

**REPORT TO:** WECA OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**DATE:** 30 NOVEMBER 2018

**REPORT TITLE:** TRANSPORT UPDATE

**DIRECTOR:** DAVID CARTER, DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE

**AUTHOR:** JASON HUMM, HEAD OF TRANSPORT

**Purpose of Report:**

1. To update Members on progress of the Integrated Transport Authority powers; Key Route Network; Bus Strategy; Mass Transit proposal; and Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan; and to seek views and feedback from members. Detailed reports on these matters are being submitted to the 30 November WECA Committee and a link to the agenda and reports for that meeting will be sent to Overview & Scrutiny Committee members. The report also clarifies the position regarding Service 10 (issue raised by members previously).

**Background**

2. The Combined Authority has a range of Integrated Transport Authority powers in respect of transport and transport policy that have been conveyed by the legal order establishing the West of England Combined Authority.
3. The Key Route Network (KRN) is a defined network of routes across the West of England Area that are considered significant to the movement of transport across the region, the region's growth and to the operation of the region's economy.
4. The Bus Strategy is a requirement of devolution and is an integral element to the Joint Local Transport Plan. Project Teams led by WECA and made up of officers from all the local authorities, including North Somerset Council, are producing the Bus Strategy.
5. The Mass Transit proposal is a WECA funded study into the options for future mass transit within the WECA area. Initial work has been led by officers within BCC on WECA's behalf. The first phase of this work is nearing completion, with the recognition that future phases of the work need to align a number of separate studies into a co-ordinated approach.
6. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plan (LCWIP) sets out WECA's approach to support DfT's national policy aspiration to double cycling activity by 2025. The document is jointly being developed by officers across WECA

## **ITA functions**

7. The West of England Combined Authority order states that the following are exercisable by the Combined Authority in relation to the Area:
  - a) the functions of the constituent councils specified in Parts 4 (local passenger transport services) and 5 (financial provisions) of the Transport Act 1985; and
  - b) the functions of the constituent councils as local transport authorities specified in Part 2 (local transport) of the 2000 Act.
  - c) Integrated transport authority functions as specified in the 2008 Local Transport Act. Which are brought into the order by Section 104 1a of the 2009 Local Democracy, Economy and Construction Act.
8. The first set of legislative functions grouped under (a) have been translated into the WECA constitution which specifically highlights the following functions: Concessionary Travel; Bus service information (including Real Time Information); Community Transport; and a joint responsibility, with the constituent councils, for Supported Bus provision.
9. Since the formation of the Combined Authority, delivery of these functions has been provided by constituent councils in the region on behalf of the Combined Authority. It is now proposed that delivery of these functions should be carried out directly by the Combined Authority, recognising that some elements of front line delivery, for example, the issuing of concessionary travel passes, are likely to continue to be commissioned from constituent councils or third parties. It is envisaged that some functions would transfer to the Combined Authority during 2019/20, with others following to an agreed timetable. It is anticipated that any service level decisions would be brought to the Combined Authority for consideration.
10. WECA officers will work closely with constituent councils to develop a detailed transition plan and timetable. This would include full consultation with any staff that may be affected by any proposed changes, in line with relevant organisational change procedures, together with consultation with trade unions as appropriate
11. In addition to the functions listed above, the Combined Authority also has statutory responsibility under Part 2 of the Transport Act 2000, to “develop policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport [facilities and services] to, from and within their area, and to carry out their functions so as to implement those policies.”
12. There are currently no resources formally allocated to undertake this duty and currently teams are individually tasked with projects or pooled from around the region to work on specific projects to develop policies such as the Joint Local Transport Plan and Bus Strategy.
13. There is a real opportunity for the region to increase its capability in this area by developing a regional team to lead policy development that will shape the region's transport into the future. Proposals will be developed by officers and brought to a future committee.

## **Key Route Network (KRN)**

14. The KRN is expected to achieve several objectives:
  - A network of routes which is prioritised for investment and maintenance to support policy objectives and the economic performance of the West of England

- Bring consistency to policies supporting the better management of the network and contributing to safety and air quality
  - Enable the alignment of policies and spending priorities between the Strategic Road Network (SRN), the Major Road Network (MRN) and KRN
  - Improve connectivity between and within economic centres in the West of England and to national and international gateways, supporting journey times, reliability and all modes of transport
  - Support economic growth and planned development in the West of England
  - Support travel by all modes of transport, whilst encouraging modal shift, to better manage congestion and demand across the network and protect the natural and build environment
  - Support a maintenance programme aligned with policy objectives
15. The proposed network is given in **Appendix A**.
16. In order to meet the KRN objectives, initial discussions have focussed on several operational levers that could be applied to the KRN. These are being developed as part of the next phase of the project but are expected to focus on:
- Priority for capital investment from WECA for improvement schemes or schemes supporting modal shift
  - Potential contributions to maintenance schemes
  - Greater consistency across the region in relation to traffic management and streetworks approaches, for example in the operation of restricted working hours or co-ordination and permitting of utility works
  - Potential for improved consistency on resilience issues such as emergency response, reactive maintenance and winter resilience
  - Consistent KPI's and improved understanding of operation of KRN
17. It is anticipated that operational arrangements would be implemented from early summer 2019.

## **Bus Strategy**

18. Production of the full strategy for consultation is scheduled for Spring 2019. Consultation on the JLTP including the bus strategy overview document will be undertaken in January/February 2019.
19. The main components of the bus strategy are shown in **Appendix B**. These work areas are substantial and interlinked, with wider implications for the overall transport network and all the key components have a critical role in supporting the target.
19. The developing vision for the Bus Strategy is to deliver a substantial improvement to the quality, reliability and accessibility of our bus network, with the Bus Strategy forming an important complementary strategy to the Joint Local Transport Plan. The Bus Strategy align with the JLTP objectives:

<b>JLTP Objective</b>	<b>Bus Strategy Objective</b>
Support sustainable economic growth	Deliver a comprehensive network, maximise service reliability, reduce journey times, deliver simplified ticketing
Promote equality and accessibility	Increase availability and ease of use of accessible waiting facilities and vehicles. Improve integration with other modes, improving access to key employment, health and leisure destinations.
Improve air quality and respond to climate change	Reduce emissions from traffic by increasing bus use, and reduce carbon and other emissions from buses
Contribute to better health, wellbeing, safety and security	Maximise service quality, in terms of vehicles, information and bus stop environment
Create better places	Improve public domain by removing car traffic, mode shift onto buses, and where possible reallocate highway space. Improve access to places for buses public transport, and the design for bus services in new developments.

20. Stage 1 of the bus strategy was commenced in Summer 2018, with the following work areas:
  - Confirmation of strategy objectives (linked to the JLTP objectives);
  - Commissioning of consultant support;
  - A first round of operator engagement, to clarify operator opinion on barriers to growth and operational issues;
  - An assessment of the performance of the current network;
  - The production of an operating cost model (to provide an independent understanding of network operating cost and revenue levels); and
  - The production of an overview document to accompany the Joint Local Transport Plan.
21. The second phase of the work will include the following areas:
  - An assessment of, and recommendations on, potential changes to the network (this work is underway), followed by operator engagement;
  - A high-level assessment of delivery mechanisms;
  - The completion of the full strategy document for consultation.
22. Recent growth in patronage has been positive and has resulted from a number of environmental factors and proactive interventions:
  - The impact of the rollout of residents parking zones in Bath and Bristol;
  - Fares review by the main commercial operator (First), holding the standard day fare to £4 for 12 years;
  - Growing population;
  - Fleet investment by the operator;
  - Significant investment by the councils in bus lanes and priority measures;
  - Improved bus stops and information (e.g. GBBN, £43m of local authority investment – including RTI – which is being renewed and revamped with money from WECA Investment Fund).

23. It is proposed to consult on the key findings of Phase 1 and the developing views within Phase 2 in early 2019, aligned with the consultation process for the JLTP.
24. The network review may have implications for the extent of the £5m of supported services. The Bus Strategy is proposed to include a review of how supported services are prioritised to take better account of issues such as links to economic output, available alternatives and the need to provide socially-necessary/inclusive services.

### **Service 10**

25. The 10 service was a supported bus service operated by Wessex. Wessex were awarded an emergency contract to operate the service for one year, but during the summer Wessex withdrew from the local bus market. In most cases the supported bus services that had been operated by Wessex were taken over by another operator, Stagecoach, but unfortunately Wessex's emergency tender price couldn't be matched by any other operator and South Gloucestershire took the decision to withdraw funding for the service. The next lowest tender price after Wessex would have almost doubled the amount that the council needed to pay for the service.
26. There is a limited budget for supported bus services, therefore funding the 10 service at this level would have meant the withdrawal of a service(s) elsewhere. South Gloucestershire Council has previously provided a list of bus services that could be used as an alternative to the 10 service. There are currently no plans for WECA to provide additional funding to support this service.

### **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)**

27. The LCWIP is a proposed sub-regional network plan for walking and cycling identifying routes and zones for further development. This would enable a prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements to be more easily considered for future investment
28. This will enable WECA to be more strategic and structured in how walking and cycling improvements can be prioritised across the sub-region, gains internal and public buy-in for proposals and allows WECA to make a stronger case for scheme funding.
29. A range of factors are being considered as part of the approach:
  - Existing commuting flows for cycling and existing walking routes and zones
  - Potential for growth in cycling within the WECA region
  - The ability for cycling and walking to sustainably support new homes and jobs at key development sites
  - Improving connectivity for deprived areas
  - Improving connections to secondary schools, colleges, universities
  - The ability to interchange with buses and rail and support sub-regional connectivity
  - Support for road safety, air quality and the health agenda
30. The overall timescale aims to have an agreed and adopted plan towards the end of 2019. This would be subject to a further report to committee for sign off.

## Mass Transit

31. Initial work has been undertaken by BCC on behalf of WECA. The report output and conclusions are currently being reviewed to ensure that the scale of ambition for a future MRT system is appropriate for the region.
32. As part of the ongoing work it has been recognised that a number of studies are underway or proposed that would impact on any Mass transit solution developed for the area. It is anticipated that these work streams will be aligned and managed under a more cohesive project governance approach

## Current study work

33. **Metrowest** – an item on Metrowest is being presented to the Joint Committee on 30th November 2018. This also addresses the recent letter from Secretary of State which required a number of key steps of West of England authorities. A link to the published report will be sent to Overview and Scrutiny Committee members – the report essentially seeks approval of the proposed governance structure for Phase 1A and 1B and provides an update on funding, including seeking approval for a further draw down of the Local Growth Fund to enable work to continue.
34. **Light Rail, Tram Train study** - This work is integral to the Metrowest proposals. Officers have met with both Network Rail and Sheffield Tram specialists and subject to Joint Committee approval it is proposed to engage them in study work to compare the relative costs of the original heavy rail approach with a potential light rail, tram-train solution.
35. **Bristol Area Feasibility Study** – work continues developing a range of objectives for the regions suburban rail and timetabling improvements. These are currently being worked up into a scope for phase 2 to map out the delivery of objectives identified in phase 1.
36. **The BSWEL study** – work continues with NSC and Bristol Airport in developing proposals. One output of BSWEL has been a pre-feasibility report to carry out high-level investigations into the potential for improved rail connections to Bristol Airport, provided as either a heavy rail link, light rail link or using a metro type technology. The interaction with any proposed mass transit solution for the region is therefore critical and officers are discussing how best to align objectives and milestones for the proposals.
37. **NR infrastructure investment discussions** – WECA continue to work with NR to map out infrastructure improvements to facilitate short, medium and long-term rail aspirations. Elements such as Bristol East junction, network resilience and improvements to track, signalling, points etc. The basis of which underpins delivery aspirations for other studies.
38. **Station accessibility improvements** - NR are currently developing a programme of accessibility and infrastructure improvements to rail stations and have longer-term plans for the Temple Quarter redevelopment and improvements to Temple meads station

39. **Metrobus future phases** – consideration of how the initial success of Metrobus can be built upon to provide a significant element of any mass transit solution for the area. Ensuring that Metrobus compliments both existing bus services and any future Mass transit proposals will be key.
40. **MRT phase 2** – Alongside the need to align the work streams listed above, it is recognised that any proposals would need to address the short, medium term and long-term stages for any mass transit scheme which are necessary to design, construct and operate a mass transit system(s). Work streams for these are being developed aimed at producing a scope that could be taken to market. Approvals of any next phase of the works would be subject to WECA committee approval.

#### **Consultation:**

41. Some questions on the bus strategy are included within the overall questionnaire forming part of the consultation on the JLTP4, for January 2019, to explore passengers' current perception of the network. In addition, it is proposed to consult on the key findings of Phase 1 and the developing views within Phase 2 in early 2019, aligned with the consultation process for the JLTP
42. Once the Bus Strategy full document is completed, wider consultation will be undertaken from Spring 2019 on its recommendations.
43. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan is due for consultation in early summer 2019.

#### **Other Options Considered:**

44. It would be possible to continue to deliver ITA functions via constituent councils as per current arrangements. This option has been discounted for the reasons set out in the main report.
45. Agreement of a KRN is a devolution requirement. Route options have already been considered as part of the iterative development of criteria and potential route options.
46. The development of a Bus Strategy is a WECA devolution requirement.
47. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan is a requirement of DfT for all Transport authorities to produce (is this correct).
48. The Mass Rapid Transit proposals will align a range of study work already underway within WECA. These could continue to be progressed in isolation however it is anticipated that complimentary benefits and a joined-up approach and strategy would not be realised. In addition, there are risks that without co-ordination some elements of separate programs could be conflict, where for example a mass transit corridor could be in competition with improvements to a strategic bus route.

#### **Economic Impact Assessment:**

49. There are no direct implications arising from this report. Future bus network operating frameworks, which will be explored as part of the Bus Strategy, will need to include an economic impact assessment as part of their evaluation.

50. The future development of proposal for Mass Rapid Transit would need to be aligned within the current DfT scheme assessment models.

**Risk Management/Assessment:**

51. There are no risks arising from the updates within this report.

**Public Sector Equality Duties:**

52. The public sector equality duty created under the Equality Act 2010 means that public authorities must have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
53. The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:
- Removing or minimizing disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
  - Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
  - Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
54. The general equality duty therefore requires organisations to consider how they could positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations. It requires equality considerations to be reflected in the design of policies and the delivery of services, including policies, and for these issues to be kept under review.

**Finance Implications:**

55. There are no financial implications resulting from the update items within the report.
56. The future development of any mass transit proposal would require financial support to progress. Existing internal resources are sufficient to develop the scope for consultant support with a view to reporting back to committee once proposed costs are submitted against scope proposals.

Advice given by: Malcom Coe

**Legal Implications:**

57. Production of the Key Route Network and Bus Strategy are devolution requirements of the West of England Combined Authority.

Advice given by: Shahzia Daya

**Land/Property Implications;**

58. There are no implications arising from this report.



**Human Resources Implications:**

59. The Bus Strategy, Mass Rapid Transit, Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan are joint projects with resources provided by all four local authorities and WECA, supported by external consultants providing technical expertise.
60. HR implications for any ITA proposals will be considered as part of the transition planning.

**Recommendation:**

**The WECA Overview and Scrutiny committee is recommended to: -**

**Note the ongoing work and provide views on the ITA, KRN, Bus Strategy, Mass Rapid Transit, and Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan**

**Report Author: Jason Humm – Head of Transport**