

**REPORT TO:** WEST OF ENGLAND MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY  
COMMITTEE

**DATE:** 26 JANUARY 2024

**REPORT  
TITLE:** TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

**RESPONSIBLE  
OFFICER:** DAVID GIBSON, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF  
INFRASTRUCTURE

### **Purpose of Report**

To provide an update to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Committee on key transport schemes and to secure approval from Committee on critical decisions and associated funding (where applicable) within the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Transport Infrastructure programme.

### **Recommendation**

That Committee:

- 1) **Recommendation 1** – Electric Vehicle Charging Action Plan – Adopts the final version of the Electric Vehicle Charging Action Plan, as set out in paragraphs 1 - 44 of this report.
- 2) **Recommendation 2** – Strategic Rail Plan – Delegates to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority’s Strategic Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Unitary Authority Infrastructure Directors, to spend the £470k previously allocated funding for the 10-Year Strategic Rail Plan and £250k for the 25-year Rail Strategic Outline Business Case, as set out in paragraphs 45-69 of this report. In the event of a consensus not being reached at Director level, decision making will be escalated to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in consultation with the Unitary Authority CEOs.
- 3) **Recommendation 3** – New Rail Stations Study - Approves the drawdown of £100k from the previously allocated £720k to progress a New Stations Study, as set out in paragraphs 51.1 and 51.2 of this report.
- 4) **Recommendation 4** – Rail Electrification - Approves the award of £200k from Investment Fund (Revenue) to part-fund the Filton Bank (Bristol Parkway to Bristol Temple Meads) Rail Electrification project to Outline Business Case stage. This is subject to the remaining £375k of separate

third-party funding being secured to enable the delivery of the proposed scope, as set out in paragraphs 70 - 97 of this report.

- 5) **Recommendation 5 – MetroWest Phase 1 (Portishead Line)** - Approves the award of £9.66m of previously allocated funding from Investment Fund. This is subject to the Department for Transport approving the project Full Business Case, addressing any remaining project capital funding shortfall and formally committing (in writing) to taking on any future capital cost risk on the project, as set out in paragraphs 98 - 136 of this report.
- 6) **Recommendation 6 – Zero Emission Buses** - approves delegated authority to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's Strategic Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Unitary Authority Infrastructure Directors, subject to a successful award from the ZEBRA 2 fund, to enter into a grant agreement with First Bus to deliver the proposal as detailed in paragraphs 136 - 159 of this report.

### **Reasons for recommendation**

The West of England is a great place to live and work. The region is home to over a million people and a £33bn economy and this is projected to continue with significant housing and employment growth projected in the coming years. However, the region faces a range of challenges – opportunities for people from deprived parts of the region or disadvantaged groups need to be widened, the conditions need to be in place to raise living standards across the region and efforts need to be redoubled in order to meet the 2030 net zero and nature recovery ambitions.

Achieving the ambitions of the region is reliant on a world class transport network. The region needs a well-connected, accessible network that helps people get around quickly, safely and sustainably in ways that support our environmental priorities. A reliable, safe and sustainable transport network is a fundamental building block to the future success of the region and providing a network that residents of the region deserve. The importance of good quality transport systems to the region was highlighted by the recent National Infrastructure Commission report which stated that England's largest cities, including Bristol, have congested roads and inadequate public transport networks, which constrain economic growth.

There is no single solution to developing a world class net zero transport network for the region. It will require changes across the entire transport system so that:

- Reliability and connectivity across the region are improved
- Public transport is the natural choice for getting around, with walking and cycling being the obvious choices for shorter trips
- There is investment in priority transport corridors so that people can travel between our towns and cities for work, leisure, and to access vital services
- There is a range of sustainable transport options that are flexible to suit the needs of the region's residents and businesses

The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority is delivering a range of work programmes that will work together to achieve these ambitions and create a world class transport network for the region. This paper covers a number of these work programmes relating to increasing electric vehicle charge points, investing in the rail and bus network and zero emission buses. Further details on why the recommendations have been made are provided below:

- Electric Vehicles - Where journeys are not able to be made by walking, cycling or public transport, it is important that these are switched to electric vehicles. There is an urgent need to speed up the delivery of new chargepoints across the region to support people making that switch. The Electric Vehicle Charging Action Plan demonstrates the need to utilise public sector funding to ensure a more equitable network of chargepoints is delivered. Furthermore, there is a clear expectation that the West of England has an agreed and published EV Action Plan or strategy in place to access its indicative funding allocation of £6.64m from the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (LEVI). This funding will be vital to making sure that publicly accessible charging infrastructure is delivered in an equitable way.
- Rail – providing high quality public transport alternatives will be vital to achieving behaviour change and reducing the overall volume of trips made by road in the region. Continued investment in the rail network in the region will contribute to achieving net zero and reducing the 44% of carbon emissions coming from transport and improve connectivity and accessibility of the network. The development of a pipeline of projects will mean that the region is well placed to take advantage of future investment opportunities.
- Zero emission buses – Securing external investment to roll out zero emission buses in the region will have positive impacts on helping to decarbonise the region’s transport network. Approving the delegated authority will enable the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority to enter into a grant agreement with First Bus in order to meet the timeframes specified in the funding requirements and take steps to place vehicle orders, subject to the funding bid being successful.

### **Voting arrangements**

*In order to be carried, a decision on this matter requires a majority of the members present and voting, such majority is to include the Metro Mayor. Each member present may cast one vote. If a vote is tied the decision is not carried. There is no casting vote. Co-opted members are not entitled to vote.*

# Electric Vehicle Charging Action Plan

## Background

1. The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and its Unitary Authority partners have ambitious plans to accelerate the shift towards electric vehicles (EVs) and take a leading role in the future rollout of EV charging infrastructure. The draft Electric Vehicle Charging Action Plan (EVCAP), attached in Appendix 1, sets out the forecast number of EV charge points that will be needed by 2030 to help support the region's shift away from petrol and diesel cars and vans, and the number of charge points which are expected to require public sector intervention to ensure that people in the West of England have access to the chargers that they need to switch to EVs.
2. "Taking Charge", the Government's national strategy for electric vehicles (March 2022), sets out the expectation for an additional 300,000 electric vehicle charge points by 2030. It places a duty on local authorities to produce a plan to show how the changing needs of the region will be met and to develop ambitious proposals to ensure that the infrastructure rolled out will meet the forecast demand. The EVCAP responds to this duty.
3. The [second National Infrastructure Assessment](#) (NIA2), published in October 2023 by the National Infrastructure Commission, recognises that increasing the adoption of EVs will be key to decarbonising surface transport and that consumers will only make the switch to EVs if they have adequate access to charging infrastructure and are confident that they can charge them when they need to. Recommendation 12 of NIA2 is that Government must accelerate the deployment of EV charge points to meet the expectation of 'Taking Charge' and keep pace with the sales of EVs.
4. Our EVCAP is set within the context of our Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (JLTP4), the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan (CESAP) and the need to reduce overall car mileage. Both documents set out the urgent need to reduce transport emissions and mitigate the effects of poor air quality on public health and the environment.
5. In 2022, across the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority area, there were 8,884 registered EVs, which placed the region below the national average for the uptake of EVs. By the end of 2025, our forecasts show that there could be nearly 40,000 EVs registered to people and businesses in the West of England region, with that number increasing to more than 150,000 in the Combined Authority area by 2030.
6. In 2022, there were a total of 585 publicly accessible charge points, which includes charge points on private land, such as supermarket car parks (delivered on a commercial basis). This also includes charge points owned and operated by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's four Unitary Authorities as part of the 'Revive' charge point network.

7. Technical work undertaken in 2022 indicates that the West of England could need 4,416 publicly accessible fast chargers and 690 public rapid chargers by 2030 to meet the forecast level of demand. Of this number, we expect that public investment could be needed to support the delivery of as many as 1,764 public fast chargers and 99 rapid chargers in the Combined Authority area, to ensure residents in the West of England have access to the chargers they need.
8. Private charge point operators do and will play a vital role in enabling more people to switch to EVs. However, we expect that some public funding will be needed in the short- to medium term to support the delivery of lower-powered chargers and sites that initially have low demand but are important for fair access and good coverage.

## Key Considerations

### *Policy Considerations*

9. As stated in paragraph 2 above the Government’s *“Taking Charge: the electric vehicle infrastructure strategy”* sets the national policy framework for EV charging and states *“we will remove charging infrastructure as both a perceived, and a real, barrier to the adoption of electric vehicles”*.
10. The Adopted JLTP, as part of the section on Improving Connectivity, states that *“in seeking to reduce the level of emissions, including carbon, we will provide infrastructure to support the use of electric vehicles”*. The EVCAP builds on this and includes detail on how charging infrastructure will be rolled out across the region, setting out the principles and objectives, and the action required to deliver these.
11. Increasing the take up of EVs directly contributes to achieving two of the JLTP objectives and indirectly impacts a further two, as set out below:

<b>Direct impact on JLTP objectives</b>	<b>Indirect impact on JLTP objectives</b>
Take action against climate change and address poor air quality	Support sustainable and inclusive growth
Create better places	Contribute to better health, wellbeing, safety and security

### *Environmental considerations*

12. Transport is the largest contributor to UK domestic greenhouse gas emissions, with 91% of these emissions coming from road vehicles. Whilst other sectors of the economy have made carbon reductions, emissions from road transport have remained broadly flat over the past 30 years. In the West of England, 44% of total local carbon emissions are from transport (approximately 1.9 tonnes of carbon per person).

13. The EVCAP is framed within the context of the need to bring down overall car mileage and shift as many trips as possible to other modes of transport, with any remaining vehicle trips being electrified.

#### *Funding considerations*

14. The Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (LEVI) supports local authorities in England to plan and deliver EV charging infrastructure for residents without off-street parking. The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority has been indicatively allocated £6.64m.
15. As part of the West of England's stage 2 funding application for LEVI, it was necessary to describe how this project fits with the local and/or regional long-term EV Charging Strategy. It is therefore evident that there is an expectation that the West of England has an agreed and published EV Action Plan or strategy. This will be critical to the success of the region's LEVI funding submission and being able to access the indicative funding in 2024. Failure to demonstrate how the LEVI proposals deliver against broader objectives could result in the funding not being confirmed and therefore severely constrain the roll-out of EV charging infrastructure.

#### *Development of the plan*

16. Taking into account the above considerations, it is necessary to have in place a regional 'action plan' to set out to residents and stakeholders how the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority will take a lead role in rolling out EV charging infrastructure and detail how the planning and delivery of on-street charging infrastructure will be undertaken.
17. The development of the EVCAP was led by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority, working collaboratively with officers from the Unitary Authorities, through the West of England EV Charging Working Group. Both Bath and North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire Councils have their own existing, locally focused EV charging strategies, dated May 2022 and March 2023 respectively. Bristol City Council is expected to develop its own locally focused strategy in 2024. The West of England EVCAP sets the regional strategy, and all strategies are in alignment with each other. Should the Committee approve the adoption of the plan, this would place a commitment on each highway authority to develop minimum design standards / guidelines for new EV charging infrastructure installed on the highway and other local authority-owned land.

#### *The electric vehicle charging action plan (EVCAP)*

18. The overarching vision is as set out in the JLTP, which is "connecting people and places for a vibrant, inclusive and carbon neutral West of England". There is a commitment to reduce car use overall and encourage people to make their journeys by walking, cycling, scooting or using public transport, with journeys

that cannot be readily switched to those modes made by an electric vehicle.

19. The plan includes strategic principles and objectives relating to the EV rollout across the region. These are:

19.1 Strategic Principles:

- A regional Action Plan will align with the wider transport strategy and the local priorities of the unitary authorities;
- Public investment will fill gaps to provide good charge point coverage;
- Priority will be given to areas where people cannot charge at home;
- Charge point rollout will be inclusive, accessible, and not negatively impact other road users, including people walking or wheeling;
- Alternatives to the private car ownership will be encouraged;
- There will be a compatible public charging network across the West of England (where viable); and
- Private sector investment will be actively sought to identify where public money can best be targeted.

19.2 Objectives:

- Encourage people to switch to low carbon transport within the region;
- Promote alternatives to private car ownership;
- Support a consistent, high quality user experience across the West of England;
- Support an inclusive, accessible charge point network to meet the needs of disabled electric vehicle car users;
- Improve access to the charge point network no matter where residents live; and
- Secure private sector investment.

20. Future demand for charging infrastructure will be met through a combination of public and private sector investment. By 2030, it is expected that approximately 50% of fast chargers and 10% of rapid chargers will require at least some public funding, with the remainder fully funded by the private sector. This means that public investment will be needed for 1,863 chargers in the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority area, to support the installation of 1,764 'fast' and 99 'rapid' chargers.

21. Public sector investment will be necessary to ensure an equitable charging network across the region, using public funding to address the gaps that are expected to be left by the private sector without intervention, as their investment

will be targeted in the areas that are most commercially viable. The locations for public sector investment will be selected based on a data-led approach taking into account a range of factors, such as levels of deprivation, air quality, proximity to existing charging infrastructure and access to off-street parking.

22. The technology relating to EVs, and the associated charging infrastructure is constantly evolving and this in turn impacts the take up of EVs and rate of charge point deployment by the private sector. Consequently, it is important that we monitor periodically the number of EVs registered in the region, the pace of charge point delivery and charge point utilisation, to ensure that our plan remains fit for purpose.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

23. The alternative option would be to not adopt a regional EVCAP, but this is not considered to be a viable option because:

- 23.1 This would be a risk to the LEVI funding submission, as the expectation that the West of England region has an agreed and published EV action plan or strategy would not be met. This could result in the indicative funding allocation of £6,64m not being confirmed, which would severely constrain the funding available to deliver an increased number of EV charging points;

- 23.2 There has been public engagement undertaken on a draft EVCAP so there is a reasonable expectation that a final version of the plan is agreed.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

24. The draft EVCAP was the subject of public engagement between 12 October and 5 November 2023. The draft plan was hosted on the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's webpage alongside a feedback survey. The engagement was promoted by sending an email to targeted stakeholders, such as Business West and disability groups, and using the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's social media channels.

25. A total of nine responses was received to the engagement on the plan. Of the nine responses received, three were from organisations and the remainder were from individuals. Whilst a high response rate to the draft plan was not expected, this is a lower response than anticipated. This is considered to be, in part, due to consultation fatigue as a number of public consultations were being held at the same time.

26. The responses received were generally supportive of the strategy and the principles within the draft document. Some concerns were raised relating to the potential siting of charging points on footways, and equity of provision between affluent and disadvantaged areas. Both of these issues are considered in our



proposed principles and site selection approach for new publicly funded chargers

27. One key response received is from the Energy Savings Trust, which is the support body to the government's Local EV Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund, which West of England Mayoral Combined Authority officers approached to ensure the Action Plan could achieve technical compliance. They were broadly supportive of the strategy, but asked that up-to-date data be used, as well as identifying some minor typographical errors within the action plan to amend. We believe that this reinforces the need for West of England Mayoral Combined Authority officers to undertake an update of the Action Plan following its adoption in what is an evolving area of work.
28. In response to the comments received, the following changes are being made to the plan before publication;
  - 28.1 Minor spelling and grammatical errors corrected.
  - 28.2 Policy update to reflect recent Government changes in position.
29. It is proposed to update the Action Plan using latest available data (published in December 2023) as part of our first periodic update.

### **Key Risks**

30. As set out in paragraph 23.1 above the key risk would be to submitting a compliant LEVI funding submission and therefore securing the indicative funding allocation.

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications**

31. The potential impact of EV charging infrastructure on other road users, and particularly some groups with protected characteristics, is recognised, particularly when the infrastructure is placed on the footway. To acknowledge and mitigate this, accessibility has been considered in both the strategic principles and the objectives of the plan.
32. The strategic objective states "*charge point rollout will be inclusive, accessible, and not negatively impact other road users, including people walking or wheeling*".
33. One of the objectives of the plan is that EV charging roll out will "*support an inclusive, accessible charge point network to meet the needs of disabled electric vehicle car users*".
34. Charging bays delivered with public funding will be designed and laid out, as far as reasonably practical, in such a way that allows disabled drivers to access the charge points. Charge point suppliers will be required to consider best practice

guidance in the delivery of new charging bays and accessibility will be incorporated into future procurement work for new charge points. New charge points will not adversely impact other road users, including people walking or wheeling.

### **Climate Change Implications**

35. Sufficient provision of electric vehicle charge points is essential for increasing the uptake of low carbon and electric vehicles which will contribute to decarbonising the transport system.
36. Bristol City Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council, South Gloucestershire Council and the Mayoral Combined Authority have all signed climate emergency declarations. Following these declarations, the West of England Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan (CESAP) sets out the environmental priorities for the region. These are: net zero carbon by 2030, nature recovery and climate resilience. The MCA is reflecting the regional CESAP environmental priorities in its infrastructure work by requiring (subject to exception) the following:
  - Carbon management plans and carbon accounting
  - Environmental impact assessments (or non-statutory equivalents)
  - Biodiversity net gain assessments and delivery of improvements of at least 10%
  - Climate risk & vulnerability assessments, and integration of climate resilience measures into schemes.
37. The EVCAP has an important role in helping to ensure data provision from charge points for carbon accounting purposes by setting out the data to collect from charge point providers where possible. The implementation of the EVCAP will need to consider the environmental requirements and budgeting for the work that is applicable (depending on proportionality and impact).

### **Finance Implications**

38. No direct financial implications. However, there is an expectation as part of the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's application to the government's Local EV Infrastructure Fund for the region to have an agreed Action Plan or strategy in place. Failure to agree the EVCAP could result in a delay, or possible failure of the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority being able to access the West of England's indicative £6.64m grant funding allocation

## **Legal Implications**

39. There are no legal implications from the approval of the EVCAP itself (Recommendation 1) though clearly its implementation will involve a number where legal input will be required. The internal Legal Team are meeting on a fortnightly basis with the project team and Commercial colleagues in order to assess progress and address issues.
40. In addition, Weightmans LLP have been instructed to provide ongoing support in relation to the proposed procurement of a Charge Point Operator and the Inter Authority Agreement which will be required between the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and the Unitary Authorities. The EVCAP will form part of the documentation that will be referenced in the procurement, which in turn is a requirement of the LEVI fund.
41. An assessment will be required in due course regarding subsidy control issues which may be involved in the funding arrangements.

## **Human Resources Implications**

42. None arising.

## **Land/property Implications**

43. None arising.

## **Commercial Implications**

44. One of the requirements of the LEVI fund is to run a competitive procurement process to deliver the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure project. The project team are currently putting together the necessary documentation required for this project to ensure the market is fully informed and briefed on the vision of the West of England Combined Authority in relation to the deployment of Electric Vehicles which is covered by the EVCAP. One of the key documents currently being referenced as part of the tender documentation is the Electric Vehicle Charging Action Plan (EVCAP). The EVACP is referenced as part of the technical specification and is proposed as a reference document in the tender questionnaire. Any delay to the approval of the EVCAP will cause a ripple effect and subsequently delay the finalisation and issuance of the tender documents to the market.

# Strategic Rail

## Background

45. In January 2021, the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Committee awarded £470,000 from the Investment Fund to support the development of a 10-year rail delivery plan to be focused on projects to be delivered between 2025-2030.
46. Approximately £80,000 of this funding was spent between 2020 and 2021 on the development of an evidence base for the West of England's current 10-Year Rail Delivery Plan.
47. A further £250,000 of funding was awarded for a "25-Year Strategic Outline Business Case", intended to support the development a longer-term scheme programme and funding strategy to 2045.
48. Shortly after this funding was awarded, Network Rail commissioned the Greater Bristol Strategic Rail Study and Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body confirmed that they were updating their rail strategy. A risk was identified of potential duplicated / abortive effort, with other organisations potentially investing and focussing on the development of similar rail projects. As a result, the work on the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's rail pipeline was put on hold until 2022.
49. Network Rail commissioned three rail studies between 2020 and 2022. These were the Bristol to Birmingham Corridor Strategic Rail Study (published 2021), the Bristol to Exeter rail corridor strategic study (published 2022) and the Greater Bristol Strategic Rail Study (published 2022). These studies formed the basis of a series of workshops in late 2022 and 2023 between the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority, Unitary Authorities, Network Rail, Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body, Western Gateway pan-regional partnership and Great Western Railways to agree key investment priorities and to clarify who will take forward the various recommendations into project development.
50. A change request was approved at the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Committee in June 2023. The change request proposed that the remaining development funding be consolidated into one project and be allocated to a new set of priority rail pipeline projects.

## Key Considerations

51. The £720,000 development funding is currently expected to support the development of the following projects (subject to confirmation following market pricing that the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority has sufficient budget in place to progress the initial development phase of these projects).
  - 51.1 New Stations Study - Building on existing business case / development work

this study will recommend the 'best performing stations' for further business case development. The stations to be considered as part of the study are currently expected to include Saltford, St Anne's Park, Ashton Gate and Lockleaze (identified as priorities in the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's Joint Local Transport Plan 4 and 10-Year Rail Delivery Plan). Some of these stations could be discounted at the end of the initial stage and the study may conclude that alternative transport interventions are required to address the transport challenges identified in these areas.

- 51.2 The final list of proposed stations to be included in the New Stations Study will be presented to the West of England Rail Strategy Working Group on 5 March 2024 followed by the March 2024 West of England Infrastructure Directors meeting, where approval to commence the study will be sought, subject to recommendation 2 being approved.
- 51.3 Station accessibility, enhancements and interchange – The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority has a policy commitment to improve the accessibility of local rail stations and this project will build on the success of the existing 'Step Free Stations' programme and transport interchange work undertaken under the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) programme. The initial development phase will identify a prioritised list of rail/station infrastructure interventions based on a newly agreed 'minimum standard' for West of England Mayoral Combined Authority regional rail stations and a defined set of criteria for prioritisation. This study will also consider interchange opportunities between rail and other transport modes.
- 51.4 Branch line study – This project will look at the feasibility and business case for operating increased services on a number of lines in the region, for example, 2/3tph on the proposed new Henbury line and 3tph on the existing Severn Beach Lines. This will take advantage of work currently being undertaken by Network Rail to assess the feasibility of an uplift in capacity on our sub-regional branch lines. The scope of the study will also be informed by the New Stations Study referred to above.
- 51.5 MetroWest Connectivity South (Bristol – Exeter rail corridor) – This project was a core recommendation from the Greater Bristol Strategic Rail Study, which promoted the likely connectivity, economic and operational benefits of improvements to the railway corridor to the south of Bristol. Subject to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority being able to secure contributions from at least two other interest parties, the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's funding is proposed to be used to test the high-level business case, including economic and demand analysis, of the project, and will then include design and development works required in support of a Strategic Outline Business Case submission and funding request for future development works. The initial development work will build on previous design work by Network Rail which identified likely infrastructure enhancements required to enable a rail service uplift between Bristol Temple Meads and Weston-super-Mare. Further

development work and greater understanding of the likely business case and benefits will support future discussions with other potential funders, such as Highways England (who are interested due to the potential release of capacity on the M5), about longer-term development and delivery funding.

- 51.6 Although some of the anticipated project benefits will be realised outside of the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority region, the Greater Bristol Strategic Rail Study specifically recommends this project as 1 of 5 that should be prioritised by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority. This recommendation was based on the anticipated benefits to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority region the project is forecasted to deliver in terms of economic growth, decarbonisation, modal shift and connectivity.
- 51.7 In order to meet our ambitious decarbonisation targets, we must not only address the numbers of car journeys starting and finishing within the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority region. We must also address those car journeys that are starting and finishing outside of our region (i.e. passing through). In order to do this, investment in and working collaboratively on projects that deliver modal shift more broadly and extend beyond the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority region, is required. Tackling traffic on the M5 corridor represents a significant challenge / opportunity in realising our decarbonisation aspirations.
52. The current draft West of England Mayoral Combined Authority rail pipeline also includes three larger, more complex projects which are currently deemed strategic priorities – Rail electrification (covered separately in this Transport Committee paper), Gravity rail link (new rail connection to enable movement of batteries by rail freight from the new Bridgwater Gigafactory) and upgrade works to Westerleigh Junction in South Gloucestershire (a strategic junction on the South Wales Mainline which would enable wider capacity enhancement to the north / south and east / west rail corridors through the region). Due to the scale of the intervention required to deliver these schemes, the £720,000 of current funding is not proposed to be used towards these projects. However, West of England Mayoral Combined Authority officers are working with regional and national partners and funders to identify funding to progress these projects through their next phases of development and to enable them to be delivered in the future. Specific meetings are being organised by West of England Mayoral Combined Authority officers with Somerset Council (Gravity rail link), Unitary authorities, Network Rail, Great Western Railway, Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body, Western Gateway pan-regional partnership in spring 2025 to agree development and funding strategies for these projects.
53. At this point the budgets for the proposed pipeline projects are only indicative. Project briefs/requirements documents are being drafted and will be issued to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's supply chain to price in February 2024. Once prices are returned, the current budget allocations will be compared and where there is sufficient budget, Directors will be asked to

approve the commencement of project development works.

54. Delegating the decision-making power from the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Committee to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Strategic Director for Infrastructure, in consultation with Unitary Authority Infrastructure Directors to decide on the draw-down of funding towards specific projects will enable greater programme flexibility. It is likely that scoping and pricing of the different projects will take different amounts of time, due to different levels of complexity, and the proposed delegation will prevent a delay of up to 5 months between prices being received and reviewed and award of new supply chain commissions.
55. Progressing the proposed list of schemes now will ensure that most of these projects will have progressed beyond Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) stage by summer 2025. At this point, there will be a basic understanding of the feasibility of each of the projects, an initial view of the business case strength, a high-level cost, and an outline view of the technical/design requirements. This information should be sufficient for some or all the projects to be considered as part of a CRSTS 2 funding submission or other wider funding bids.

#### **Alternative Options Considered**

56. The main differences between the current draft West of England Mayoral Combined Authority rail pipeline and the one issued in 2021 as part of the original funding request are as follows.
  - 56.1 'Freight strategy' - de-scoped – Early-stage development work is being funded and led by Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body in conjunction with Network Rail and freight operators.
  - 56.2 'Connections to the East-West-North' – including a review of the case for 1 train per hour between Bristol and Oxford' - de-scoped - Early-stage development work is being funded and led by Great Western Railways (GWR) in conjunction with Network Rail.
  - 56.3 '25-Year SOBC' - de-scoped – It is recommended that the available rail pipeline funding is prioritised towards projects that are deemed deliverable within the 10 years. The longer-term horizon is more changeable and therefore the risk of abortive work on a 25-Year SOBC is high. Longer-term strategic interventions, such as the upgrade to Westerleigh Junction and electrification, are more significant in scale and cost and therefore it is recommended that these are progressed as standalone projects.
  - 56.4 Branch line study – new scope – Project recommended by the Greater Bristol Strategic Rail Study. Service enhancements to 2 trains per hour or greater aligns with the original concept for MetroWest and modelling work to date suggests that the service uplifts would drive significant economic and decarbonisation benefits, including improved access to employment.

56.5 New Stations Study - new scope – A review of opportunities to open new stations was a core aspiration of the 10-year Rail Plan and JLTP4. The timing of this work will align well with the current programme timescales for 'AssessWest' bus / transport network review. The work will build on the new stations recommended by the Western Gateway pan-regional partnership's 2050 rail vision.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

57. West of England Mayoral Combined Authority officers have worked closely with officers in the Unitary Authorities to develop and agree the latest draft rail pipeline. The West of England Rail Strategy Working Group, which is held every 8-weeks, has been used to support these discussions.
58. West of England Mayoral Combined Authority officers have presented the emerging draft rail pipeline to West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Directors on two occasions in late 2022 and 2023. Feedback from these sessions has been incorporated into the latest draft plan.

### **Key Risks**

59. MetroWest Phase 1 (Portishead Line) and/or MetroWest Phase 2 (Henbury line) projects could be deferred or cancelled. This could mean that development work on the 'Branch line study' undertaken prior to their deferment / cancellation could be abortive.
60. Technical work done as part of the New Stations Study may recommend that none of the proposed station locations are taken forward for further development – either on the grounds of the likely weakness of the business/value for money case or the technical feasibility of constructing and operating a station at the proposed locations.
61. The proposed projects may require funding from third parties to enable them to be progressed into later stages of development, delivery and operation. West of England Mayoral Combined Authority officers have started discussions with third parties about their appetite to contribute towards funding future phases of the projects. For example, Highways England has been engaged about MetroWest Connectivity South based on the likely benefits to increasing the capacity of the M5 motorway. DfT has been engaged about future funding for West of England Mayoral Combined Authority station accessibility projects through their Access for All funding.

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications**

62. The proposed station accessibility and enhancements workstream will seek to establish an agreed set of West of England Mayoral Combined Authority minimum standards for accessibility at local stations in the West of England. This will lead to further project work to enhance station accessibility at existing



stations. Equality, diversity and inclusion will be considered on all rail pipeline projects through the production of Equality / Diversity Impact Assessments, in conjunction with rail industry partners, and progression of any agreed actions.

### **Climate Change Implications**

63. All of the projects proposed as part of the refresh of the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority rail pipeline will support the move towards a decarbonised transport system and providing a viable alternative to the private car. The rail pipeline funding will support the first phase of the project which if taken forward to the construction phase will contribute to the delivery of an action in the CESAP by improving frequency and accessibility of trains through delivery of new train lines and stations. New rail infrastructure will also have environmental impacts (e.g. construction work removing vegetation, carbon embodied in the rail infrastructure etc) and these need assessment, reduction, mitigation and management.
64. At the appropriate development stage, the rail pipeline will need to include and budget for the CESAP environmental requirements:
- Carbon management plans and carbon accounting
  - Environmental impact assessments (or non-statutory equivalents)
  - Biodiversity net gain assessments and delivery of improvements of at least 10%
  - Climate risk & vulnerability assessments, and integration of climate resilience measures into schemes

### **Finance Implications**

65. £80,000 of the funding has been spent to date developing the 10-year Rail Delivery Plan.
66. The £720,000 of awarded funding is proposed to be split between the proposed projects as follows:

Proposed projects	Recommended project funding allocations
Spend to date	£ 82,000.00
MetroWest Connectivity South	£ 200,000.00
Branch line study (3tph to Avonmouth / Severn Beach, 2tph to Portishead or 2tph to Henbury).	£ 100,000.00
Station accessibility, enhancements and interchange	£ 178,000.00
New stations study (incl. Ashton Gate, Saltford, Lockleaze, St Anne's Park)	£ 100,000.00
Contingency	£ 60,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 720,000.00</b>

67. It is possible that once the scopes for the initial phases of the projects have been priced by the supply chain, the current project funding could be insufficient to support the current proposed development works. At this point, a decision will be taken whether to reduce the scope to align with the available budget, or to find additional funding from third parties or to request further project funding from the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Committee.

### Legal Implications

68. There are no legal implications currently from the Strategic Rail Plan and the proposed delegation (Recommendation 2) and the proposed drawdown for the New Rail Stations Study (Recommendation 3). However, it is likely that there will be legal implications which arise from the implementation of the Strategic Rail Plan and/or the outputs of the New Rail Stations Study which will need to be considered at the relevant time.

69. An assessment will also be required in due course regarding subsidy control issues which may be involved in the funding arrangements.

### Commercial Implications

70. The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's Professional Services Framework Consultants (PSFCs) will be engaged to lead the feasibility and development services on the different projects working alongside Network Rail. Briefs for each of the service packages are currently being drafted. These will be issued in the form of requests for quotation to the PSFCs to price in spring 2024.

# Rail Electrification

## Background

71. The Great Western Route Modification Programme, which started in 2012, was aimed at enabling renewal of rolling stock, primarily replacing 50+ year old, diesel High Speed Trains. The Government determined electrifying the Great Western Main Line, from London to Oxford, Newbury, Bristol and Cardiff would enable the use of cleaner / greener rolling stock. However, plans to electrify rail lines to Bristol Temple Meads from the north (via Bristol Parkway and Filton Bank) and the east via Bath Spa, were curtailed in 2016, due to governmental cost escalations related to the procurement of the rolling stock and electrification, both compounding as significant programme delays, escalating costs and lack of available government funding to absorb the increases.
72. Today just 38% of Britain's railway network is electrified, compared with 60% on average in the European Union. This significantly undermines the country's net-zero commitments. The Railway Industry Association (RIA), a trade body, warned in 2021 that 448km of track must be electrified each year if all trains are to be green by 2050. That has been achieved only once since 1990.
73. Britain's reliance on diesel is not just bad for the environment. Electric trains have more seats and accelerate and stop more quickly than diesel trains, reducing journey times, while also increasing capacity on the network. They make travel cheaper due to lower maintenance and energy costs. A study by the RIA found that an electric train costs up to £3m less than a diesel one over its lifetime and is 300% more reliable on suburban lines.

## Key Considerations

74. Network Rail is the lead promoter of the project and once the initial feasibility stage is fully funded, they will lead the initial phase of development work.
75. Network Rail has recommended that funding is initially prioritised towards demonstrating the feasibility and affordability of electrifying the rail network between Bristol Parkway station and Bristol Temple Meads station (Filton Bank). Filton Bank, between Bristol Temple Meads and Bristol Parkway, is a core transport corridor within the region. Electrifying this section will enable electric rolling stock from Bristol Temple Meads towards London and Wales, while filling a further gap for electric trains heading north out of our region. Electric rolling stock exists for London and Wales bound services, however today operating with inefficient diesel motive power. Delivering this section of electrification enables the region to better consider decarbonisation of our regional branch line services, for example Battery / Electric rolling stock on the Seven Beach branch, and potentially to Henbury.
76. Evidence from this work could support government confidence in efficient delivery of electrification and potentially unlock opportunities for future government funding to deliver the electrification of Filton Bank and to develop

other electrification schemes, including Chippenham to Bristol Temple Meads via Bath Spa.

77. The funding recommended for approval in this paper will part-fund the progression of Filton Bank electrification project to Outline Business Case stage. The total funding required for this stage is £575,000. Other third-party funding is needed to support Network Rail's estimated cost to complete the proposed development works. Network Rail is leading discussions with DfT and Transport for Wales about potential funding contributions towards the project. Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body and Western Gateway pan-regional partnership are supporting Network Rail in these discussions.
78. The primary focus of the initial phase will be to work closely with Network Rail's specialist supply chain to conduct a detailed review of identified innovation/value engineering opportunities. The aim of this work is to realise opportunities to reduce the unit cost of electrification, initially focused on Filton Bank. These opportunities include the following.
  - 78.1 Laser surveys to prove that an innovative bridge coating, adopted from projects in South-Wales, will enable overhead lines to pass below Church Road bridge (Lawrence Hill Station). The alternative is to reconstruct the bridge at significant cost.
  - 78.2 Revisit the foundation design and ground conditions information, to see what locations the current proposed higher cost rock anchors can be changed for a more conventional piled solution.
  - 78.3 Demonstrate the constructability of Network Rail's novel 'push out' cantilever system for the overhead stanchions (to support the wires). Should feasibility be demonstrated, this would allow construction to be done on a four-track railway with a two-track railway still running. This would dramatically reduce track access costs.
  - 78.4 Survey the Bristol Temple Meads station train shed to prove that it could be modified to take the loadings of 'head spans' or alternative solutions including those adopted on tram lines (electrification infrastructure). If this is achievable, it will avoid costly movement of railway signals and ease the impact on the building's Grade 1 heritage listing.
79. The aim of exploring these value engineering opportunities is to reduce the unit cost of electrification from c. £3-4m per single track kilometre to c. £1-2m per single track kilometre. This would mean the construction cost of delivering Filton Bank electrification would be in the range of £30 - £50m.
80. Other scope to be delivered as part of the initial feasibility stage includes.
  - 80.1 Outputs informing future rolling stock strategies, including bi-mode electric solutions

- 80.2 Identification of current services which will be able to immediately utilise electrification of this transport corridor, quantifying those benefits.
- 80.3 Updated overhead line equipment (OLE) design, based on the innovations found to be feasible, and the latest track layout.
- 80.4 Development of a construction strategy that enables a live two-track railway at all times.
- 80.5 Production of a cost estimate.
- 80.6 Production of an Outline Business Case (Network Rail).

### **Alternative Options Considered**

- 81. The scope of this project could have been broadened to cover a larger geography, including investigations into potential electrification of rail lines between Bristol Temple Meads station and Chippenham and Weston Super Mare. A wider scope would require a greater level of initial funding before basic concepts have been proven for our region. This approach could limit the likelihood of securing the required funding to progress. A broader scope would also increase the risk of abortive effort and spend, if a unit rate saving cannot be demonstrated and future DfT funding doesn't materialise.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

- 82. West of England Mayoral Combined Authority officers have worked closely with officers in the Unitary Authorities to develop and agree the latest draft rail pipeline. Although there are no plans to use existing rail pipeline funding to support electrification (due to the magnitude of the funding required), the pipeline overview includes the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's aspirations to support the decarbonisation of the rail network, starting with implementation of rail electrification schemes in our region. The West of England Rail Strategy Working Group, which is held every eight weeks, has been used to support these discussions.
- 83. West of England Mayoral Combined Authority officers have presented the emerging draft rail pipeline to West of England Combined Authority Directors on two occasions in late 2022 and 2023.

### **Key Risks**

- 84. Other third-party funders may not be willing to contribute funding. This would mean that the proposed development work is put on hold, or the planned scope needs to be reduced.
- 85. The value engineering savings to be explored in this development phase may be found to be undeliverable. This would result in a higher unit cost for electrification than is targeted. The ideas that are being progressed have been validated by Network Rail's specialist supply chain to ensure they are realistic.

## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications**

86. As part of this development phase, an Equality Impact Assessment will be produced in conjunction with rail industry partners. Any recommendations arising from this assessment will be taken forward as part of the initial development stage and the future development and delivery.

## **Climate Change Implications**

87. Typically, an electric train emits between 20%-35% less carbon per passenger mile than a diesel train – a figure that will increase as the power generation industry continues to decarbonise.
88. Another key advantage is that electric trains have zero emissions at the point of use. This eliminates harmful diesel engine emissions, supporting cleaner air and associated health benefits. They also reduce noise and vibration pollution, of particular benefit to local residents and biodiversity.
89. Moreover, electric trains can be powered by any source of power, including renewable and low-carbon options. This means they are not susceptible to oil and gas price hikes and shortages, an ever-important consideration in light of current energy market volatility.
90. New electric rail infrastructure will also have environmental impacts. The development work for the rail pipeline will need to include and budget for the CESAP environmental requirements (carbon management, environmental assessments, biodiversity net gain improvements, and climate resilience).

## **Finance Implications**

91. The unit cost of delivering electrification is measured in single track kilometres (STK). The anticipated unit cost for Filton Bank Electrification in 2016 was £3-4m. The aim of this feasibility work is to verify that value engineering opportunities can be realised to reduce this unit cost to £1-2m per STK. The expectation is this would drop the overall cost of electrifying Filton Bank to between £30-£50m.
92. The proposed initial development phase, up to Outline Business Case stage, is estimated to cost £575,000. This includes a £475,000 allocation for Network Rail and their supply chain. Network Rail's allocation is supported by detailed cost build up, including pricing from their specialist supplier.
93. The initial recommended MCA funding contribution towards the project is £200,000. Subject to this funding contribution being approved, a further £375,000 is required from others to enable Network Rail to progress the project to Outline Business Case stage. No work will be undertaken until the full funding requirement is met.

### **Legal Implications**

94. There are no legal implications currently from the proposed award of £200,000 in respect of the Rail Electrification Project (Recommendation 4). However, once the additional funding requirement has been secured, appropriate legal documentation will have to be finalised to govern the relationship between the stakeholders and Network Rail.
95. An assessment will also be required in due course regarding subsidy control issues which may be involved in the funding arrangements.

### **Human Resources Implications**

96. None arising.

### **Land/property Implications**

97. None arising.

### **Commercial Implications**

98. No procurement will be required as the service will be awarded to Network Rail in the form of a third party agreement. The CA shall evaluate the cost forecasts provided by Network Rail and ensure the agreement achieves the required outcomes without unnecessary risk to the CA.

# MetroWest Phase 1 – Portishead line

## Background

99. The MetroWest 1 scheme, which includes re-opening of the Portishead Line, is jointly promoted by North Somerset Council (NSC) and the MCA with a funding contribution from the DfT.
100. The MetroWest 1 scheme is split into two key phases;
- 100.1 MW1a - Severn Beach Line infrastructure and service enhancements, including two services per hour to Avonmouth, with one continuing to/from Severn Beach. Additional trains and necessary upgrades to existing infrastructure to create an overall half-hourly service calling at all stations between Bristol Temple Meads and Westbury.
- 100.2 MW1b - New hourly service between Portishead and Bristol Temple Meads, consisting of existing 9km freight-only and re-opening 5km of disused railway, with two new stations at Portishead and Pill.
101. For MW1a, the infrastructure enhancement works required to operate the Severn Beach and Westbury service enhancements have been delivered. The services between Bristol Temple Meads and Severn Beach have been operational since December 2021, and the enhanced service between Bristol Temple Meads and Westbury was introduced in May 2023.
102. For MW1b, the delivery of the infrastructure required to support the re-opening of the Portishead line will be primarily designed and delivered by Network Rail (NR) with minor scope, including vegetation clearance, ecological enabling works and highways works, to be delivered by NSC and the MCA.
103. The following are the primary benefits of the scheme:
- Reduced travel time into Bristol from Portishead (23min by train);
  - Over 50,000 people brought within direct catchment of a rail station;
  - 1.2m additional rail journeys and £7m revenue within 15 years of opening;
  - Delivers the removal of 13 million car-km annually by 2041;
  - Benefits to the regional economy in Gross Value Added (GVA) of £43m per annum.
104. In July 2022, the project secured an increased capital funding allocation of £152.02m, which included an additional £10m funding allocation from the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (from Transforming Cities Fund and Investment Fund). The March 2022 estimate that supported this funding allocation was produced by NR, in conjunction with the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and NSC.



105. Approval of the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's additional £10m funding contribution was subject to additional funding commitments from NSC (£10m) and DfT (£15.58m), which were also approved in July 2022. NSC's additional £10m capital funding contribution was approved at their Full Council meeting on 12 July 2022. DfT's additional £15.58m capital funding contribution was confirmed in a letter from the Minister of State for Transport, dated 19 July 2022.
106. The additional West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and NSC funding allocations were approved based upon DfT taking on the future capital 'cost risk' on the project after Full Business Case approval stage. Beyond the additional £10m contributions (each) towards the project construction phase, the NSC and West of England Mayoral Combined Authority capital funding contributions would be fixed.
107. DfT provided an initial £13.8m of funding to support the current detailed design phase to enable the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority, NSC and Network Rail to undertake activities to de-risk the programme and to increase cost certainty. This funding was provided on agreement that prior to the Full Business Case being submitted, market prices would be secured for the construction phase. An updated market estimate is due to be issued by Network Rail in mid-February 2024. This will support the project Full Business Case submission which is programmed to be issued at the end of February 2024.
108. £7.887m of West of England Mayoral Combined Authority revenue (Investment Fund) funding was approved at the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Committee on 16 June 2023. This was secured in support of the operation of MetroWest 1a rail services for the first 3 years – the enhanced half hourly Westbury line and Severn Beach line services. A letter has been issued to DfT requesting that they fund the operational costs associated with the new hourly Portishead line rail service and two new stations, Portishead and Pill. Formal confirmation of this funding is expected by the time the FBC is submitted in late February 2024.

### **Key Considerations**

109. This paper recommends the award of £9.66m of previously allocated West of England Mayoral Combined Authority funding.
110. Should the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Committee approve the award of this funding, drawdown of the monies would be subject to the following other criteria being met.
1. DfT and West of England Mayoral Combined Authority CEOs approving the project Full Business Case.
  2. North Somerset Council drawing down their total funding allocation
  3. DfT formally (in writing) committing to meet any remaining project capital

and revenue funding shortfall at FBC approval stage.

4. DfT formally committing (in writing) to taking on any future cost risk on the project. As such, the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority project funding contribution would be fixed.

111. The current MetroWest 1b project schedule assumes the submission of the project FBC at the end of February 2024. This date allows for the time (13 weeks) that the DfT has requested to review and approve the FBC and related funding, prior to their summer recess.

112. Upon release of West of England Mayoral Combined Authority funding, the required West of England Mayoral Combined Authority project funding will be transferred to Network Rail under a 'Funding Agreement' to enable the award of their various construction phase contracts.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

113. Delay the project – The Full Business Case submission has been programmed for submission and approval prior to Government's summer recess. Delay beyond this will mean a minimum project delay of 3 months. This duration could potentially be greater depending on the timing of the next general election. Any time delay would result in additional inflationary cost pressure on the project.

114. Cancel the project - If the scheme is cancelled the sunk costs up to the submission of FBC are estimated at £44.82m, of which NSC and West of England Mayoral Combined Authority would have a revenue reversion challenge of c. £31.02m.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

115. The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority, and specially the West of England Metro Mayor, has actively engaged with government departments in support of securing support and funding for the project. A site visit to Portishead was undertaken in July 2023 with the Secretary of State for Transport to promote the project.

116. Extensive public consultation has been undertaken over several years on the project proposals. The response to the consultations was very high with almost 2,000 separate responses received over both stages and the level of support for the scheme is also very high with 95% of community respondents fully or mainly in support of the proposals.

117. The project Development Consent Order (DCO) was granted by the Secretary of State for Transport on 14th November 2022. The DCO provides planning consent, powers for the compulsory acquisition of land where necessary and ancillary powers.

## **Key Risks**

118. Detailed design works being managed by Network Rail will continue beyond the FBC submission date and supply chain prices will be subject to change until a completed detailed design has been priced and a final contract price has been agreed between Network Rail and their supply chain in late summer 2024. The risk of price fluctuation is being considered in the project quantitative risk analysis which will inform the Full Business Case estimate. The risk associated with any potential cost increases resulting from design change would be held by DfT, subject to them taking on the future cost risk post FBC approval.

## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications**

119. A Diversity Impact Assessment has been produced by Network Rail in conjunction with the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and other project stakeholders. This document has been maintained throughout the project lifecycle to date. The recommendations from the assessment have been factored into the project designs, including the new stations at Portishead and Pill. The project designs have also been reviewed and approved by Great Western Railways 'Built Environment Approval Panel (BEAP)', which ensures that project designs are compliant to accessibility standards.

## **Climate Change Implications**

120. MetroWest Phase 1 required an Environmental Statement to support the DCO process. Climate change and environmental impacts have been assessed in the Environmental Statement.
121. The project is a vital intervention which directly supports the move towards a decarbonised transport system and providing a viable alternative to the private car.
122. MetroWest Phase 1 contributes to the delivery of an action in the Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan by improving frequency and accessibility of trains through delivery of new train lines and stations contributing to a decarbonised transport system.
123. The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority is delivering the Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan (CESAP) environmental priorities across its transport programmes through a series of new environmental requirements (subject to exception).
124. The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority is developing a proportionate approach to applying these new policy requirements to programmes at an advanced project stage such as MetroWest Phase 1, which has already completed some environmental assessments.

## Finance Implications

125. On 27 July 2022, the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Committee approved an additional £10m project funding allocation. This was to be drawn from a combination of Transforming Cities Fund and Investment Fund.
126. DfT provided £13.8m of funding to support the current detailed design phase to enable the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority, NSC and NR to undertake activities to de-risk the programme and to increase cost certainty. This funding was provided on agreement that at the end of the detailed design stage market prices would be secured for the construction phase. These market prices would then support the FBC submission and approval by DfT.
127. The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority is aware of potential emerging cost pressures on the project. This position is subject to further change as detailed design works continue in parallel with supplier pricing and estimating. An updated project estimate is due to be released by Network Rail in mid-February 2024 to support the Full Business Case submission. The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority stance remains that no further funding contribution will be made to the project by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority beyond the additional £10m allocated in July 2022.
128. The total capital project funding allocation approved in July 2022 was £152.016m. The funding was to be provided through the following funding sources:
- Local Growth Fund - £18.868m.
  - Economic Development Fund - £49.535m.
  - Local Authority Contributions - £4.413m.
  - NSC Contributions (2019) - £15.860m.
  - Transforming Cities Fund - £6.203m.
  - Investment Fund - £9.657m.
  - DfT RNEP contribution (2019) - £47.480m.
129. The table below outlines the current total authorised project budget (£44.79m) and the total funding allocation (£152.06M).
130. The additional West of England Mayoral Combined Authority funding allocation that this paper recommends is drawn down is £9.66m.

Type	Authorised	Stage	Funding Source	Total (in £ms)
Capital Costs	Authorised Spend	Pre-FBC Approval	Local Growth Fund	£18,868
			Transforming Cities Fund	£6,203
			Department for Transport RNEP Capital	£13,805
			Public Match Revenue (LAs)	£4,413
			Public Match Capital (NSC)	£1,504
			<b>Current total project funding approved to spend</b>	<b>£44,793</b>
	Allocated, not authorised	Post-FBC Approval	Investment Fund	£9,657
			Economic Development Fund	£49,535
			<b>Total funding allocation recommended for approval to spend (Jan 2025)</b>	<b>£59,192</b>
			DfT RNEP Capital	£33,675
			Local Contribution (NSC)	£10,000
			Public Match Capital (NSC)	£4,356
			<b>Total remaining funding allocations to be approved by Others</b>	<b>£48,031</b>
			<b>Total funding allocation outstanding formal approval to spend</b>	<b>£107,224</b>
				<b>Total Project Capital Funding Allocation</b>

## Legal Implications

131. The award of £9.66m of previously allocated funding from the Investment Fund to the MetroWest Phase 1 (Portishead Line) project (Recommendation 5) has a number of legal implications:

- 131.1 It is subject to the DfT approving the Full Business Case in respect of the project, addressing any remaining project capital funding shortfall and formally committing (in writing) to be responsible for any future capital cost risk on the project.
- 131.2 A funding agreement will be required with Network Rail to enable the award of its various construction phase contracts.
- 131.3 North Somerset Council is required to secure governance approval from its Full Council to draw down its full funding allocation following FBC approval. Satisfactory assurances will be required that this has occurred.
- 131.4 An Inter Authority Agreement will be required between the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority, DfT and North Somerset Council in relation to the proposed funding arrangements.

132. An assessment will also be required in due course regarding subsidy control issues which may be involved in the funding arrangements.

## Land/property Implications

133. If the project was deferred for an extended period (beyond 2 years) or cancelled, the only valuable deliverable / asset resulting from the spend to date would be the land purchases local to Station Road, Pill Station Car Parks & Quays Avenue (west), with an approximate land value of £1.0m.

134. If the project does not proceed, agreement will need to be reached with NSC on how this land asset is maintained and/or managed moving forward.

## **Commercial Implications**

135. The form of agreement / contract which will be used to transfer funding between the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority, DfT and NSC to Network Rail to support the delivery of the main works has not yet been finalised. This needs to be agreed by late summer 2024, ahead of Network Rail's planned award of supply chain contracts for the construction phase. The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority shall evaluate the cost forecasts provided by Network Rail and ensure the agreement achieves the required outcomes without unnecessary risk to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority.

# The Zero Emission Bus Regional Area 2 (ZEBRA 2) Bid

## Background

136. In October 2023, the DfT announced the ZEBRA 2 fund – enabling local transport authorities (LTAs) to bid for funding to support the rollout of zero emission buses across England. ZEBRA 2 is £129m of capital funding to cover up to 75% of the cost of infrastructure and 75% of the cost difference between a zero emission bus and conventional diesel buses and required partnership working with operators to develop a suitable bid. North Somerset Council has submitted a separate bid due to qualifying for £25m of funding ringfenced for rural LTAs.

## Key Considerations

137. Following engagement with all bus operators in the area, and as a result of extremely short timescales meaning operators needed to have fully developed proposals, First Bus were the only operator to be able to produce a proposal achieving the strict ZEBRA 2 value for money and deliverability criteria. Value for money assessment is through the DfT issued greener buses tool - in which the First Bus proposal has achieved a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 2.05 and is considered 'High' value for money. Deliverability is assessed on clear evidence of a proposals readiness to deliver – including financial commitments, clear project plans, and commitments from suppliers, all of which have been supplied by First Bus. On the 15 December 2024 the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority submitted a ZEBRA 2 bid based on this proposal.

138. A summary of the bid is included below:

Total cost for First Bus proposal	£44.1m
Total bid to the ZEBRA 2 fund	£6.7m (with a First Bus contribution of £37.4m)
Summary of proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Upgrade of Hengrove depot including electrical charging infrastructure to support new electric bus fleet</li><li>- A total of 74 electric buses – 67 Double Decker and 7 Single Decker (new zero emission buses to replace existing Euro 5 and 6 diesel buses)</li></ul>	
Timeline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Successful bid will be confirmed in March 2024</li><li>- If the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority is successful – Zero Emission Buses will begin operation in November 2025</li></ul>	

139. Should the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority be successful in its bid to the ZEBRA 2 fund, a grant funding agreement will be required to be put in place between the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and First Bus to enable funds to be paid to the operator, following successful delivery against agreed milestones. Confirmation of the bid outcome is expected in March 2024, with a grant agreement with First Bus required to be entered into at this time due to the ZEBRA 2 scheme funding requiring vehicle orders to be placed in April 2024. Delegated authority is therefore required from the West of England Combined Authority Committee to enter into a grant agreement with First Bus in order to meet the timeframes specified in the funding requirements.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

140. Option 1: not to submit a bid. This option was not considered as it would result in the Mayoral Combined Authority failing to take advantage of available funding that could assist in introducing zero emission electric buses in the area and assist in meeting net zero emission targets, as well as targets within our Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership in relation to transitioning to a zero emission bus fleet in the area.

141. Option 2: to develop a multiple operator bid across the area. This option was not considered viable as a result of the short timescales in which the bid had to be submitted and the high level of technical detail required for a successful submission, which would not have been possible in the time available. In addition, DfT learning from the ZEBRA 1 scheme that identified multiple operator bids as high-risk in terms of deliverability challenges.

142. Option 3: develop a joint bid with North Somerset Council. This option was considered however was not taken forward as a result of North Somerset Council qualifying for ringfenced funding for rural areas, which the Combined Authority was not eligible for. North Somerset Council have submitted a separate ZEBRA 2 bid centered on the Weston depot.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

143. The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority ZEBRA 2 bid has been developed in consultation with the UAs and has been discussed at officer level and at a meeting of the Infrastructure Directors where formal support for the final bid proposal was given.



## Key Risks

144. Risk of failure of the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and First Bus to agree grant conditions enabling the scheme to deliver as set out in the bid.

Mitigation: To make use of existing grant agreement templates already in place and used for existing grants to minimise delays and ensure standard conditions are fit for purpose. In addition to ensure that grant conditions reflect already agreed delivery timescales as set out in the bid submission.

145. Risk of vehicles and equipment funded through a successful bid not remaining in the Combined Authority area or the benefits not being realised for residents.

Mitigation: ZEBRA 2 funding conditions require vehicles to remain operational in the bid area for a minimum 5 year period – this requirement will be mirrored as a condition of grant to First Bus.

146. Risk that should the bid be successful that First Bus fail to deliver to the required timescales as a result of delays (internal/governance or from suppliers).

Mitigation: Through ensuring a signed grant agreement is in place as soon as possible this will enable confirmation of orders with suppliers to be raised with minimal delay – this will be essential as lead times are likely to increase as a result of orders from other successful ZEBRA 2 bids. Through the bid submission First Bus have provided confirmation of funding allocation and of vehicle supplier commitments – this further reduces the chance of delays.

147. Successful ZEBRA 2 bids are required to develop and report against a Monitoring & Evaluation plan – this plan has been developed and included in the bid submission.

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

148. Delivery of the proposals as set out in the ZEBRA 2 bid are not anticipated to have any Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion implications. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been included in the ZEBRA 2 bid documentation identifying no negative impacts.

149. In assessing the equalities impact of the proposals, we have consulted and engaged with groups including the Enhanced Partnership Advisory panel and the Public Transport Safety & Equalities Group. These groups, as well as any others identified, will continue to be engaged during and following delivery to help monitor the impact of the project and ensure any equalities, diversity, and inclusion issues are identified and addressed.

## **Climate Change Implications**

150. Securing this investment for zero emission buses will have positive impacts on helping to decarbonise the region's transport network.
151. Bristol City Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council, South Gloucestershire Council and the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority have all signed climate emergency declarations. Following these declarations, the West of England Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan (CESAP) sets out the environmental priorities for the region. These are: net zero carbon by 2030, nature recovery and climate resilience. The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority is reflecting the regional CESAP environmental priorities in its infrastructure work by requiring (subject to exception) the following:
- Carbon management plans and carbon accounting
  - Environmental impact assessments (or non-statutory equivalents)
  - Biodiversity net gain assessments and delivery of improvements of at least 10%
  - Climate risk & vulnerability assessments, and integration of climate resilience measures into schemes.
152. The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority will be determining the criteria for justifiable exceptions to these requirements (for example proportionality and impact) and the Zebra 2 programme needs to consider these and reflect the relevant requirement(s) in its grant agreement ensuring there is a sufficient budget to complete them. For example, it will need to include carbon accounting to report to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's corporate carbon management plan, which is under development.

## **Financial Implications**

153. This proposal seeks delegated authority to enter into a grant agreement with First Bus if successful in its bid for ZEBRA 2 funding. The grant payable to First Bus would be £6.7m of ZEBRA 2 funding, following completion of agreed milestones.
154. This would be a contribution towards the total cost of £44.1m to support the roll out of zero emission buses. There will be no financial impact on the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority as a result of the proposal. All funding will be provided by DfT or First Bus.
155. Successful funding bids are due to be announced in March 2024.

## **Legal Implications**

156. As stated above, a grant funding agreement will be required between the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and First Bus in relation to Zero Emission Buses (Recommendation 6) and all appropriate obligations contained in the ZEBRA 2 funding award will need to be flowed down to First Bus.
157. An assessment will be required regarding subsidy control issues which are likely to be involved in the funding arrangements.

## **Human Resources Implications**

158. None arising.

## **Commercial and Procurement**

159. None arising.

# Delegated Decisions

## Background

160. The following delegated decisions, related to projects in the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) Funding, Bus Services Improvement Plan (BSIP) Funding and Transforming Cities Funding, have been taken.

## Key Considerations

### Delegation:

#### *City Region Sustainable Transport delegated decisions*

161. In October 2023, the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Committee, granted a delegation for the approval of change requests for the drawdown of funds up to £1m within the agreed CRSTS project budget. The delegation was granted to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Strategic Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Directors of Infrastructure of the Unitary Authorities. The following requests have been approved through this delegation:

- **Bath & North-East Somerset Liveable Neighbourhood Programme** - delegated approval to draw down £736,000 of further development funding to enable the project to bring forward the delivery of five interventions identified through the co-design process with residents and communities, which will be delivered using Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs).
- **Thornbury to North Bristol Corridor (A38N)** – delegated approval to draw down £500,000 of further development funding to bring forward ground penetration radar surveys, in order to reduce the risk to design changes at later stages of the project and de-risk elements of the construction programme. This change also resulted in a re-profile of those funds from future years into the financial year 2023-2024.
- **Chipping Sodbury to Hambrook Corridor (A4174/A432)** – delegated approval was given to draw down £400,000 to bring forward ground penetration radar surveys, in order to reduce the risk to design changes at later stages of the project and de-risk elements of the construction programme. This change also results in a re-profile of those funds from future years into the financial year 2023-2024.

- **Bristol City Centre Strategic Corridor** – the approval was given to draw down £100,000 of further development funding from the project budget to cover costs to develop the project’s business cases.
162. In April 2022 the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Committee agreed to allocate funding from the CRSTS Programme for £450,000 revenue funding in 2022/23 and £450,000 capital funding to Bristol City Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council (£150,000 revenue and £150,000 of capital each). The funding was allocated to provide funding to support capacity within the councils to deliver the programme. The approval of these funds was delegated to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority’s Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Chief Executives of the Unitary Authorities.
163. Subsequently, at the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Committee meeting in July 2022 a further allocation was agreed for £450,000 in 2023/24 and £450,000 in 2024/25 from the CRSTS Programme to Bristol City Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council (£150,000 per year each). The approval of these funds was also delegated to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority’s Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Chief Executives of the Unitary Authorities. The following has been approved through this delegation:
- **Bristol City Council City Regions Sustainable Transport Settlement Capacity** – a Feasibility and Development Funding [Application](#) form was approved to draw down £150,000 of capital and £450,000 of revenue funding for the financial years 2022/23 to 2024/25 from this fund to provide capacity funding to Bristol City Council to support the delivery of the CRSTS Programme.
164. In July 2022, the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Committee agreed a delegation for the approval of Business Case approvals for projects of a value below £6m in the CRSTS programme. This was delegated to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority’s Strategic Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Directors of Infrastructure of the Unitary Authorities. The following decisions have been approved through this delegation:
- **Bristol Liveable Neighbourhood Programme** – the approval of the a Feasibility and Development Funding [Application and](#) draw down £490,000 to produce a Full Business case for the Overton and Princess Victoria Street project and the drawn down of £349,000 to produce a Full Business case for the Chandos Road, Denmark Street and Rosemary Lane project. The project will be co-designed with the local community and will include transport interventions such as prioritisation of those travelling by active travel modes, improve safety and quality, placemaking and greening.

- **Bristol to Hengrove MetroBus Extension Corridor Project** – the approval of a Feasibility and Development Funding Application and draw down of £200,000 to produce a Full Business case which will deliver an extension of Metrobus beyond Hengrove to Hartcliffe and Withywood.
- **South Gloucestershire Liveable Neighbourhood Programme** - the approval of a Feasibility and Development Funding Application and draw down of £870,000 to produce two Full Business Cases to deliver two liveable neighbourhoods in Yate and Thornbury. The project will be co-designed with the local community and will include transport interventions such as prioritisation of those travelling by active travel modes, with a focus on accessing key destinations such as schools and community facilities, improve safety and quality, placemaking and greening.
- **Midsomer Norton and Westfield Walking, Wheeling and Cycling Links Project** - the approval of a Feasibility and Development Funding Application and draw down of £144,000 to produce a Full Business Case which will deliver active travel improvements in Midsomer Norton and Westfield.
- **South Bristol Liveable Neighbourhood Project** - the approval of a Feasibility and Development Funding Application and draw down of £600,000 to produce a Full Business Case to deliver liveable neighbourhoods in the Southville, Windmill Hill and Bedminster wards. The project will be co-designed with the local community and will include transport interventions such as prioritisation of those travelling by active travel modes, improve safety and quality, placemaking and greening.
- **Bristol to Bath Railway Path Project** - the approval of a Feasibility and Development Funding Application and draw down of £209,000 to produce a Full Business Case which will deliver improvements to CCTV and lightning to a section of the Bristol to Bath Railway Cycle path.
- **A4 Portway Strategic Corridor - Park and Ride Access Project** – the approval of a Full Business Case and £2,007,000 to deliver access improvements at the A4 Portway park and ride. This scheme will enable buses to access and egress the site from the north and west so that the full potential of the facility can be achieved.

### *Transforming Cities Fund*

165. In March 2023 the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Committee granted a delegation for the approval of change requests relating to the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) to ensure that the fund was fully utilised by March 2023. This was delegated to the West of England Mayoral Combined

Authority's Strategic Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Programme Review Board. The following has been approved through this delegation:

- **A37/A4018 Stockwood to Cribbs Causeway Corridor** – approval was given to phase the delivery approach to the A37/A4018 Stockwood to Cribbs Causeway Corridor in order to accelerate delivery, rephase the funding profile including TCF and award funding drawdown of £640,000 capital from the CRSTS Programme funds.
- **A4 Portway Strategic Corridor** – approval was given to phase the delivery approach to the A4 Portway Strategic Corridor in order to accelerate delivery, rephase the funding profile including Transforming Cities Fund and award funding draw down from the project budget of £170,393 capital CRSTS Programme funds.

### *Bus Service Improvement Programme*

166. In July 2022, the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Committee agreed a delegation to determine any matters required by the DfT in relation to the final funding agreement, including any changes to the spend profile and the authority to spend against the Bus Services Improvement Programme within the funding allocation from the DfT. This was delegated to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's Strategic Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with North Somerset Council's Director of Infrastructure. The following decisions have been approved through this delegation:

- **Fares Package Two – birthday offer and free travel for care leavers project** – the approval of a funding request and draw down of a funding £10,600,000 to deliver the Birthday offer from August 2023 to July 2024 and free travel for care leavers from August 2023 to March 2025.
- **Fares Package One – fares package one discounts and simplification project** – the approval of a funding request and draw down of £11,200,000 funding to deliver the Fares Package One project to deliver fares reductions, discounts and simplification of fares including fares caps from September 2022 to March 2025.
- **Network and Services – Enhanced Commercial Services project** – the approval of a funding request and draw down of £10,500,000 funding to deliver the Enhanced Commercial Services Project to deliver increased frequency and service on a number of bus routes for a period of 24 months from April 2023.

- **Network and Services – AssessWEST project** – the approval of a funding request and draw down of £200,000 funding to deliver the AssessWEST Project to deliver a review and proposal for an optimised bus network including a connectivity to other modes of transport. This will be used to inform decision making around the future bus network and support the development of the Joint Local Transport Plan.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Draft Electric Vehicle Charging Action Plan

## **Background papers:**

### **West of England Mayoral Combined Authority Contact:**

Report Author: Louise McBride and David Jarman  
Contact Details: [louise.mcbride@westofengland-ca.gov.uk](mailto:louise.mcbride@westofengland-ca.gov.uk)  
[david.jarman@westofengland-ca.gov.uk](mailto:david.jarman@westofengland-ca.gov.uk)