connectivity across the North Fringe into Avonmouth/Sevenside is not sufficiently addressed in the plan – LRT is mentioned but that needs to be supplemented by MetroBus and better cycling routes from the North Fringe.

Radial connectivity to the Airport is only proposed from the City Centre (it needs to be rail or tram based) and not from the Weston/M5 corridor apart from road i.e. car based transport.

Walking and cycling - It is not clear what the £400m for walking and cycling will cover. Will this deliver a West of England Network of segregated cycle routes connecting all the enterprise zones/areas and major employment areas with housing areas together? Does this allow for funding to address existing bottlenecks, areas of conflict in the current infrastructure? As well as attract more people to cycling and walking we need to look after the significant number of people whom regularly travel that way now.

Policy Interventions – the plan focuses on physical projects and not other actions or incentives that could be put into place which are cost neutral or minimal in cost terms but which could still have a significant impact on modal shift. For example, the West of England should use its new powers (through devolution and the Bus Bill) to greater direct and influence the existing bus network, ensuring it links into and compliments MetroBus, ties in with train timetables and ensuring all housing areas and employment areas are connected with the public transport network.

The West of England combined mayoral authority should lobby government to support the setting up of Bus to Work and Train to Work schemes which allow employees to purchase season tickets through salary sacrifice (both saving NI and employee tax) – it should not simply be seen as an employee benefit but a wider societal benefit in helping to reduce congestion, pollution and improve public health.

In the 2012 bus study we commissioned with South Glos Council, we discovered our members we spending almost £1m per annum on works buses. Due to Treasury restrictions they had to deliver services in a way that was not most cost effective and didn't benefit all employees. A far more cost effective solution would be for Treasury to allow those business that want to, the freedom to subsidise the sustainable travel to work costs of their employees and to do so without financial penalty to employer or employee. When someone travels to work by sustainable transport every one benefits not just the individual.

The Vision does not include enough emphasis or thought to lower cost interventions/tweaks that can make sustainable transport more attractive and cost effective.

Ann O'Driscoll
Director
North Bristol SusCom