

The West of England Partnership

Transport News December 2007

Welcome to the second edition of West of England Transport News which gives an update on traffic trends and transport schemes in the sub-region. Good progress has been made towards our targets for traffic, bus travel, road safety and cycling.

We also provide an update on our major schemes with a special emphasis on the Bath Package – recently given provisional Government backing – and emerging plans for a Bus Rapid Transit network.



JOINT LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

- Progress on 18 out of the 19 Joint Local Transport Plan targets has exceeded expectations.
- £75 million has been earmarked for local transport schemes in the Government's three year capital 'settlement' and this will be boosted by a further £100 million investment in local transport measures through the Greater Bristol Bus Network and Bath Package major schemes.

Recent Progress

Our Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP) has a range of challenging targets to improve the quality and reliability of the sub-region's transport network and reduce road casualties. Progress in the first year has been beyond expectations, with 18 of the 19 indicators already on track.

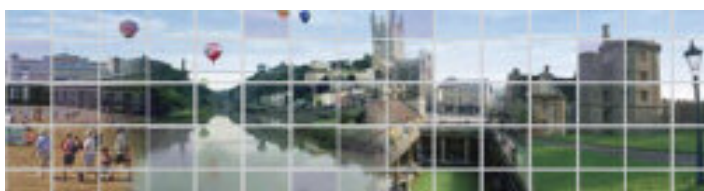
In particular:

- bus passenger journeys have increased by 4%;
- 74% of bus journeys commenced on time in 2006/07 compared to 67% in 2005/06;
- safety on our roads is substantially improving, with a 20% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured (KSIs) compared to the 2001–04 average. Child KSIs have fallen by 42% over the same period;
- cycling is another success story with the number of trips increasing by 24% over the last three years.

Three Year Funding Settlement

At the end of November the DfT announced that the West of England has been allocated a capital sum of £75 million to invest in local transport over the next three years. About half this total is intended for 'integrated transport' schemes costing less than £5 million and the other half for road maintenance. This firm financial commitment will allow us to draw up a full programme of schemes to deliver from April 2008 onwards.

A full summary of progress is available in the West of England's July 2007 Joint Progress Report, available on the Partnership's website (www.westofengland.org).



WHAT OUR COUNCILLORS SAY ON JLTP PROGRESS AND THE THREE YEAR SETTLEMENT

“This funding is really encouraging news, and our progress this year particularly reflects the improvements to bus services in Bath as a result of First investing in new vehicles. The ambitious redevelopments at Southgate and Western Riverside will also deliver key public transport improvements, supported by the Greater Bristol Bus Network bid to improve bus routes between Bath and Midsomer Norton/Radstock, Bristol and Midsomer Norton, and Bristol and Bath”.

*Councillor Charles Gerrish,
Bath and North East Somerset’s
Cabinet Member for Customer Services*



“Whilst I welcome this funding settlement North Somerset still needs to see substantial improvements focussed on the issues at Junctions 19 and 21 of the M5, and on bus reliability and rail capacity and timetabling. Improving a bus service on already congested roads, where it is impossible to introduce HOV lanes throughout is insufficient. If residents are to really be convinced to switch from car travel to alternative transport we are going to need real additional support and commitment from government and the operators, as the West of England local authorities simply cannot do it alone.”

*Councillor Elfan Ap Rees,
North Somerset’s Executive Member for Strategic
Planning, Highways and Economic Development*



“Our progress this year is really encouraging, showing how by working together the four councils can target resources to improve transport quickly and start to show immediate results. The launch of the A420 Showcase bus route, and forthcoming full endorsement of the Greater Bristol Bus Network bid, will help transform our public transport offer and provide a real alternative to everyday car travel in the city.”

*Councillor Mark Bradshaw,
Bristol City Council’s Executive
Member for Access and Environment*



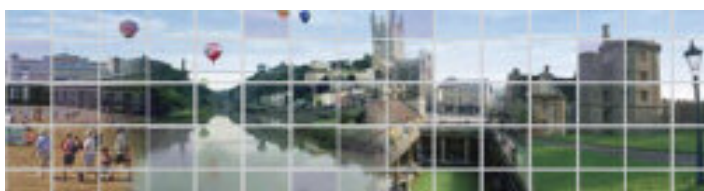
“I am delighted with this funding and with the initial progress made with the plan, and look forward to these improvements being sustained to enhance the quality of life for all people living and working in the area. Improving the transport network is vital to maintaining the area’s economic viability and this is a major step forward.”

*Councillor Brian Allinson,
South Gloucestershire’s Executive Member for Planning,
Transportation and Strategic Environment*



Better Buses

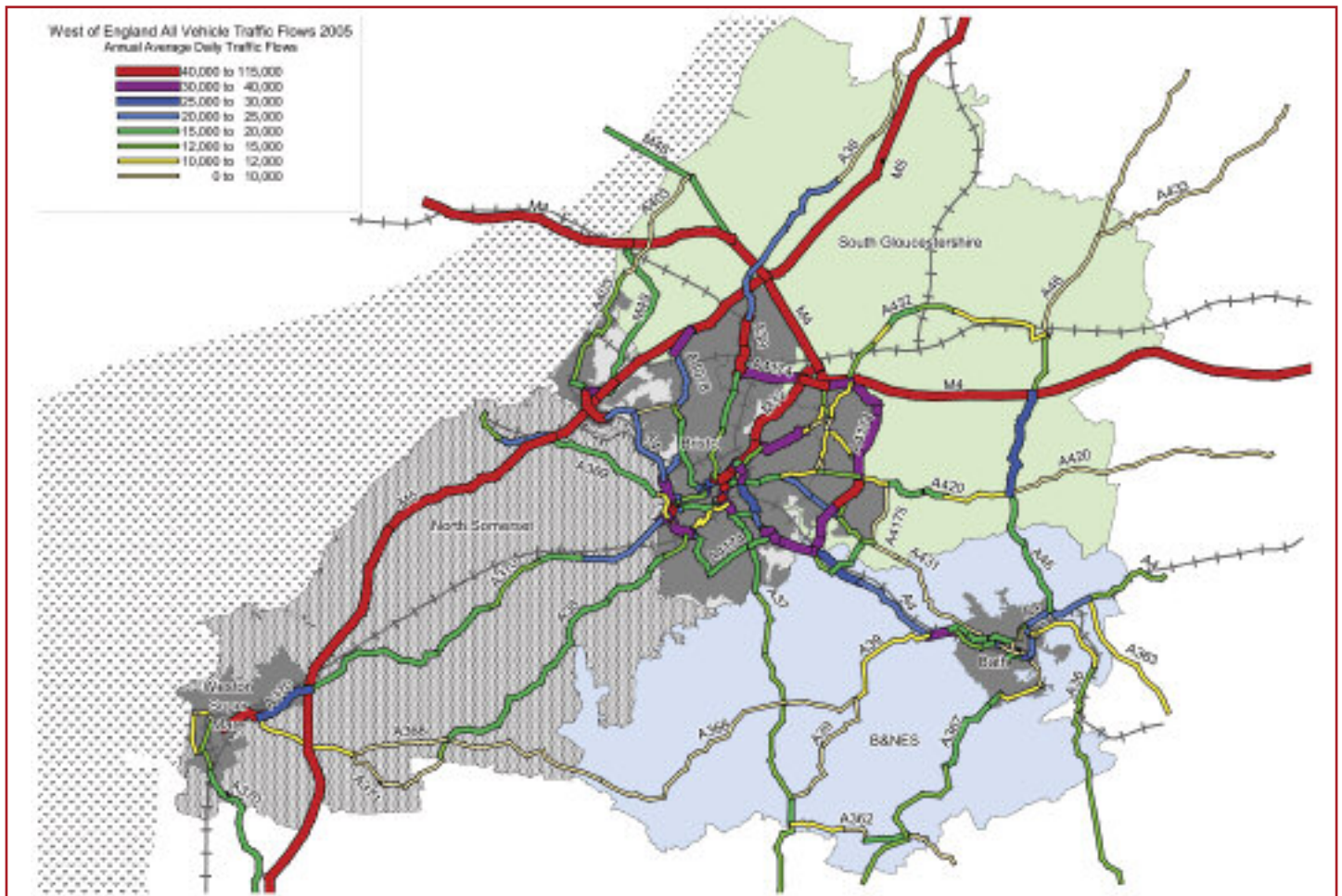
First’s bus fleet in Bath and North East Somerset was entirely replaced with new vehicles during 2005 and 2006, significantly improving service quality. With council funding, First’s buses in and around Bristol have all been provided with ‘real time information’ equipment, significantly increasing the number of services showing this information at stops in Bristol city centre.



RECENT TRAFFIC TRENDS

Traffic growth and congestion is a major concern in the West of England. Average peak hour traffic speed in Bristol, at 15 mph, is the slowest of the English ‘core’ cities outside London. All four councils are committed to tackling congestion and reducing the rate of traffic growth.





Current Traffic Volumes in the West of England Sub-region

The map shows the volume of traffic currently using our main roads.

Flows into Bath city centre

In the five years 1999 to 2004 flows in and out of Bath city centre declined annually by an average of 1.4%. This downward trend has continued since then. Major inbound flows in the morning peak are on the A367 Churchill Bridge (2,100 cars), the A4 Upper Bristol Road (1,800) and the A4 Paragon/Walcot Street (combined 1,750).

Flows into the North Fringe

Our surveys show that overall (12 hour) traffic flows in the North Fringe this year are now the same as they were in 2003, following a rapid period of growth in the 1990s. Heaviest inbound flows in the morning peak period (7–10 am) are on the A38 near M5 Junction 16 (almost 9,000 vehicles) and on the A4174 Ring Road near M4 Junction 19 (8,000).

Flows into Weston-super-Mare

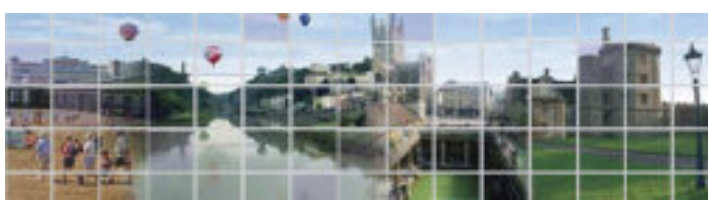
Inbound peak traffic flows into Weston-super-Mare have increased by 5.2% compared to the 2002–04 average, which is in line with the national average.

Area-wide Travel

The JLTP target is to limit the rate of growth of ‘annual area-wide vehicle kilometres’ to 12% between 2004 and 2010. So far, the total has increased by 1.3%, which is well under the target trajectory and indicates that our policies to promote alternative modes of transport are starting to have an impact on traffic flow.

Flows into Bristol City Centre

Inbound morning peak flows into Bristol city centre have fallen by 4% compared with the 2003–04 average. This progress is particularly encouraging as the JLTP target is to ensure that there is no increase in the 2003/04 figure.



CONGESTION

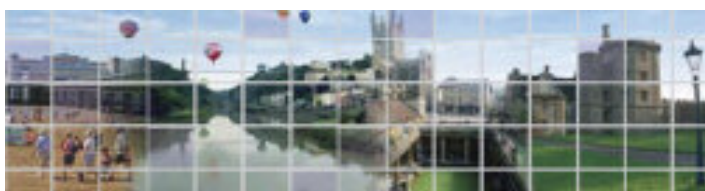
In July 2007 the Department for Transport (DfT) accepted our 'Congestion Delivery Plan', a new document setting out details of our plans for tackling traffic problems. Congestion is forecast to grow on major urban routes but the plan is to limit the increase in journey time to 14% between 2003/04 and 2011.



A range of initiatives will help to deliver or exceed this target including:

- continued investment in expanding the Urban Traffic Control system in the sub-region, including new and improved traffic signals;
- launch of the West of England's A420 'Showcase' bus corridor in December 2007, featuring bus lanes, 'real time' passenger information displays, new stops and shelters and new high quality vehicles;
- introduction of free off-peak bus travel for senior citizens;
- continued growth in rail passenger numbers;
- management of the Bristol city centre parking charge regime to transfer long stay commuter spaces to short stay spaces for shoppers;
- improved cycling and walking networks and successful implementation of travel plans, particularly with key employers in the North Fringe of Bristol.

As a result of our Congestion Delivery Plan we have been allocated an extra £200,000 to help enhance the transport network in 2007/08. The plan will be regularly updated to monitor progress towards the target and further reward funding will be made available if the encouraging progress continues.



CURRENT SCHEMES TO TACKLE CONGESTION

High profile transport schemes currently underway or close to completion include:

A420 Showcase Bus Route

Investment to improve conditions for buses, general traffic, cyclists and pedestrians. Bus lanes, traffic signal upgrades, bus stop enhancements and new pedestrian crossings have been implemented along the A420 and A431 corridors. This follows the successful remodelling of Kingswood town centre in 2003/04. The high profile bus interchange in Old Market opened in September and the Showcase route was launched on the 4th December.



Avon Ring Road

Design work is now well underway to signalise the A4174 roundabouts at Deanery Road and Marsham Way. This follows the signal improvements carried out on the Avon Ring Road at its junctions with Bromley Heath, Badminton and Westerleigh Roads. These schemes are intended to deliver a significant improvement in road safety as well as reducing traffic congestion.

North Somerset Hot Spots

In North Somerset, 14 sites have been identified as congested 'hot spots' and we are looking at short and long term options for tackling traffic conditions in these locations.

A4 Bath Road/West Town Lane

This £1.2 million junction scheme has recently been completed. Largely funded by adjacent retail development, it features upgraded traffic signals, new and improved pedestrian crossings and an extension of the outbound bus lane to improve reliability for services to Bath and the Bath Road park and ride.

M5 Junctions

Development funding has been secured to mitigate some traffic congestion at Junctions 19 and 21 of the M5, with detailed designs being progressed through close working with the Highways Agency.

Jacobs Wells Road/Hotwell Road junction

Due for completion in Spring 2008 is a £1 million replacement of an existing roundabout in Bristol with a larger gyratory. This will increase capacity for general traffic and improve pedestrian crossing facilities. Part-funded by the adjacent Harbourside development, the scheme also features an extension of the existing outbound bus lane along Hotwell and Anchor Roads.

Two major retail developments are now under construction and transport infrastructure is crucial to their success:

Broadmead

The comprehensive regeneration of Broadmead shopping centre, due to open in Autumn 2008, includes a multi-million pound highway scheme. Now substantially complete, the scheme aims to accommodate traffic generated by the shopping development whilst providing high quality pedestrian facilities to maximise accessibility to and through this part of Bristol city centre.

Southgate

In Bath, the major Southgate regeneration scheme is delivering a comprehensive upgrade to highway, public transport and pedestrian facilities whilst maintaining traffic capacity and accommodating traffic generated by the development. A new bus station is being funded by the developers along with enhancements to Bath Spa station, creating a state-of-the-art public transport interchange.



(Bus station photo supplied by Multi Development UK Ltd)

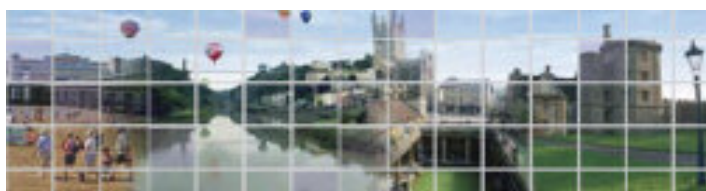
MAJOR SCHEMES UPDATE

The JLTP sets out our programme of major schemes and these are illustrated on the map overleaf. Our first two schemes, the Greater Bristol Bus Network and Bath Package, are together attracting an extra £100 million of Government funding into the sub-region.

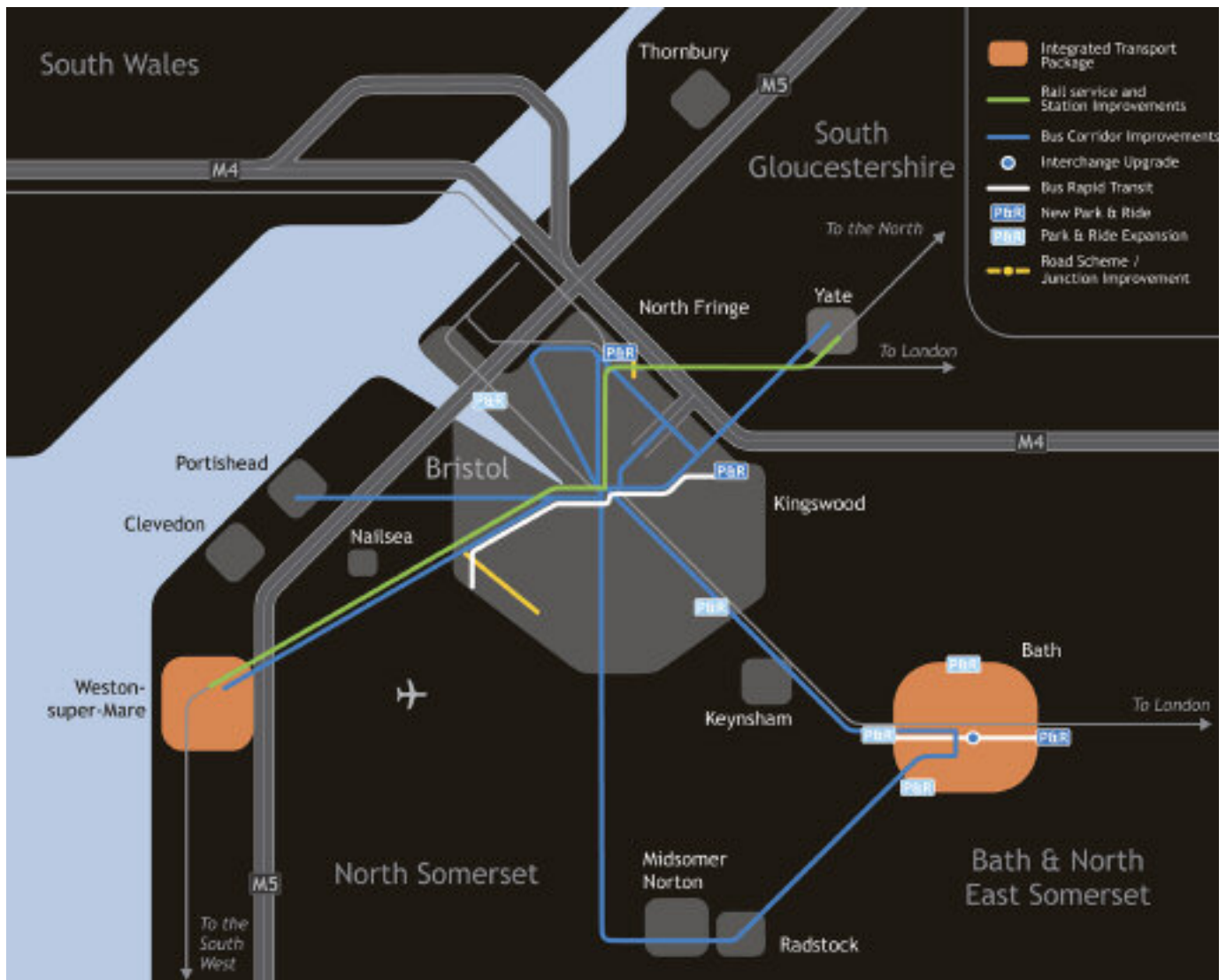
Greater Bristol Bus Network (GBBN)

The GBBN major scheme comprises a significant investment in ten 'Bus Showcase' corridors across the sub-region to deliver substantial improvements in the quality and reliability of bus services. We will carry out a range of measures to improve the speed, comfort and perception of conventional bus travel.

The scheme is a combination of bus priority measures, improved frequencies and better, accessible bus stops with 'Real Time' passenger information displays, complemented by comprehensive bus fleet renewal by the operator. The total cost of the scheme is £69.8 million, made up of £42.3 million from the DfT, £20 million from First and the rest from the councils and developers.



Major Scheme Summary Plan



Final funding approval from the DfT is expected imminently with implementation to commence following comprehensive public consultation.

Bath Package

The 'Bath Package' aims to create a high quality transport system that provides an attractive alternative to the private car, reduces congestion and improves the quality of life in this World Heritage city, and supports the Bath Western Riverside regeneration project and other future developments. The scheme comprises:

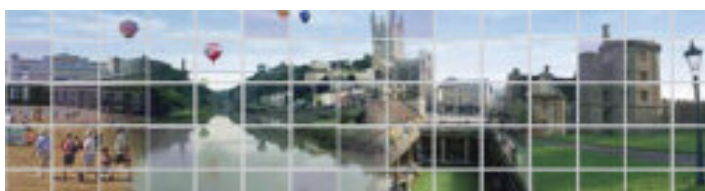
- showcase bus routes;
- bus-based Rapid Transit between Newbridge park and ride site to the west of the city and a new park and ride site to the east;

- further expansion in the size of existing park and ride sites; and
- city centre traffic management and pedestrian improvements.

In October 2007 the scheme received 'Programme Entry' status (approval in principle) from the DfT and it is anticipated that implementation will commence in 2009.

Weston Package

The 'Weston Package' is designed to support sustainable development in Weston-super-Mare. The emerging Package includes improvements at Worle station (new car and cycle parking, bus stops and improved passenger facilities); new public transport links between regeneration areas and the



town centre (via a new bridge over the railway); a park and ride; and improvements to M5 Junction 21. Public consultation is planned for spring 2008 and it is intended to submit a bid for funding to the DfT in autumn 2008.

South Bristol Link Road

This scheme could consist of a link extending from the A370 near Long Ashton to the A4174 Hartcliffe roundabout. The project is being investigated by Bristol City and North Somerset Councils and will need to reduce congestion, improve access and facilitate regeneration.

Early cost estimates indicate a route cost of approximately £40 million. Public consultation is planned for Summer 2008 with submission of a funding bid to the DfT in Autumn 2009.

Special Feature - Bus Rapid Transit A Step Change in Public Transport Provision



Introduction

Bus travel in the sub-region will be greatly improved with completion of the GBBN scheme. We recognise that further upgrading of the public transport network will be necessary to sustain economic growth and prosperity. Upgrading is also needed to cater successfully for new, sustainable developments over the next 20 years whilst reducing growth in traffic congestion, improving air quality and enhancing quality of life.

The Greater Bristol Strategic Transport Study (GBSTS) assessed future transport trends across the sub-region and concluded that traffic

congestion would substantially worsen without a clear package of improvements in public transport. GBSTS foresaw radical action being needed to ensure that economic and regeneration benefits are not offset by worsening traffic congestion. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) was identified as ideally suited to deliver this upgrade.

The first line of the future BRT network is already being progressed in Bath as part of the Bath Package, awarded 'Programme Entry' status by the DfT in October this year.

What does BRT mean?

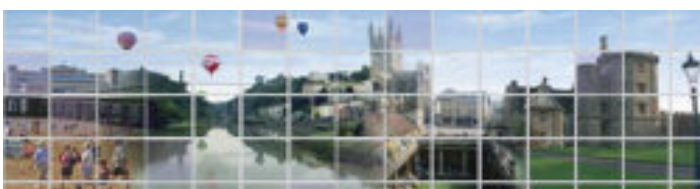
Essentially, the vision is to provide a rapid, reliable, frequent and comfortable network to attract substantial numbers of car users and reduce congestion. This will be delivered through a combination of routes segregated from general traffic and new, high profile vehicles and interchanges. The vehicles will be bus-based, and potentially 'guided'. The vehicles and system will have the feel of a tram but with the flexibility of a bus and with lower cost infrastructure.

Conventional bus services will also be able to join the network from further afield to maximise benefits for the wider area.

BRT will be carefully designed to integrate into sensitive areas and historic streetscapes. In addition, the system will offer potential opportunities for improving the public realm by facilitating enhancements to pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.

Where do the routes go?

GBSTS identified potential BRT corridors and these form part of the post-2011 proposals in the JLTP. Transport consultants Steer Davies Gleave have undertaken a full assessment of all potential routes within these corridors, and short-listed routes on the basis of patronage, cost, deliverability, and links with new development. On this basis four routes have been identified as good performers, linking the city centre with Long Ashton park and ride site; Emersons Green; Parkway station via the University of the West of England; and Hengrove. Of these, the Emersons Green to Ashton Gate line has been



assessed as performing the best in terms of deliverability, amount of segregated route and links to new development.

The network will also facilitate future extensions to Whitchurch and Bristol International Airport.

What are the benefits for the sub-region?

In short, less traffic congestion, better air quality and lower dependence on car ownership and use. The system will form an essential part of the overall transport strategy for the sub-region and assist in sustaining current economic growth and regeneration. Put another way, without BRT traffic conditions are predicted to get substantially worse, with significant implications for the status and future growth and prosperity of the sub-region.

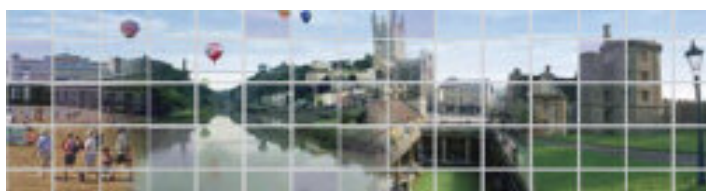
What Happens Next?

It is intended to submit a funding bid to the DfT in September 2008 for the Emersons Green to Ashton Vale BRT route. The four councils recently hosted a visit from the DfT to introduce them to the scheme and commence dialogue prior to submission of the bid. We are currently working on detailed designs, costs, patronage estimates and environmental appraisals. An important aspect will be identifying the additional benefits that could be achieved for cyclists, pedestrians and existing bus passengers.



When will the system open?

Construction of the Emersons Green to Ashton Vale route is planned to commence in 2011 with a 2014 opening date. A total of £71 million has been identified in the South West's Regional Funding Allocation to commence delivery of the network.



TRANSPORT INNOVATION FUND

The responses to our JLTP consultation showed broad support for exploring a potential bid to the Government's Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) as a means of accessing substantial funding for tackling congestion and improving the transport network.

Our work on a potential TIF bid has illustrated the need to set proposals in the context of the sub-region's 20 year transport vision. In October we produced 'Our Future Transport' which looks at the traffic problems facing the area, highlights the various measures being considered to tackle them and lays out initial proposals for a TIF funding application.

Subject to further consultation and the approval of all the councils involved, the West of England is aiming to submit its application in late spring 2008. It is expected that a decision from the Government on whether to provide funding would then come in the autumn.

Next year there will be an extensive consultation programme where the views and ideas of stakeholders and the public will play a full role in further developing and refining the sub-region's transport improvements.

To download a copy of 'Our Future Transport' and register for future TIF updates visit www.westofengland.org/transport or call our hotline on **0800 019 3235**.

CONTACT US

West of England Partnership Office

Wilder House, Wilder Street, Bristol BS2 8PH

Telephone: 0117 903 6868

Email: transport@westofengland.org

Website: www.westofengland.org

Further information:

Bristol City Council

www.bristol.gov.uk

Bath and North East Somerset Council

www.bathnes.gov.uk

North Somerset Council

www.n-somerset.gov.uk

South Gloucestershire Council

www.southglos.gov.uk