

West of England Combined Authority Audit Committee meeting on 3 July 2023

Statements received from the public

1	Steve Reade
2	David Redgewell, South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside
3	Christina Biggs, Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways
4	Gordon Richardson Bristol disability equalities forum.

Statement 1

Steve Reade

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

I read with interest your external auditors report on the progress being made with the recommendations from their earlier report.

We all wish the Combined Authority to succeed and deliver on its primary goals of facilitating funding opportunities to the local authorities and increasing employment opportunities for residents.

The auditors noted significant turnover in senior staff but did not summaries the reasons for that turnover (unless I missed it).

In my time on the Housing and Transport Boards it was clear that there were tensions between the Mayor and senior members of the Combined Authority staff. The Mayor stated at one meeting that he had little confidence or trust in some of his staff.

These meetings were not public, although other Members were present.

I would ask did the Grant Thornton audits did they take interpersonal relationships into account when assessing the effectiveness of the Combined Authority or is this considered to be outside their remit.

Although I think IR1, IR2 and IR3 are applicable to my point.

I would also ask the Mayor does he have trust and confidence in those staff currently in post.

I recognise that these papers before you today are a look back as much as anything and I would hope the points I make have been resolved.

I don't think the problems are insurmountable and with the scrutiny being given by this committee the Combined Authority should soon be back on track.

Statement 2

David Redgewell, South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside

Whilst I welcome the Auditors report

Looking at support bus service.

And future transport zones .

The Red Flags were right on the withdraw of support bus services and social exclusion this has caused to many communities in the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council area and across the border to Somerset council and Gloucestershire.

With 43 bus services being withdrawn

due to lack of any funding through the transport levy to the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority

From Bristol city council, Banes , south Gloucestershire council.

As one of the main functions of the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council are as Transport Authorities

We are very concerned again to see the lack of Audit on the Bus service improvement plan and the £108 million pound of Tax payers money being spent.

On improvements to bus service across the Region by the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council.

Fare scheme of £8 million.

The level of investment in service frequentice to First group plc west of England buses and stagecoach west.

and bus service improvements

The money being spent on the westlink Demand responsive bus services.

And its contracts .

Where we have major staff shortages

And not enough buses.

We have one of the biggest metropolitan railway construction projects in England with the Bristol Temple meads to Pill, Portishead line

Henbury line with new stations at Filton North for the YTL Arena and Exhibition centre.

Delays to Portway parkway station in Bristol.

Funding of new train services from Bristol Temple meads to Filton Abbey wood Bristol parkway, yate, charfield new station cam and Dursey, Gloucester central. Half hourly to hourly to Cheltenham spa Ashchurch for Tewkesbury, Worcester shrub hill Worcester Forge street.

Bristol Temple meads station to Keynsham, oidfield park, Bath spa Freshford Avoncliff Bradford on Avon Trowbridge Westbury half hourly.

Hourly to Dilton marsh warminste and Salisbury. With extra service to Frome/ Southampton central.

Also the seven Beach line service.

For 3 years from weston super mare Weston Million worle parkway yatton for clevedon Nalisea and Backwell parson street Bedminster Bristol Temple meads station Bristol Lawrence hill Bristol Stapleton road, Montpellier, Redland Clifton Down, sea mill , shirehampton Portway parkway Avonmouth Dock and st Andrew road and Severn Beach.

With so much west of England mayoral combined transport Authority /North Somerset and Department for transport money being spent on the a Network.

Clear Audit is required of theses Transport services and infrastructure products.

With the city Region Transport plan.

Funding of main bus coach and walking cycling corridors.

Works on Bridges around Bristol Harbour and New cut .

Their again news to a clear Audit trail of the the Department for transport capital programme.

We also have a situation where the west of England mayoral combined Authority is still sub contacting work to South Gloucestershire council Banes and Bristol city council instead of as per combined Authority and mayoral decision transferring the staff to the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority .

This is adding cost and inter charging to many probject .

With the Department for transport carry out gateway reviews of west of England mayoral combined transport Authority

Prodject a clear Audit of Transport infrastructure expenditure and financial support is required.

This is the case in the west Midlands combined Authority Greater Manchester combined Authority liverpool city region Authority.

I view of the interest in the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council bus service improvement plan by the buses and coaches minister Richard Horton mp and secretary of state for mark HARPER mp

And Debates with Regional mps

We would urgently as the committee to Audit the Transport function of the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority.

Statement 3

Christina Biggs, Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways

Subject: Funding of rail-bus interchange for MetroWest stations

FoSBR has been concerned for some time at a lack of interest in ensuring opportunities for bus - rail interchange at our local stations. This has come to a head with the new Ashley Down station.

Construction of the new Ashley Down station began in March 2023 and is progressing well. However no attempt has been made to integrate the station with local bus services. In fact

Bristol City council initially stated that the location of existing stops was adequate and no further action was required. We find this both remarkable and concerning.

The current set up is wholly inadequate. There are bus stops in the area, but they are too far away to provide a proper interchange. For example, there is only a northbound bus stop on Muller Road underneath the railway bridge with no apparent plans to install a southbound one. Similarly, on Shaldon Road there is only a northbound bus stop. We understand that Bristol City Council has even considered removing this!

These stops serve routes to Southmead Hospital, Lockleaze and Eastville. Southmead Hospital has significant problems with parking and congestion and is an important destination for people around the region. Lockleaze and Eastville are areas of significant deprivation, where car ownership is relatively low. This limits access to employment opportunities. Bus journeys to are often slow as a result of congestion and insufficient regularity whereas train journeys are rapid. Existing rail services already serve many employment areas, such as the City Centre, Severnside and Yate. Interchange at the few places where this is possible can allow journeys to other locations, such as at Bristol Parkway or UWE where MetroWest and local buses can enable journeys to Emerson's Green Science Park and Cribbs Causeway.

We have argued that better interchange between bus and train at Ashley Down station would enable easier and quicker journeys to Southmead Hospital from further afield, and better access to employment from local areas. It would also allow people to make a variety of journeys by public transport that are currently difficult or unrealistic. At present the absence of a stop in one direction means there is a long gap between stops and a considerable walk is required up steep hills. This does not encourage people to travel by public transport.

Frustrated by a lack of response to our campaigns, we have submitted a pre-application planning request to Bristol City Council planning department. Our intention was to show that interchange is possible and, we hope, to finally push the council into action. In this preapp we suggested locations for bus stops, included signage to point the way between trains and buses and suggested types of real-time information for both. However, the BCC planning department have subsequently informed us that they do not have capacity to consider pre-applications and that we would need to submit a full planning application, which is not within the scope of a volunteer-led campaign group such as ours.

In other core cities such Manchester, Nottingham or Leeds, we believe that bus-rail interchange would have been included in the design process for the new station. We understand that Bristol City Council is now starting to design the rail-bus interchange for Ashley Down. However, to achieve an optimal design with full adjacent disabled access requires a secure budget as well as clear governance. At present the siting of bus stops is with the local authority and it is not clear what the allocated budget would be. We urge the West of England Audit Committee to support a robust means of governance and partnership with transport providers, and allocating Combined Authority funds to streamline the provision of rail-bus interchange, starting with Ashley Down and extending to all West of England rail stations.

Figure: Map of Ashley Down station and Muller Road showing existing bus stops (in black) and suggested bus stops (in blue) as well as suggested locations for signage (S)



Statement 4

Gordon Richardson, Bristol disability equalities forum

Would like to raise concern about the red flag by the Auditors on the loss of public support bus services in the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority mayor Dan Norris and North Somerset council this has left a 40 communities without public transport bus service and In some places only a limited demand responsive bus services.

Due to driver shortages .

With very limited access.

To food shopping facilities,Health care hospital work facilities for disabled people.

The loss of supported bus services has

Left main part of South Bristol with a public transport Network.

Ashton vale, parts Bristlington knowle

Hortham village Olverton.

Oidbury court parts of Fishponds Stapleton Broomhill parts of Easton Eastville the Dings access to Bristol Temple meads station.

Links have been lost from Thornbury to Hortham Aztec west Bristol parkway station uwe bus station and Southmead hospital bus station to Westbury on Trym Shirehampton and Avonmouth.

Evening service from Southmead hospital bus station to staple hill Kingswood and keynsham have been withdrawn.

The somer valley has lost bus services Radstock Westfield midsomer Norton paulton town service.

179 768 to Radstock Westfield midsomer Norton paulton Timbury Tunley and Bath bus and coach station.

Only 2service are at present still operating 84 85 Wotton under edge to charfield wickwar chipping sodbury yate bus station Yate railway station and yate park and ride.

Bristol South Bristol to the chew valley

Both these services are on short term contract .

We request the west of England scrutiny commission Audit the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council bus service improvement plan

And westlink Demand responsive bus services for service to the communities

In the Bristol and Bath city region and North Somerset council.

Gordon Richardson Bristol disability equilities forum.