BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY

an independent force for a **better Bristol**

Response to WoE Joint Transport Study Issues – November 2015 to January 2016

The Society welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the WoE Joint Transport Study. We recognise that the Issues paper is an early stage in the plan process. We respond to the consultation questions below, but start with some general comments. We think the development of options could be structured better, and make a proposal for how to do this.

Overall approach

Building roads vs managing traffic volumes. From the beginning of time, transport strategy has sought to improve road by making them more direct, improving junctions and widening the links between junctions. The original purpose was to encourage traffic and trade. For the last hundred years the purpose of road improvement has been to 'solve' the problem of traffic congestion caused by approaching universal household car ownership. It is now an axiom of transport planning that a new roads attract more traffic, which soon nullifies the 'solution' of the road improvement. It is accepted that it is not possible to build out of traffic congestion. This was not always the case. In the 1960s Buchanan's Traffic in Towns represented received wisdom. The logical solution is politically unattractive. Approach the problem from the opposite direction. Traffic limitation is the obvious and only approach.

There is an undercurrent in the JTS which assumes that a significant challenge to the dominance of motor cars is unachievable. There seems to be resignation to building more roads. The Society argues that in urban areas it is just not feasible to accommodate the volumes of private motor cars in the road space available: there is no choice but to facilitate other travel options, limit private motor cars, and improve the environment for pedestrians. More emphasis should be given to possible behavioural changes through demand management, for instance to reduce the number of vehicles coming into Bristol city centre, so as to tackle air quality and make the place more pedestrian-friendly. Behavioural change is possible: for instance, there has been a 25% increase in bus usage in the last 18 months in Bristol.

Large engineering projects vs smaller proposals and behavioural changes. The JTS concentrates on large capital projects at the expense of smaller proposals that would cumulatively deliver a sounder cost/benefit to more people at more locations, recognising the dispersed nature of travel journeys.

The Society supports:

- traffic management of traffic coming into Bristol, eg further park and ride locations on the edge of Bristol
- traffic management of traffic coming into and through Bristol city centres.
- a concerted effort to improve bus services, to replan routes and increase frequency, and make them more convenient through measures such as contactless payment cards
- maximising the use of existing rail infrastructure, eg re-opening stations on existing lines
- improvements to walking and cycling *networks*, not just on single routes and 'superhighways'.
- schemes to make walking, cycling and public transport easier, safer and more attractive

The Society is not opposed in principle to new heavy or light rail schemes, but considers it unlikely that any schemes will prove sufficiently cost-effective. In the WoE travel to work area the main transport corridors already have rail connections through Bristol. Bath to Weston, Bath to Portishead (soonish) and Weston to Yate. We cannot think of any other transport corridors that would attract sufficient patronage to justify the capital and operating cost of a new scheme for example, reopening the Bristol to Radstock line. To reopen the old east Bristol Midland line would conflict with cycling policy. Secondly, improvements to battery technology will introduce battery powered buses within the medium term. The character of the WoE travel to work area is that of a number of dispersed suburban centres. The relatively low population density can only support bus transport. Furthermore, bus transport can serve more destinations in the dispersed pattern of suburban centres.

Transport mode hierarchy. The JTS seems to make no mention of the transport hierarchy which is an essential part of transport policy, enshrined in JLTP. For the highway schemes proposed, eg "strategic corridors", "better connectivity", the benefit is unclear between the transport modes - active travel, public transport, private transport. If the JTS were to pay heed to the transport hierarchy, it might allocate budget taking that into account, and it would influence the choice of and design of schemes.

The schemes proposed by JTS give good weight to public transport, but not enough to cycling and walking (where walking includes walking to and from public transport). The JTS should more clearly recognise the health impacts of different modes of travel, and include this in the cost-benefit analysis. Walking and cycling should retain their position at the top of the transport hierarchy when developing schemes.

Walking is always included as an add-on in other schemes, not as a scheme in its own right. We would like to see the importance of walking recognized – it is part of almost everyone's journey already and an increase will benefit the health both of those who walk and of the city. A relatively inexpensive programme of capital expenditure, combined with better maintenance and traffic management, could have a major impact. A package of measures to support walking as a sustainable transport option could include improved crossing-points, reduced through-traffic, removing polluting vehicles, creating pocket parks, wider pavements**,** better signage, incorporating places to rest e.g. benches, good lighting and sight lines, and traffic calming.

The West of England local planning authorities should adopt policies for how urban road space should be shared between the transport modes – where possible, giving more space to walkers and cyclists and less to private motor traffic.

The structure of the consultation.

Whilst we have answered the consultation questions, we have concerns about the structure of the consultation material and the associated consultation questions, and therefore the value of the consultation response:

- **the JTS jumps straight from principles to 13 possible 'scheme concept' packages**. It does not offer a reasoned analysis of the most cost-effective way to solve the transport problems it identifies. Instead it lists a number of schemes, totally uncosted in terms of inputs or benefits. It is accepted that eventually schemes will have to be packaged, but there should be intermediate stages in developing the packages. Having identified key issues of dispersed and complex trip patterns, car dependency and congestion, and network resilience, there should be an analysis of alternative ways of addressing these issues. The JTS is centred too much on schemes, not enough on strategies, based on spatial analysis. The list of funding packages should emerge from a strategy to create an integrated transport network. It is too early in the process to be clear on scheme options.
- **the JTS makes no mention of the relative size, impact, value for money, deliverability of schemes**, yet asks the public to choose between them.

A proposed better approach

Taking the above points into account, we suggest that a better and more logical way of addressing the stated issues would be as summarised in the following table.

The table incorporates the following principles:
- a bias towards sustainable transport options, in line with JLTP agreed hierarchy, and away from measures that encourage more private motor traffic. (This is very much in line with the objectives of Bristol's Good Transport Plan, which is endorsed by most of the transport-related groups in Bristol).
- defining options where the benefit is clear between the transport modes
- defining strategic approaches before jumping to engineering solutions. For instance, improve bus connectivity before assuming that the answer is a Metrobus scheme which may not be possible without compromising green infrastructure or incurring unacceptable engineering costs.
- giving more weight to behavioural change, less to engineering projects.

JTS issues	Cost-effective approaches	Less cost-effective approaches
1) Limited travel options	• a programme to improve journey choices: information and work with employers, schools and communities to make small changes in local areas to prompt behavioural change. • make public transport easier to use, eg easier walking and cycling routes to public transport, park and ride sites, public	

JTS issues	Cost-effective approaches	Less cost-effective approaches
	transport interchanges, better ticketing and information. • make cycling feel safer and easier, eg segregated routes where other traffic volumes are high • make walking easier: provide seating, shelter, signs and maps • shared mobility such as public cycle hire, car sharing and car clubs. • wider use of broadband and home working	
2) Congestion, reliability, resilience, connectivity	• reduce traffic volumes coming into and through city centres and other congestion hotspots by travel demand management • bus priority measures to reduce the impact of heavy traffic congestion on reliability of bus services • connectivity - new links to improve the network for buses, whether on existing routes or new 'rapid' (Metrobus) routes • connectivity - new links to improve the network for cyclists, both main highway routes and quieter routes • connectivity - new links, crossings and interchanges to improve the network for pedestrians. Assess the impact of all transport schemes on pedestrians and seek maximum benefits. • connectivity - new links and stations to improve the rail network (Metrowest)	• pinch points and bottlenecks – road improvements to ease motor traffic • connectivity - new links to improve the network for motor traffic • strategic corridor packages - improve main highway corridors for motor vehicles
3) Demand for housing and employment growth; infrastructure capacity	[the approaches are the same as in 1) and 2), at specific locations for growth] • In larger housing developments, design in a pedestrian-permeable network and a cycling network from the start.	
4) Environmental challenges	• air quality – in city centres, reduce volumes of motor traffic, and increase the use of low emission vehicles, eg replace diesel buses • freight - reduce the number of heavy vehicles on the roads by freight consolidation centres • quality of pedestrian environment – reduce volumes of motor traffic in city and town centres, improve the urban walking environment to make it more pleasant	
5) Social challenges	• access to jobs – apply measures as in 1) and 2) on key routes; attract employment to where people live • road safety – 20mph zones in urban areas	
6) Governance	• working better together - closer integration between the local authorities, de-trunking of highway routes to allow for local control, and bus franchising which could contribute towards improving services and regulatory regimes.	

Consultation questions

What are the key transport issues facing our area?

Q: **How strongly do you agree or disagree with the issues we have identified so far?**

Limited travel options	Strongly agree
Congestion, reliability, resilience, connectivity	Strongly agree
Environmental Challenges	Strongly agree
Social Challenges	Tend to agree
Demand for housing and employment growth; infrastructure capacity	Strongly agree

Q: How would you rank these issues in order of importance?

1) Limited travel options
2) Congestion, reliability, resilience, connectivity
3) Demand for housing and employment growth; infrastructure capacity
4) Environmental Challenges
5) Social Challenges

Q: **Are there are any other transport issues that you feel should be considered?**

No. But environmental challenges should include the quality of public realm and the dominance of road space by motor traffic.

Where are we trying to get to? Our objectives

Q: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the objectives we have identified so far?

Support Economic Growth	Strongly agree
Reduce Carbon Emissions	Strongly agree
Promote Accessibility	Strongly agree
Contribute to better safety, health & security	Neither agree or disagree
Improve quality of life and a healthy natural environment	Strongly agree

Q: How would you rank these objectives in order of importance?

1) Promote Accessibility
2) Improve quality of life and a healthy natural environment
3) Reduce Carbon Emissions
4) Support Economic Growth
5) Contribute to better safety, health & security

Q: Do you think there are any other objectives you feel should be considered?

No. But "Promote accessibility" should include the objective "Create places where people want to live and work", which is an objective of the Strategic Economic Plan. Where that objective can be achieved, and home and workplace are close, it is likely to require the least investment in transport, or none at all.

Continued ….

How can we get there?

Q: Thinking about how these concepts relate to the issues and draft objectives, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the ideas outlined above?

Whilst we have answered the consultation questions, we have concerns that the JTS jumps straight from principles to 13 possible 'scheme concept' packages; that the benefit is unclear between the transport modes - active travel, public transport, private transport; that no mention is made of the relative size, impact, value for money, deliverability of schemes.

		Comment
#1. Strengthen and enhance public transport corridors	Strongly agree	Makes use of existing infrastructure to make public transport easier to use, and hence influences behaviour. Good value for money. It should also include pedestrian and cyclist access to public transport.
#2. Extended MetroBus network	Tend to agree	Extending rapid bus routes make good sense in principle, but only if the costs can be controlled and routes can be found that do not damage essential green infrastructure. Otherwise, it is better to improve bus services on existing routes.
#3. Extend MetroWest	Tend to agree	A good idea but the value for money may not be as much as other options. The Metrowest developments already agreed are the easiest wins.
#4. MetroWest ++	Neither agree or disagree	A good idea but the value for money may not be as much as other options
#5. Walking and cycling superhighways	Strongly agree	Good value for money. But this should be networks, not superhighways. And walking should not be an add-on. And the networks should be safe, convenient and attractive to use
#6. Better connectivity	Neither agree or disagree	This is too vague to assess properly. The benefit is unclear between the transport modes - active travel, public transport, private transport. It seems mostly aimed at making it easier to travel by private transport. Building new roads is not the answer.
#7. Pinch points and bottlenecks	Neither agree or disagree	This seems mostly aimed at making it easier to travel by private transport.
#8. Strategic corridor packages	Strongly agree	The benefit is unclear between the transport modes - active travel, public transport, private transport. The GBBN improvements on Whiteladies Road show that this approach can work well for buses and for pedestrians.
#9. Working better together	Strongly agree	Devolving powers to WoE seems a good thing.
#10. Local Sustainable Transport Fund	Strongly agree	Advice on travel choices helps behavioural change – a good thing.
#11. Regional connectivity	Neither agree or disagree	OK, but should it be in scope ? It seems a separate subject. The benefit is unclear between transport modes, as both rail and road are included
#12. Freight	Strongly agree	Important for tacking city centre air quality
#13. Travel demand management	Strongly agree	This is needed to drive behavioural change. It needs greater emphasis in the JTS.

Q: Which of these concepts do you think would make the most difference to improving local transport? Select up to 5 options.

#1. Strengthen and enhance public transport corridors
#2. Extended MetroBus network (on the basis that this includes enhancing existing bus routes too)
#5. Walking and cycling superhighways
#10. Local Sustainable Transport Fund
#13. Travel demand management

Our top 5 deliberately include the three measures which influence behaviour - #1 Strengthen and enhance public transport corridors, #10 Local Sustainable Transport Fund, #13 Travel demand management.

Q: Are there any specific schemes you would like to see included within the concepts?

- Car share and community transport schemes for journeys that are not common enough to justify frequent public transport provision
- Increasing the use of low emission vehicles

It is noted that the Bristol Core Strategy identifies transport schemes as follows:
rapid transit from Kingswood, Whitchurch, showcase bus corridor to Hartcliffe, Park & Ride on M32 (but not on the A4174 Cribbs Causeway corridor), Callington Road Link, Demand Management