

Comments by the Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance on the Bus Rapid Transit public consultation

No information about the bus nor whether the system is guided or not

We were disappointed that the consultation leaflet gave no information on the greener bus alternatives to a conventional diesel. As consultants have been working on the project for two years, we expected information on current and future vehicle choices to be given in some detail. Without the facts about the technology, claims made that the vehicle will be reliable, comfortable and more 'environmentally friendly' in terms of noise, CO2 and air pollution simply cannot be assessed by the public. One of the reasons given for rejecting the ultra light tram alternative was that no vehicle was currently available (even though one could be built within a year), the timescale was short and a choice of vehicle had to be made. We now find that research is still continuing on the choice of bus.

The map of city centre options

The map is confusing with no clear choice of a route nor indication if the route will be circular or one way. A Redcliffe route has been recently been added though we were informed that a tram running along that route could not fulfill the requirements of the RT system.

How the bus is to be given priority in the city centre

Stating that the bus will be given priority at traffic lights does not adequately explain how the 'traffic free' nature of the route can be achieved while running through the city centre. This gives the impression that this crunch issue of getting a vehicle of this size around this area has not yet been addressed. We believe that 'traffic free routes on existing roads' for the RT network cannot be achieved without the use of bus lanes which will then have to be shared with other buses affecting reliability.

Feeder services

We believe that in order for feeder buses to mix with BRT buses on this route, a transformation of the current First North Somerset services is required with a complete suite of new buses replacing the current double deckers (with longer buses to enable them to run under the Cumberland Road bridge while maintaining current capacity) and an off board ticketing system.

Facts/explanations are preferable to jargon

What is a 'turn up and ride frequency'? What is the 'quality feel of tram'? What are 'emerging new ticketing and payment technologies'?

Cost of the scheme

We believe that the estimate of £ 20 million given by the consultants in their report on the Partnership's website is too low to be realistic. The estimate was drawn up without a site inspection or an engineering review. The estimate of £27 million for the ultra light tram, provided by the rail contractors, was itemised but until the route is precisely determined it is not possible to make realistic estimates for either bus or tram for all the additional non-track works.

In the Evening Post recently the Partnership stated that £6-7 million of the £20 million total is for bridges. Bridge work includes a new Prince St bridge, a new pedestrian/cycle bridge alongside the Ashton Ave (Create) bridge, works to the bridge itself and bridge/crossing of the Portishead rail line. This means that all of the rest of the work has to be completed for 13 million. This includes removing the rail track, laying 3km of concrete sections, relaying the rail track for the steam railway, a cycle path/walkway alongside the segregated section of the route where none exists, the reorganization of a stretch of Cumberland Rd to create a lane for the Bus, the building of a ramp down to Cumberland Road bridge, a new system of traffic light priority and any new road layout for the centre. We believe that a whole range of engineering problems were not addressed at the time that the estimate was given so it is essential for the full cost to be published as soon as possible. An ultra light tram would be able to use the existing rail with minimal cost of rehabilitation and less additional bridge work would be required.

Ashton Section – Create Centre

We are surprised that the Create Centre does not merit a BRT stop. It is the major centre of Council employment along this section with a large number of parked cars and is the workplace of the Council's Sustainable City team. A stop would also enable people to walk across the harbour to Hotwells and Cliftonwood and could also assist the re- use of the currently empty neighbouring bonded warehouse.

Our view

Members of the Alliance have read the consultation leaflet and attended the two public meetings .Our general view is that the consultation is inadequate because insufficient information has been given to the public to enable them to decide whether the Bus Rapid

Transit will live up the claims in the leaflet that it will be ' a real alternative for car users' or 'fast, reliable, frequent and comfortable' and its impact on the immediate environment of the Harbour, the Cut and the city centre has not been assessed nor costed.

We would like the West of England Partnership to hold a public meeting next year after the bid has been made to Government to explain the full extent of the BRT works, the cost of the bid and the further research being undertaken on the vehicle.

We will be asking for a meeting with West of England Partnership to discuss the consideration of Ultra light rail as an option alongside a bus based Rapid Transit option in the South Bristol Link consultations.