Public questions and replies

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WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE

17 DECEMBER 2021

PUBLIC QUESTIONS & REPLIES

The following questions were submitted by the deadline (full details of questions are set out in the following pages):

Q 1 David Redgewell - Bus/coach interchanges

Q 2 David Redgewell – Rail services

Q 3 Dick Daniel – Public transport – trams

Q 4 Tony Lloyd – Portishead rail line

QUESTION 1

Question from: David Redgewell

Subject: Bus/coach interchanges

Question:

With the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and North Somerset council bus strategy making passengers change buses and coaches at interchanges. This will be the case on some main routes from the 30th January 2022.

Will the West of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council please provide a copy of the interchanges facilities design guide?

These guides exist in Transport for London, Greater Manchester mayoral combined Authority, Liverpool city region mayoral combined Authority and the West Midlands mayoral combined Authority.

Passengers and stakeholder groups are concerned.

The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and North Somerset council interchanges with the exception of the new bus and coach station interchanges facilities at Weston Super Mare and metro bus stops facilities in the region. Bus and coach stations at Bath, Bristol, Yate, UWE, Southmead bus station and Bristol Parkway. Limited facilities at Bristol Temple Meads.

Many of the West of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council appear to be a bus stop and sometimes a shelter and real time information. The proposed interchange in Keynsham Ashton way has still not been constructed. First group South Gloucestershire council Banes council and Bristol city council had been looking at turning the Park and ride sites into public transport interchanges similar to Oxford and Salisbury; is this being looked into in the Bristol Bath city region? Has mayor Dan Norris and North Somerset council leader councillor Davies approved such a policy under bus back better the bus service and has this policy been discussed by the west of England and North Somerset council scrutiny commission. Along with the bus service Advisory Board and passengers forum. And full public consultation on bus service changes under bus back better the National bus strategy which put passengers first.

REPLY:

It is absolutely vital that we improve bus stops and transport hubs to make them welcoming, safe environments that are a window onto the amazing West of England region.

We are currently developing guidance for bus stops and transport hubs. This will look at standardising and improving the safety, accessibility and attractiveness of bus stops and transport hubs across the region. It is important that they provide an effective link between services and forms of transport. This guidance will be shared more widely once available.

Improvements will be delivered through the City Region Sustainable Transport Programme.

As part of this corridor programme, we intend to review the services to ensure that we provide improved accessibility to high frequency bus corridors in a joined-up way.

QUESTION 2

Question from: David Redgewell

Subject: Rail services

Question:

What plans are in place to set up a Railway executive and Integrated Transport Authority for the West of England mayoral combined Authority and North Somerset council? With North Somerset council joining the west of England mayoral combined Authority and working with the Weston Gateway transport Board.

We welcome the progress on the 30 minute services on the Severn Beach line between Avonmouth Dock station to Clifton Down, Bristol Temple Meads and station to Weston Super Mare across the city region. And the Bristol Temple Meads to Bristol parkway shuttle via Lawrence Hill, Stapleton road, Filton Abbey Wood, Bristol Parkway. To help progress opening up of Railway station such a Portway parkway in Bristol. The Bristol Temple Meads to Bedminster Parson Street, Pill and Portishead, and a further station at Ashton Gate. Bristol Temple Meads to Henbury loop line with stations at Lawrence Hill, Stapleton Road, Ashley Down, Filton Abbey Wood, Filton North for the arena and Henbury for Cribbs Causeway. Bristol Temple Meads, Lawrence Hill, Stapleton Road, Ashley Down, Filton Abbey Wood, Bristol Parkway, Yate, Charfield, Cam and Dursley, Stonehouse Bristol Road and Gloucester central. Bristol Temple Meads to Keynsham, Oldfield Park, Bath spa, Freshford, Avoncliff, Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge, Westbury, Warminster or Frome Improvements to the Bristol Temple Meads, Bedminster Parson Street, Nailsea and Backwell, Yatton for Clevedon, Worle parkway, Weston Super Mare, Highbridge and Burnham on Sea, Bridgwater and Taunton. And disabled access to stations at Freshford, St Andrew Road, Avonmouth, Stapleton Road, Lawrence Hill, Bedminster Parson Street, Nailsea and Backwell and lifts at Weston super mare and Cheltenham spa .

We need a railway executive and integrated transport Authority to speed up delivery of public transport.

REPLY:

Great British Railways will work in partnership with Metro Mayors (and other transport authority leaders) to give them greater control over local ticketing, timetables and stations, enabling better integration with local transport services.

We welcome this and await further details in the Levelling Up White Paper which is now due to be published in the New Year.

In the meantime, as Transport Authority, the Combined Authority has developed and agreed with Network Rail a 10-year Rail Delivery Plan which captures our existing commitments and identifies new projects to bring forward to delivery by 2030.

QUESTION 3

Question from: Dick Daniel

Subject: Public transport - trams

Question:

Would the committee agree that in an emergency there needs to be urgent action?

WECA and the councils agree that there is a 'climate emergency', and transport is a major contributor to green house gas emissions, as well ill-health and inequality issues.

Having a great public transport system that is reliable, low cost and low emissions is needed is not disputed.

That the proven way to do this is by having a tram system, which acts as the back-bone, and is closely linked to the bus network.

The reason for this is trams can easily run on renewable electricity with no emissions, they are 3 times more efficient at using energy than a bus, due to steel wheels on rails.

Create no tyre or road surface particulate pollution. Are cheap to run.

Why is WECA still considering other options rather than taking urgent action and getting on with building a tram network that will make a significant contribution to dealing with the climate emergency?

REPLY:

The climate emergency warrants urgent action which is why I am delighted that the Green Recovery Fund was passed at the last Combined Authority meeting and that I have secured over half a billion of funding for transport through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement.

The Combined Authority is working on a number of transport initiatives with constituent councils. We are creating West of England Sustainable Transport, helping people get from A to B in an affordable, reliable, greener way – with more journeys being made by public transport. We are planning new transport that can get many people on the move quickly and easily – running separately

from other traffic where possible. It could include several different types of transport such as buses, trams or trains. There are choices to be made.

At this early stage of the scheme development process, we are considering geographic routing options, constraints and opportunities; and building the evidence base. We are looking at a full range of options including buses, trams and light rail systems to decide the best way of delivering this new network. Each type of transport has different advantages and disadvantages, and we already know that we need more than one type of transport for different parts of the region. No decisions have yet been made on the most appropriate technology – we must be led by the evidence-base to determine the right solution for the specific area.

QUESTION 4

Question from: Tony Lloyd

Subject: Portishead rail line

Question:

Friends of Bristol Suburban Railways FoSBR understands that, in the original Outline Business Case for the whole of MetroWest Phase 1A and 1B combined, the revenue funding for the hire of five trainsets for the Portishead and Severn Beach Line to Bath was envisaged to be £1.1m total per annum. This was to be collected by the then-West of England Partnership from the four councils from their own revenue funding streams, and paid by WEP to the DfT as additional to the £118m capital funding already assured. This revenue funding was envisaged to be only necessary for the first three years, whereupon the DfT was to take this revenue funding into the franchise, releasing the four councils from supplying this revenue funding.

Question 1: Given that MetroWest Phase 1A delivery funds of £9m are now committed by WECA from their Investment Fund, is extra funding for the extra trainset hire for the Portishead Line, MetroWest Phase 1B, still envisaged to be supplied to the DfT and for how long?

REPLY:

Funding for rail services enabling MetroWest phases 1b and 2 will follow a similar funding model to the Department for Transport's, as delivered through MetroWest phase 1a enhanced services. MetroWest 1a enhanced services commenced with the December 12th national timetable change.

Question 2: Has this envisaged funding been secured by WECA or is this train set hire envisaged to be no longer necessary? In short, is the DfT satisfied with the financing of the Portishead Line and, if not, is this lack of assurance the underlying cause of the six-month delay to the Development Consent Order for the Portishead Line?

REPLY:

The Department for Transport are satisfied with the funding mechanism negotiated through the MetroWest Rail projects and Great Western Railway. This was evidenced by the commencement of enhanced services through to Severn Beach. We are not aware of any connection between the Development Consent Order delay and project funding. However all potential delays will have a knock on for costs.