

Rapid Transit Consultation (TP/WH)
FREEPOST BS6529
BRISTOL
BS1 5BR

4th January 2010

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: North Fringe to Hengrove Package

GWE Business West Ltd is a leading membership and economic development organisation delivering an extensive range of services to businesses. As a powerful voice for business we play a major role in shaping and supporting economic growth and success. We represent over 2,000 businesses in the West of England and are the principle business organisation for the sub region. In addition to providing a wide range of business services, advice and support to its members, GWE Business West supports the economic and social prosperity of the West of England.

Improving transport and accessibility across the West of England has been a top priority for business for some time now and we are keen to see new schemes come forward to achieve this aim. In order to support both proposed and committed development across the West of England, such improvements are becoming increasingly imperative. The proposed North Fringe to Hengrove transportation package is one such scheme which starts to tackle the problems associated with Greater Bristol's growth agenda, especially when it is combined with other RFA2 major scheme priorities such as the South Bristol Link, and the Ashton Vale to Temple Meads Bus Rapid Transit scheme.

The current consultation on the package, together with the suggested transportation mode of Bus Rapid Transit is something we fully support as a practical, flexible and realistic option for the North Fringe to Hengrove via city centre route and as a scheme that will help to improve accessibility to both the city centre and South Bristol by public transport. Many in the business community have been waiting to see progress with rapid transit for a good few years now and together with the implementation of the Ashton Vale to Temple Meads route, the North Fringe to Hengrove package is crucial to restoring some much needed confidence within the business community.

As alluded to, it is important that this scheme is seen with the broader framework of all the proposed transport schemes and within the overall context of the Greater Bristol growth agenda. This scheme is integral to both the regeneration of south Bristol, and proposals for development at Emersons Green, whilst providing a sustainable transport corridor linking housing, leisure, educational and employment locations. Indeed the package is considered vital to the strategic vision of the University of the West of England, which as part of its development

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proposals for the Frenchay Campus has included a reserved route for the Bus Rapid Transit as part of its masterplan. Further to existing proposals, businesses would like to see the extension of the route to the Cribbs Causeway facility which as a 7-day-a-week destination would provide a more sustainable use of the BRT route.

We believe there is still some more work needed to persuade the business community (and others) of the benefits that Bus Rapid Transit can deliver in terms of reliability, flexibility and quality. Whilst this could be achieved through effective marketing and promotion which clearly illustrates what the new buses and routes could look like, it will also be important to control local transport operators in order to achieve reasonable ticketing prices on the route.

Whilst we recognise and support the park and ride element of the scheme for its role in providing maximum patronage on the BRT route, we question whether the suggested location on the M32 is the most desirable, given the likely attraction it provides for commuters to travel through the North Fringe. Rather we propose such a facility is more suited at the terminus of the Rapid Transit route in Aztec West, where the opportunity for a multi-modal interchange would see the location viewed as more than a destination in terms of employment.

To re-iterate, GWE Business West welcomes the scheme together with the consultation process currently underway. Whilst we hold some reservations over the detail of the Park and Ride component, we recognise that as an accelerated programme, too many alterations to the scheme could delay and ultimately jeopardise this process. We therefore simply urge for momentum to be maintained to ensure a set route can be determined and a scheme delivered on the ground.

We would look forward to taking part in an ongoing dialogue.

With very best wishes

Tessa Coombes



Director of Policy & Strategy
GWE Business West

Sent to:

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