

# Transport Provision in the South West – Response from GWE Business West

## Summary

- Response based on West of England area as the economic hub of the sub region
- Previous and planned growth needs to be reflected in new and improved transport infrastructure for the West of England
- Transport and accessibility is the biggest issue for business in the sub region and is getting worse
- Schemes consulted upon and in the Joint Local Transport Plan need to be implemented quickly
- Too much bureaucracy and takes too long to get schemes through to completion

## GWE Business West

1. 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.

## Meeting Demands

2. Our interest is particularly in the West of England as the economic hub of the SW region. Businesses in this area have long argued that existing transport infrastructure has not kept pace with the growth and development of the sub region. The area has taken substantial growth in the last 20 years and more growth is planned in the next 20 years, but few, if any, major improvements have been made to our transport system.
3. Ask any business in this area what the biggest issue is for them, and their reply will be transport and their perception is that it is getting worse not better. Not surprisingly therefore, GWE Business West (in its role as The West of England Initiative and Chamber for Bristol, Bath and South Gloucestershire) has always taken a very keen and active interest in lobbying, supporting and promoting proposals to improve the transport network in this area.

## Our Transport Priorities

4. South Bristol & Access to the Airport- we have been promoting the concept of improved road and public transport links into, and within, the South Bristol area and out to the airport for quite some time. We believe transforming this connectivity is vital now and in the future. A key economic success factor for the region as a whole is the growth of its regional airports, with Bristol at the top of the list. However, current access arrangements are wholly inadequate and need to be addressed as a priority. We would like to see the two schemes highlighted below delivered quickly, along with an extension of the BRT route out along the A38 to the Airport.
5. The local councils have recently consulted on two major schemes that have the potential to provide significant accessibility improvements in this area, these should be developed as an absolute priority, as should the schemes identified for both the Bath and Weston-super-Mare urban areas:
  - Bus Rapid Transit – from Ashton Vale to Temple Meads, via the City Centre
  - South Bristol Link Road – phases 1 and 2, to link the A370 to the Hartcliffe Way roundabout
  - Weston and Bath transport packages
6. Many in the business community have been waiting to see some progress with rapid transit and the Link Road for many years now and the implementation of this first route and Phases 1&2 of the Link are crucial to restore some much needed confidence within the business community that something will actually happen – the most common comments about the schemes from our members are “let’s just get on with it” and “when is it actually going to happen”. These schemes, and others, are in the approved Joint Local Transport Plan and the Regional Funding Allocation, so why does it take so long?

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7. Rail Improvements - we have consistently lobbied on two particular fronts in relation to rail provision in the area. The provision of high-speed linkages from Bristol to the South East and London is a top priority for business, as well as a good suburban rail service for commuters, which has been a priority for some time and will become even more important as new housing is provided in the sub region, as has the importance of promoting.
8. Motorway Links and Additional Junctions – business concerns relate specifically to the need to promote improved linkages between the M4 and M5 to the South of Bristol and in particular for an additional new motorway junction 18A on the M4 north of Emersons Green, as well as a clear recognition of the need for improvements to existing junction 21 on the M5 at Weston-super-Mare.

### Regional Transport Strategy

9. It is important that the above priorities are seen within the broader framework of all the proposed transport schemes and within the overall context of the growth agenda. The West of England area will inevitably take a huge chunk of the growth proposed for the SW Region, it is important therefore to recognise within the Regional Transport Strategy the immense additional pressure this will have on the transport system in the sub region and the demands for new and improved infrastructure that will come from this growth, if the mistakes of the past are not to be repeated.

### Current Arrangements - Effectiveness

10. It is the perception of business that schemes seem to take an inordinate amount of time, bureaucracy and repetition to deliver through the current funding process – the Greater Bristol Bus Network scheme took over a year just to get through the Major Scheme Bid (MSB) process. Other schemes seem to go through endless consultation processes, detailed technical appraisals and endless studies before they even enter the bidding process – the South Bristol Link Road is a prime example of this and we are still not at the MSB stage. The efficiency and effectiveness of these processes needs to be addressed as a priority if infrastructure is actually to be developed ahead of growth or even alongside it.

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