

## WECA Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting on Monday, 27 June 2022

### Questions received from the public

#### Item 1 – David Redgewell

Question 1 .

In view of the public equalities duty at the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council and the month being National pride month.

Whilst we welcome the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority

Being a partner in the Bristol public transport safety partnership.

What action is being taken by the mayor and the Transport Authority to improve safety and access on the public transport Network for the LGBTQ community young people BME and Disabled passengers including buses coaches ,Trains and Ferries.

and will the mayor be attending Bristol and Weston super mare pride with the pride bus this year .

Ian Beckey Railfuture Severnside

Brendon Taylor Bristol disability equalities forum.

#### **Response:**

The West of England is committed to promoting equality and diversity within the transport sector. As already noted by the questioner, we are a partner of the Bristol public transport safety partnership.

The Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4) has one of its main objectives to: “Enable equality and improve accessibility” to the transport network. By working with our partners within the transport sector, we are promoting safety and access for individuals within the LGBTQ+ community as well as individuals from other backgrounds, including BME, individuals with physical disabilities and hidden disabilities.

A lot of the main focus within the transport sector is the improvement of physical access onto public transport. Through the current investment within the transport network, the transport proposals being built will help improve physical access – a example of this is the access for all programme at railway stations, or improvements to bus stops that will be rolled out as part of the bus improvement corridors as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, that will feature improved facilities for individuals. We encourage engagement in the consultation processes that are undertaken as part of the development of these transport infrastructure proposals, to ensure that these schemes are inclusive as possible.

The Combined Authority are working closely with equalities groups in the region to understand the impacts of the e-scooter rental trial on users with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 (including those with visual impairment). Members of these groups are also closely involved

in the development of our Monitoring and Evaluation strategy. This is intended to help us gather as much information / learning as possible during the current trial period, so that we are well placed to react if/when a decision is made by central Government on the long-term legality of the use of e-scooters on the public highway. Our monitoring and evaluation activities will of course consider safety impacts for both scooter users and other road users (including pedestrians).

Regarding safety on public transport, or for walking and cycling, the Combined Authority is not running any campaigns directly regarding safety issues on the transport network. However, in working in partnership with the bus and train operators, we do support the campaigns for example, around women's safety on the rail network, and are aware that bus and train operations provide training to their staff to have consideration towards passengers who may be more vulnerable when using the public transport network, and how to intervene if issues do occur for these passengers.

However, we also need to acknowledge that we can and need to do more to ensure that access and safety is improved for the transport system. There are still issues with outdated infrastructure and vehicles that make it difficult for people to access trains and buses, safety on vehicles can still be a concern for many, safety concerns can be an issue for walking and cycling (especially at night), and there are issues of workforce diversity within the transport sector. In recent years, there has also been wider awareness of the transport issues that individuals with hidden disabilities have when using transport – such as neurodiversity like Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and ADHD.

In recognition of the challenges still faced by individuals using transport, the Department for Transport in 2020, published its Inclusive Transport Strategy Plan, and the promotion of “its everyone's journey” public campaign, noting that disabled people have been disproportionately affected by the COVID pandemic, with the aim of encouraging positive behaviours as we return to normal. This document recognises there is the need to do more within the transport sector to ensure inclusive transport, of which the Combined Authority will need to play its part in.

The inclusive transport strategy can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-transport-strategy>

Specific to Pride Month:

GWR is a supporter of the Weston-super-Mare pride weekend, which is occurring on the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> July. GWR is actively promoting its services to Weston-super-Mare railway station for this event, as well as to Bristol Temple Meads and Clifton Down stations for Bristol Pride, which will take place on the 9<sup>th</sup> July.

First Bus is a partner of Bristol Pride, and is operating a dedicated pride shuttle service between Parade End, the Amphitheatre and the Downs, running from 11:30am, with the last shuttle to the Downs at 7:30pm, with returns continuing into the evening as well as promoting the 1, 2, 3 and 4 services to the Downs for the event. The operator is also providing free bus travel for those with Pride supporter wristbands, within the First Bus Bristol Zone on the 9<sup>th</sup> July.

In addition, both bus and train operators are operating rainbow-liveried vehicles in the region in support of Pride – the “Trainbow” GWR train, and rainbow liveried bus by First.

Question 2 .

What progress is being made on access for all bids and grants on access for all to metro west railway stations at Bristol Lawrence hill, Bristol Stapleton Road , Bedminster, Parson street, Nalisea and Backwell, oidfiled park and Trowbridge.

With the Department for transport Network rail western route and First group plc Great western railway.

What has happened to the successful bids for Weston super mare and Cheltenham spa lift scheme

What action is the Western gateway transport Board and west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council making to progress these schemes.

In view of the fact that disabled passengers can not get Network rail western route to hand rails at Avonmouth and Bristol Stapleton road station.

And a new footbridge was put in a Highbridge and Burnham station

With No disabled access by Network rail western route.

Please will the scrutiny commission as the mayor Dan Norris , Bristol city council Banes ,South Gloucestershire, and North Somerset council to reset up a access for all group with Network rail western. First group Great western railway, Transport focus western Transport gateway transport Board and Somerset cc Severnside community railway partnership South Gloucestershire disability equities Network, Bristol disability equities forum Banes and North Somerset forums

Ian Beckey Railfuture Severnside,

Brendon Taylor Bristol disability equities forum.

Somerset catch the bus campaign.

**Response:**

Thank you for your email regarding accessibility issues in the greater Bristol area. This is an important area of focus for the Combined Authority and is being targeted as part of the Combined Authority's 10 year rail delivery plan and 25 year rail strategies. Working with industry partners (Great Western Railways & Network Rail) we are aiming to improve station accessibility throughout our region.

We recently held a programme of workshops reviewing station accessibility across a selection of regional stations with Great Western Railways, Network Rail, the unitary authorities and Severnside Community Rail Partnership. The output of these workshops was the approval and funding to do initial design work for a "Step Free" solution at Lawrence Hill station. If the construction phase is funded in the future, we hope to have a solution in place by the end of 2025. Alongside this workstream, as part of our 10 year rail delivery plan, we plan to take more stations in the Combined Authority region requiring accessibility improvements into the initial feasibility/design stages and hopefully through to construction.

Also, Network Rail and Great Western Railways have submitted a bid to the Department for Transport (DfT) for funding towards accessibility enhancement works at other stations in our region, including Oldfield Park, Parson Street and Stapleton Road. If funded, these are planned to be delivered between 2024 and 2029. This funding is not guaranteed, as other regions are competing for a national DfT 'Access for All' funding pot. Due to the cost of installing accessible footbridges and limitations on the overall national funding pot, securing funding will be extremely competitive.

Nailsea and Backwell station, Weston Super Mare, Cheltenham Spa and Trowbridge Stations all fall outside the West of England Combined Authority region, therefore we have limited involvement with accessibility improvements in these locations. We have tried this week to source information on progress with accessibility improvements at these stations from Network Rail and Great Western Railways but key representatives are unavailable. Hopefully this can be shared separately to this response.

Recognising the importance of improving accessibility at our regional stations, we are happy to commit to exploring the possibility of instigating a forum of key stakeholders, focussed specifically on station accessibility.

## **Item 2 – David Redgewell**

### **Question 1**

In view of the Government leveling up bill proceedings through the house of lord and house of commons.

What progress is being made to bring the local Enterprise partnership in the west of England mayoral combined Authority as a committee of the combined Authority

This will allow North Somerset council now to join the Authority

Allowing the combined Authority to negotiate a New devolution deal in phase 1 .

This could include full public transport precept for bus coach train ferry and future mass transit lights railway system.

And a railway executive jointly with Western gateway transport Board.

Interchanges facilities and bus stations.

As well a Devolution deal on Transport infrastructure and fares.

### **Response:**

The Government White Paper "Levelling Up the United Kingdom", published on 2 February 2022, proposes changes to the current framework for the governance and funding of LEPs. It sets out the Government's intention that LEPs will integrate into Combined Authorities where they exist. It sets out that where a LEP's geography does not match that of the Combined Authority, solutions will be considered by Government on a case by case basis.

In the case of the West of England LEP, North Somerset is outside the Combined Authority area and so a bespoke solution will need to be developed for the provision of LEP functions in North Somerset. At its meeting on 30th March, the LEP Board made a recommendation to establish a working group comprising representatives from the Combined Authority, the LEP, North Somerset and a representative from the three other Unitary Authorities to consider options and proposals to bring before the respective bodies in the summer. The Combined Authority subsequently adopted this recommendation at its meeting on the 8 April.

The subgroup is now working towards the Government's timetable of submission of an integration plan by the end of July.

The integration of the LEP into the Combined Authority will have no impact on the membership of the Combined Authority itself or on the terms of the devolution deal for the West of England. North Somerset will remain outside the Combined Authority area as is currently the case.

## Question 2

In view of the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council having the second largest bus service improvements plan money allocation in the country

What progress is being made to properly maintain passenger information services

And bus shelters and interchanges

across the city and county of Bristol, Banes council South Gloucestershire council and working in partnership with North Somerset council.

Some shelters in Weston super mare at ellborough park Weston super mare on route 7 and 20 are unsafe condition as Alcombe road in Weston super mare.

Main shelters on the A4 between Bristol and Bath via keynsham and Salford via Bristlington are graffiti.

Timetable unreadable.

A370 main bus stop and timetable are unreadable and between Bristol city centre and Weston super mare bus station have graffiti with homophobic and racist remarks on them .

As Do timetable and shelters from Bristol city centre to Hotwells Bower Ashton, Ashton court smashed shelters toward Bristol, pill , portbury and Portishead.

Main shelters in Bristol city centre and Bath city centre kingswood and the North fringe are graffiti damage what being Done to repairs and clean bus shelters and interchanges including broken benches at Bath spa bus and coach.

Realtime information not working at Weston super mare bus and coach station interchanges on I points

Out of date bus tube maps in Weston super mare.

And for the police to catch the people carrying out criminals damage.

What urgent action is west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council taking with the city and county of Bristol , South Gloucestershire council and Banes .

Repair and clean very important public transport infrastructure.

As this gives a very poor impression of the west of England metro mayor transport services jointly with North Somerset council.

We need a urgent bus stop shelter maintenance service.

David Redgewell South west transport Network.

**Response:**

Bus stops and roadside infrastructure in the Combined Authority area are owned and maintained by our constituent councils. At present, different standards of cleaning and maintenance apply in each area. Every roadside timetable poster in the CA area has local authority contact details for damage and graffiti to be reported directly and followed up promptly.

Where specific locations have been identified in the question, we will pass that information on to the relevant councils.

The issues highlighted in respect of North Somerset Council's area have been passed on to them to follow up.

One of the commitments in the draft enhanced partnership for buses is for the authorities to work together to establish a consistent standard of bus shelter cleaning and maintenance across the whole area.