

QUESTIONS AND METRO MAYOR'S RESPONSES ARE
ATTACHED

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March 15th Combined Authority Committee Public Questions and Responses

Q1 David Redgewell

What effects on public transport services delivered by the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council under the bus service improvement plan or support by services or Ferry and railway services under metro west railway Network have on stakeholders and passenger by the west of England mayoral combined Authority being put into special measures and the appointment of a panel to advise the west of England mayoral Authority and the mayor and council leaders on governance of the Regional Transport Authority for upto one year the Regional planning Authority and the local Enterprise partnership, which is to merge into the west of England mayoral combined Authority with North Somerset council becoming a member.

Metro Mayor's response:

Growing passenger numbers is the only way to build a sustainable public transport system. As mayor I have secured record sums for transport in the West of England. We are using that cash to roll out new and innovative ideas like WESTlink and WESTlocal, Birthday Buses and more. Bus passengers numbers are up 13% in 2023. Rail improvements continue apace with Portway Station opening, plus more frequent trains at local stations. We are investing £7m in WESTcharge and more than £15m in walking and cycling schemes. The Best Value Notice has no impact on the public transport services delivered by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority under the Bus Service Improvement Plan, rail projects, or any of the other investments that the Mayoral Combined Authority is making to improve public transport across the region.

Q2 David Redgewell

With the Department for levelling up setting up a panel to advise the west of England mayoral combined Authority on Governance for 1 year metro mayor Dan Norris and council leaders for one year ,

How will the effects the resubmission of the bus service improvement plan by the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council to the Department for transport on 12 th June 2024 .

What passenger and stakeholder groups consultation will take place over the revised plan including taking to passenger using the Bus service funded by the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council,

In view of the fact the bus service improvement panel finished 25 minutes early without discussion with passengers group stakeholders and councillors the changes to the bus service Network on 8th April 2024

By bus operators First group plc Wales and West buses Division, stagecoach west buses, Transpora buses, and other operators,

How will the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council,

Improve consultation and discussion with passengers group before the plan is submitted to the Department for transport,
Including a bus passengers forum.
Whist welcoming the citizens panel.
This does not fit into the timescale for the submission,
With new responsibilities on Passengers safety partnership cctv cameras at bus stop shelters Interchanges railway stations and Bus and coach stations working with Avon and Somerset police British Transport police and Bristol Port police Avon and Somerset police and crime commissioner on Passengers safety.
Improvement on passenger facilities for passengers travelling with reduced mobility and partly sighted passengers
With drop kerbs and Castle kerbs talking buses,
Improvement in passengers waiting Facilities and interchanges with bus and coach and ferry railway services,
Report to the Department for transport and work and pensions on bus Drivers cleaners, engineers, Supervisors and managers vacancies in the local bus company Depot,
Consultation on the bus and coach and Demand responsive bus services network,
The bus network being submitted to the Department for transport,

With sign off by the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council bus advisory panel and Bus advisory Board.
West of England scrutiny commission
West of England mayoral combined Authority committee, west of England joint committee,
Metro mayor Dan Norris,
Will the special measures advisory panel have to approve the Bus service improvement plan submission to the Department for transport for funding 2024 2025 funding,
Is a major concern to passengers groups and equalities groups.
Or will the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council still be able to sign of the plan with mayor Dan Norris,
And West of England mayoral combined Authority committee and joint committee and North Somerset council,

Metro Mayor's response:

The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority is proceeding with the refresh to the Bus Service Improvement Plan policy including through the Enhanced Partnership process, ahead of the submission deadline in June. Unlike the original BSIP document this is not a formal bidding process. However it is clearly an opportunity to positively present the case (to the current or next Government) for continued investment in bus services beyond the current deadline for BSIP spending in 2025/26. To this end we will set out what has been achieved to date through our BSIP investments. Our focus on fares, enhancing services, new and innovative ideas such as Birthday Buses and WESTlink and WESTlocal coupled with driver recruitment has led to growing passenger numbers. We will also update our ambitions to return to the passenger growth trajectory that was in place pre-pandemic and set out what resources might be required. We will also take the

opportunity to set out the case for the institutional changes needed to take that growth forward - and in particular the need for a West of England Passenger Transport Executive to bring public sector bus responsibilities together as happens in other successful Mayoral Combined Authorities.

Q3 Cllr Andy Wait (B&NES)

Having looked at the latest transport consultation document, I welcome the cycle path from the new Hicks Gate transport hub to Keynsham High Street. Whilst this is good for Keynsham, it is not a replacement for a cycle path along the Keynsham By Pass. If the network is to encourage cyclists from the Bath/Bristol Railway Path and those who live in Saltford or to the east of Keynsham to a new more direct path along the A4, why would the route then be diverted through Keynsham along substandard and hilly cycle paths when these cyclists are used to a flat clear path. Why remove the excellent and popular idea of a cycle track along the Keynsham Bypass from your consultation?

Metro Mayor's response:

I fully support practical measures to make it easier for people to cycle and walk in and around Keynsham.

It is important that there are sufficient safe cycling, walking and other forms of travel routes through Keynsham and along the A4. During the development of the proposals for engagement, the proposed route between Hicks Gate and Keynsham was suggested to provide a segregated area for people to walk and cycle. However, these proposals are not set in stone and will continue to develop as the proposals move to a Full Business Case and there will be more opportunities for residents and other stakeholders to engage with the proposals.

Councillors who have asked questions are always welcome to raise their concerns with me at the regular councillor surgeries I hold for them. I very much value the opportunity to discuss ward issues and to thank councillors in person for the important work they do for our communities.

Q4 Cllr Andy Wait (B&NES)

In the last few years there has been a growing community developing along the A4 to the east of Keynsham towards Saltford. This community is going to grow substantially with the new development of Withies Park, and even more if the new B&NES Local Plan is successful. These residents are likely to want to use active travel which means a cycle path along the A4 to at least the new Keynsham Station hub will allow these residents to leave their cars at home and cycle or walk to Keynsham Station and continue their journey by train. Why remove this cycle and walking path for the active travel network?

Metro Mayor's response:

As mentioned in the answer to Q3, the proposals included in the Outline Business Case are not yet set in stone and there will be further opportunities for the residents and other stakeholders to engage with the scheme as it develops.

Q5 Chris Lamb

How much of the budget allocated for the WestLocal scheme is being spent on the first two approved schemes- those of Paulton and Chew Valley & have both schemes satisfied a test for becoming self-financing once BSIP funding ends and will the test be publicized on WECAs online site?

Metro Mayor's response:

I am pleased that the first two bids through the WESTlocal scheme have been approved. These are in Paulton and Chew Valley. These bids have a combined value of £476,232 for two years (23.8% of the overall £2m WESTlocal budget). The bid writers were asked to demonstrate how their service would become financially self-sustaining in the future. As this information is commercially sensitive, it won't be published but there was a rigorous process of assessing the bids before the money was awarded.

This is a new people-powered solution. My thanks to the residents in Paulton and Chew Valley for working so hard on finding local solutions to local challenges. I would encourage others to follow their lead.

Q6 Chris Lamb

When will the forthcoming report on bus franchising be completed and made public?

Metro Mayor's response:

Franchising is under active consideration. We have a unique set of circumstances in the West of England that present particular challenges when it comes to franchising, and it is not a simple matter of copying what other parts of the country have done. As promised a report to Committee on franchising will be brought forward later this year once leaders from local councils have been fully briefed by officers.

Q7 Ian Beckey

What progress is being made on reopening the Henbury loop line And Henbury railway station and for South Gloucestershire county council to grant planning permission for the station and a new ramp access to the Station car parks and bus services interchange stops.

With Network Rail Western route plans to replace the level crossings at Avonmouth Docks we need to make sure that Western Gateway Transport Board and West of England mayoral combined transport Authority make sure this Will allow the extention of the Bristol Temple meads station, Bristol Lawrence hill, Bristol Stapleton road Ashley Down station, Filton Abbey wood, Filton North Station, Henbury railway station and Avonmouth Dock.

With the ability to provide through platforms for metro west railway stage

Metro Mayor's response:

Outline design has been completed for Henbury Rail Station and the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority is currently working with the rail industry through the detailed design process. The current plan is to open the station by 2027 but this will depend on a number of factors not least the progress of South Gloucestershire Council's assessment of the planning application for the station.

The infrastructure is being designed to not preclude through services should a loop option connecting to the Severn Beach Line become viable in the future. Additionally, any renewals to Avonmouth Dock Level Crossing will not preclude a future (Henbury) loop service.

The Mayoral Combined Authority is currently working closely with the rail industry to develop a scope of work for a new branch line feasibility study which will seek to identify options to improve service levels and connectivity. This study will include the Severn Beach and Henbury lines and it will help to inform the regional future rail enhancements and the interventions required to deliver them.

Q8 From Ian Beckey

With the removal of service 3 First group Wales and West buses from Bristol city centre, to Bristol Broadmead shopping centre, city centre, College Green, Clifton Down station, Downs, sea Mills, Shirehampton Avonmouth Lawrence weston, Henbury cribs causeway bus station.

This is major service withdrawal in Greater Bristol, Bristol city council and South Gloucestershire county council area,

With the only a partial replacement services being service 41 Kingwood Town centre, st George, Lawrence hill Station oid Market Bristol cabot circus Bristol Broadmead shopping centre city centre Bristol Harbourside, Hotwells, sea Mills Shirehampton Avonmouth Dock Severnside,

But no link to Henbury and cribs causeway bus station.

What action is the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority to replace this service in discussion with First group plc Wales and West buses Division stagecoach west and Transport buses.

Metro Mayor's response:

The Number 3 bus is a commercial service run by First. I am in regular contact with First and all the bus providers in our region. However, I have little direct say over which routes a commercial operator decides to run. First is making a number of changes to the commercial network from April. This includes the 3 which will no longer serve Avonmouth, with new service 41 now serving Avonmouth village and Industrial Estate from the Central area and service 15 operating from Cribbs Causeway to Avonmouth Industrial Estate. The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority would be unable to replace the 3, due to a commercial alternative being available. This is because, by law, local transport authorities cannot provide tax payer subsidised bus services that would compete with commercial ones.

Q9 Rosa Kell

What connections will be made with west link services on the A37. Between Wells bus and coach station and chewton mendip ,Farrington Gurney, Clutton whitchurch, Hengrove knowle, Totterdown Bristol Bus and coach station, Connections for westlink Demand responsive bus services to Chew valley Blagdon and Hengrove hospital?

Metro Mayor's response:

WESTlink links passengers to the main bus network including services on the A37. Passengers can use the app or call to book a WESTlink Monday-Saturday. To the North of the Chew Valley, the WESTlink boundary changes from April with a spur created into Witherwood enabling Chew Valley passengers to access the 75 bus route which runs every 15 minutes into Bristol. The new Hengrove Shared Zone means Chew Valley residents can access Hengrove for onward travel to the m1 metrobus. Additionally a new WESTlocal service from Chew Valley starts on 8 April 2024; it will operate from Monday to Friday, from Bishop Sutton to Bristol city centre via Chew Stoke, Chew Magna, Hengrove Park and Bristol Temple Meads. The service will operate 2 journeys leaving Bishop Sutton at 0735 arriving in Bristol city centre at 0825, returning at 1740 arriving at Bishop Sutton at 1825. This is a new people-powered solution. My thanks to Jackie Head and the Chew Valley Sustainable Transport Partnership for working so hard on finding local solutions to local challenges. I would encourage others to follow their lead.

Q10 Rosa Kell

What progress is being made in starting the new bus services x91 . Blagdon, Chew valley Chew magna and Bristol city centre as part of west local With the Chew valley partnership and Transporta buses, And the new Radstock Westfield midsomer Norton paulton Timbury Tunley Bath Park and ride site, With big lemon buses,

Metro Mayor's response:

The new WESTlocal service from Chew Valley will start on 8 April 2024, thanks to funding from my West of England Mayoral Combined Authority. The service will operate two journeys, leaving Bishop Sutton at 7.35am and returning from Bristol City Centre at 5.40pm. This is a new people-powered solution. My thanks to Jackie Head and the Chew Valley Sustainable Transport Partnership for working so hard on finding local solutions to local challenges. I would encourage others to follow their lead.