

Western Gateway

Sub-national Transport Body



Consultation Responses

Making the Right Choices: Issues and Opportunities Paper

27/06/2023

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1. Summary

Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body (WGSTB) has received 35 responses for the Issues and Opportunities paper for the Strategic Transport Plan: Making the Right Choices. Deadline for responses was Friday 19th of May 2023. Figure 1 shows the respondents categorisation.

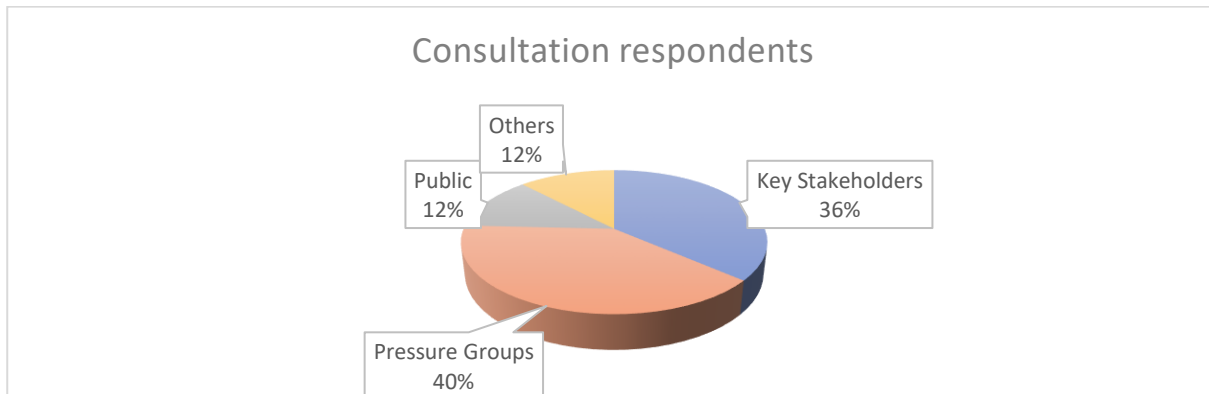


Figure 1- Respondents Categorisation

It is important to acknowledge the small sample size of 35 respondents and it was targeted to Key Stakeholders. While these responses provide some insights and a steer in developing the draft Strategic Transport Plan and other issues that need to be addressed, they may not be representative of the entire population and do not offer a balance of the wide range of viewpoints. Treating the responses as an indicator rather than a definitive representation is a cautious approach, especially given the nature of the consultation where broader perspectives and diverse data sources are beneficial for a more comprehensive understanding.

However, from this consultation it can be summarised as follows:-

- STB encouraged to adopt a different and collaborative approach for seeking solutions to achieve the desirable integrated outcomes for the region.
- Majority agree that Achieving Net Zero to be the Top priority and especially decarbonisation of transport.
- Support for the opportunities mentioned with Rail being ranked highest in terms of priority, followed by Active Travel, Demand Management and Bus and Coach.
- For the Issues in our region section, connectivity should focus on rail rather than road. Corridors to be viewed as transport corridors rather than mono-modal corridors
- Recurring view that the Issues and Opportunities Paper favours road building and BAU while lacking practical commitment to public transport and rail improvements.
- A view states that roads will need to play a key role in supporting economic growth and levelling up. It is not clear how achieving Net Zero by minimising road use will be balanced against the need for economic growth. This difficult challenge will need to be addressed in the Strategic Plan. It has been suggested that better integration with Active Travel, Public Transport and Technology will be key to success and should be the focus.

This report will outline the feedback received by section and provide comments, criticisms and suggestions from the respondents. Some of the responses contained some high-level recommendations and these can be found in item 9 of the report. Item 10 presents the next steps from WGSTB's perspective.

2. 'Big Issues'

70% of the responses to the Issues and Opportunities Paper have agreed with the issues stated. The other 30% have not clearly stated their position. The respondents have also highlighted key issues that need to be mentioned and further suggestions for the existing issues.

An inconsistency highlighted by several respondents- key stakeholder and campaign groups is that there is a focus on decarbonisation of transport but still advocating and planning for roads improvements for the purpose of capacity and connectivity improvements e.g., North- South connectivity.

It has been recommended to base the discussion on maps and data, so the reader has an evidence base e.g., data to show that traffic volumes apart from on the M5/M4 are highest on the A350 and A36.

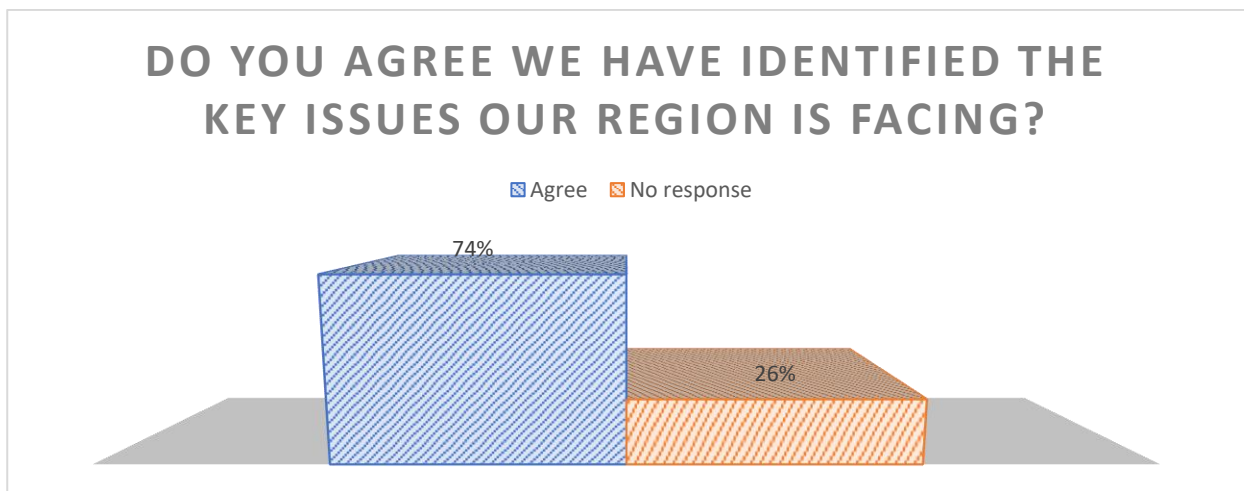


Figure 2- Agreement on identification of Key region Issues

2.1. Achieving net zero

77% of the responses that have ranked the priorities believe that Achieving Net zero should be the top priority and the wording needs to be more strategic where the Plan should be concerned with delivery transport decarbonisation rather than a series of decarbonisation schemes. Key concerns surrounded the lack of mention to biodiversity and climate change issues and the lack of urgency in addressing the issue of decarbonisation. Some concerns were associated with Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body and its constituent Local Authority influence over SRNs and Airports.

While those who disagree, agree in principle and in theory but are sceptical of how the priorities will be carried forward. It is viewed as 'business as usual stuff that we have seen in local transport strategies for years with the same old tropes of addressing road congestion by increasing capacity while paying lip service to some vague concept of sustainability'.

All respondents agree on the role played of public transport and active travel in sustainable transport system, however it requires more investment and integration to meet the needs of the users.

2.1.1. Decarbonisation

Criticisms

- The reports approach of using targeted investments in the region by 2050 to decarbonise transport systems is seen as outdated

- The longer-term full electrification of road transport is a matter for the 2030s and beyond and needs to take place in a context of overall road traffic reduction and modal shift to public transport and active travel."
- There is heavy reliance on technology in transport decarbonisation rather than behavioural change
- Disagree with the strong implication that roads and road travel are inappropriate in a decarbonised travel system Modal shift is an important objective but impractical as a solution to decarbonisation and needs to be more nuanced in the strategy.
- WGSTB and constituent Local Authorities should not disclaim accountability and decline to accept responsibility for SRN and Airport emissions.
- Lack of urgency in achieving transport decarbonisation

Suggestions

- WGSTB to lead decarbonisation of transport initiatives in the region through target setting and strategic actions
- Focus should be more on overall road traffic reduction and modal shift to public transport and active travel
- Highlight the societal and health benefits of active travel and the use of public transport
- It is suggested that the Strategic Plan should reference National Highway's proactive approach to Active travel and providing more travel choices and delivery on its plans to achieve Net Zero (and the activity of other partner organisations) and highlight them as opportunities for collaboration with partners
- Safe remaining carbon budget
- Elimination of carbon to be the top priority through journey optimisation, minimising the need to travel and challenging government illusions about unconstrained growth would be more responsible climate mitigation aims
- Acknowledge and maximise the benefits and efficiency of public transport – in Business As Usual funding is always available for road infrastructure but always a constraint when it comes to improvements to rail infrastructure and services and public transport. We must recognise the need to reduce road transport subsidies and the associated externalities as they amount to 3 times the tax take. The STB needs to take a stronger stance in the issue
- Encourage more spending in public transport rather than new roads to align with LA climate emergency policies in relation to carbon emissions
- Bus and Coach should be listed as an opportunity in Achieving Net Zero section (figure 5)
- Rail investment should be a priority as it features across all regional issues.
- Instead of deeming road travel inappropriate for a decarbonised transport system, it has been suggested to:
 - o Consider the right mode for each journey
 - o Create an integrated transport system
 - o Decarbonisation of vehicles – as this is also seen later an opportunity in alternative fuels hence a more balanced approach is recommended.
- WGSTB and its constituent Local Authorities can control and impact SRN and Airport emissions through:
 - o Resisting growth in SRN by opposing capacity increase
 - o Through housing and employment decisions and lobbying for road improvements such as South Coast to M4
 - o Working within NH to limit SRN missions via
 - Provision of electric charging on the wider road network and will be a factor in ZEV use
 - Incentive provision to encourage modal shift to active travel and public transport for shorter journeys will also reduce SRN emissions

- Urgent action required before 2030 and 2035 to significantly reduce emissions which requires significant investment in sustainable transport measures to enable rapid and significant modal shift
 - o More focus on time frames and challenges involved in meeting 2030 decarbonisation targets needed
 - o The use of scenarios for traffic projections that are not compliant with net zero and the lack of predictions is not helpful and potentially misleading
 - o A shift away from predict and provide is not helped by the focus on congestion along certain corridors – instead traffic flows should be based on people which could then include public transport and look at capacity across the modes in a more holistic way
 - o Scarce public spending on new roads which drive emissions in the wrong direction and undermine public transport viability needs to be acknowledged – road building needs to be restricted to not increasing capacity and carbon emissions or undermining modal shift – these issues are missing from the document
- Mention could be made to the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan¹ and the subsequent Environmental Improvement Plan 2023² as a start point. There is a need for a much greater sense of urgency and ambition in achieving these goals given the ecological catastrophe we now face.

2.1.2. Air Quality

Criticism

- Mitigating the effects of climate change on the population has not received sufficient emphasis as an issue, e.g. No mention of the effect of reliability of the transport infrastructure due to increasingly extreme weather patterns, including flooding and drought. Health will also benefit from more active travel.
- Over reliance on a transition to EVs though they may decrease NO₂ and CO₂ emissions but still contributes to air pollution from brakes and tyre wear and will not resolve the issue of congested roads
- Focus on active travel infrastructure is lacking in the document
- No mention on what approach may replace the traditional 'predict and provide' approach e.g., decide and provide, vision and validate or places and people

Suggestions

- Highlight the health impacts beyond Air Quality e.g. electric vehicles may cut tail pipe emissions but will have little effect on particulates from vehicles brakes and tyre wear
- A clear focus on provision of better public transport- particularly in rural areas which also lack in active travel infrastructure

2.1.3. Rural Journeys

Comments

- Limitations of active travel in rural areas such as the prevalence of HGVs on narrow roads prevents the use of bicycles for short rural journeys because of safety and the lack of active travel infrastructure

Suggestions

- Rail in conjunction with connecting bus links can play a major part in reducing rural car use

2.1.4. Car use

Criticism

- Incoherence within the strategy- Issue 1 recognises the problem of cars and freight emissions, and to the extent that it identifies the need for modal shift away from this transport and draws attention to the fundamental illogic of predict-and-provide. Yet Issue 2 on Road Congestion and North-South Connectivity is in complete contradiction with this – it is exactly about predict-and-provide the capacity to increase car and road freight traffic and consequently increase carbon emission.
- Car use reigns supreme and this "consultation" needs to be focused on getting car use down, not accommodating more
- There is a very significant difference between 'car use' and 'car mileage'. The key difference is occupancy. High and increasing 'car mileage' is the 'issue' and increasing car occupancy (better car use) is an essential part of the solution. However, occupancy is not mentioned in the document. - The document is not clear whether 'mileage by cars' or 'mileage in cars' is 'projected' to increase by 12-15% by 2051.

Comments

- Although there is a focus on the M4/M5 and Westbury, the population, lack of public transport options and high car ownership levels in SE Dorset lead to many journeys being made by car
- Car use is forecast to increase during the peaks, does this take account of more working from home which I would suggest is now a permanent transition?

Suggestions

- Need to be careful not to equate number of car trips with increasing congestion and demand for increased capacity. How certain are these projections given the rapid change in travel to work patterns post covid? What assumption has been made on the number of rail and bus trips over the same period to come up with the projected increase in car use? Is it based on additional housing and employment development and / or growth in trips from existing households?

2.1.5. Freight emissions

Criticism

- Incoherence within the strategy- Issue 1 recognises the problem of cars and freight emissions, and to the extent that it identifies the need for modal shift away from this transport and draws attention to the fundamental illogic of predict-and-provide. Yet Issue 2 on Road Congestion and North-South Connectivity is in complete contradiction with this – it is exactly about predict-and-provide the capacity to increase car and road freight traffic and consequently increase carbon emission.
- Document does not address why the transport system is warped towards inefficient and environmentally destructive freight movement

Suggestions

- Inefficient and environmentally destructive freight movement negatively impacting the regions transport system- should be highlighted more as a key issue
- Support the implementation of more rail freight terminals, but they need to be planned carefully to ensure no unintended consequences are caused such as congestion on adjacent road networks
- Plan should address the social and environmental impacts of freight leakage on rural communities
- Current HGV leakage on inadequate and non-designated freight routes must be address immediately and not dependent on long-term strategic planning
- Restrictions on transport interventions due to AONB protection should be applied equally

- Highlight the importance of strategic routes as a method of providing freight with safe routes where HGVs can drive at steady speeds, with less braking and tyre wear, and thus less emissions and air pollution.
- Underline that is not just or fair to argue that HGVs should use short-cuts through rural communities in order to reduce carbon emissions, where strategic routes are longer distances
- Suggest the inclusion of other environmental impacts from freight, such as noise and vibration, especially as lorry size and tonnage increases
- Prioritise the need for tackling obstacles to more rail freight and electrification

2.2. Economic Growth

Comments

- Economic growth is part of the problem
- Economic growth is unsustainable given the limited resources of the planet, there is a consensus that human activities have irreversible environmental effects

Criticism

- WGSTB takes no cognizance of the effects of peripherality
- No mention of the significant congestion and traffic growth issues on the M5 and the A46 in Gloucestershire or the growth limiting capacity constraints experienced by the Bristol to Birmingham rail line

Suggestions

- Propose renaming this to: Enabling a strong and sustainable economy (to acknowledge it is not just about growth)
- Develop strategies which rebalance economy, ecology and ethics
- Moving people and goods does not grow or improve productivity – this distinction needs to be recognised and that investment in public transport and active travel offers far greater returns and should form the basis for new investments.
- Intelligent planning around all development would assist with the economic elements
- To mention the M5 or any part of Gloucestershire

2.2.1. Housing

Comments

- Sustainable transport needs a much more central position in the strategy document, including the way that transport shapes a place and life styles.
- The spatial distribution of new homes and other development in the region needs to be documented and considered to reflect Government aims to reduce carbon emissions from transport
- The importance of transit-orientated development in combination with land value capture as a way of extending urban areas, strengthening local economies, and environmental benefits, needs inclusion.
- The document needs to acknowledge that building new homes in association with new road systems is counterproductive in terms of traffic and car-based life styles, creation of low-density sprawl, town and city centre vitality and the establishment of 'beautiful' places on account of the sheer quantity of parking and tarmac dominating the public realm.

Criticism

- In relation to housing growth along the Midlands to South-West corridor; close to the M5 makes it sounds like it fits the wrong notion of transport- sounds as if the Local Authorities have no say in the principal planning of housing location and provisions for its transport arrangements
- Housing planned in the region is dependent on the SRN (evidence in the paper about new housing planned in the M5 corridor. This will place the M5 under significant pressure North of Bristol and similarly on the A31 in Dorset's new developments are dependent on new road schemes being implemented. Further, the planned Tewkesbury Garden Town is dependent on a new SRN road which is being promoted by the Local Authority.
- It is welcome that the paper states: Using the planning system through higher density and mixed-use development and incorporating transport hubs we can establish sustainable travel from the outset in these proposed growth areas. However, while this sounds good, it is vague enough to mean different things to different people and to allow car-based development still to dominate The Location of developments is crucial – it is not just about incorporating travel hubs as it may do little

in developments with easy access to a transport hub- most people will drive, and any bus service will be severely limited

- Also, the Housing theme talks of areas close to the M5 and Bristol, yet every area has obligations to provide homes, and there are huge urban cowpat extensions onto places like Wimborne and Blandford, and intensification of Poole and Bournemouth centres, which will impact the network, with people working cross-boundary.

Suggestions

- STB should show leadership in encouraging a more sustainable pattern of growth to minimise travel demand and maximise travel options for new developments
- Consider sustainable travel alternatives for existing communities especially isolated rural communities
- New developments need to be in areas where there are existing good transport links or have an easy and affordable way to extend them without compromising the service quality and provision.
- New development sites need to have walking and cycling prioritised within them and have good active travel links into surrounding areas
Bus services need to be there before residents move into the development before they establish car-based travel patterns
- The need to keep pace with population growth in areas to receive a lot of new housing, with new metros reaching out to outer suburbs and satellite towns and integrating heavy rail/ light rail/ trams/ buses with cycle networks Netherlands-style.

2.2.2. Seasonal Traffic

Comments

- Western Gateway, in common with Peninsula Transport, encompasses transport corridors which are particularly prominent for seasonal travel. As a consequence, the level of service on such corridors at peak seasonal periods is crucially important for the tourist economy of the South West as a whole

Criticism

- Seasonal traffic – again this talks of the M5, M4 and A303 corridors in terms of the WG area acting as a conduit between London and Cornwall/Wales yet fails to mention the huge numbers of holidaymakers and especially day trippers heading to the Dorset beaches and locking the M3/A31/A338 in the process.
- What are we supposed to infer from ‘need to manage seasonal increases in road traffic’? There is no indication at all here that they consider demand should be managed or that non-road transport could address seasonal trips (only roads are mentioned). This is a very strong implication that predict-and-provide road capacity increase is the only mode of thinking within the STB.

Suggestions

- Reflect the congestion and other impacts in the coastal urban and rural areas resulting from tourism related trips as well- not just strategic corridors
- The priority must be to manage this seasonal congestion by encouraging more people to travel by train and coach to the South West as it does not make sense resource wise to increase road capacity just to deal with seasonal peaks

2.2.3. Road congestion

Comments

- National Highways supports the establishment of new railway stations to encourage modal shift away from car use. However, it should be noted that they need to be planned carefully, so as not to encourage more journeys on the SRN to access them.
- From Western Gateways Partnership: I endorse your commentary on p11 with respect to rail infrastructure and am keen to work with you in promoting the importance of Wester-leigh Junction on the London to Cardiff and Bristol to Birmingham lines. This is identified as priority infrastructure in the Rail Vision, as is the opportunity for electrification of the gaps between Chippenham and Bristol Parkway to Bristol Temple Meads. I am keen to press the importance of these infill opportunities with the likes of DfT and Network Rail as part of our own Phase 2 piece of work
- We would also support the report's suggestion of a new railway station at Corsham, which might make some contribution towards meeting the problematic lack of a park-and-ride service into the city of Bath from the east. This currently leads to crippling congestion and illegal pollution on the A4 link from Cleveland Bridge to the A46, whereas park-and-ride facilities exist to north, south and west of Bath, with correspondingly easier movement.

Criticism

- This section appears as if written by National Highways, i.e., not by transport planners but by people whose living and thinking is entirely dedicated to road building. All the usual tropes and mythologies are here – congestion relief, journey times, accidents, effects of increased traffic on communities.
- This section mentions how nice it would be to improve rail links, but presents all sorts of difficulties in doing so and we can guarantee that roads are always deliverable and that rail improvements almost never materialise, so long as we have no real transport planners in the region.
- Here is an illustration of the fundamental incoherence of the strategy – clearly written by different people. This issue appears to recognise the problem of cars and freight emissions, to the extent that it identifies the need for modal shift away from this transport and draws attention to the fundamental illogic of predict-and-provide. Yet Issue 2 on Road Congestion and North-South Connectivity is in complete contradiction with this – it is exactly about predict-and-provide the capacity to increase car and road freight traffic and consequently increase carbon emission.

Suggestions

- Road congestion is another topic where no mention is made that BCP is one of the top 5 congested areas in the UK
- Our B3092 experiences heavy freight and heavy car traffic day and night, which is partly displaced partly from the A350 between Warminster and the A303 which is the strategic route. The A350/303 junction is a blockage to the proper functioning of this route because traffic going west has to turn right across the A303. Making this junction safer would improve this strategic route for freight and for cars, reducing the burden on our B road.
- Page 11 left column last para “restricted” loading gauge better than “narrow” as height is a major issue.
- This section is a bit random – would be more helpful to discuss as part of each strategic corridor. Rail seems to have been bundled in with road congestion – needs its own category
 - o Capacity constraints on the rail network, that will require significant investment over the proposed plan period, should be discussed under a standalone heading, not under “road congestion”.

‘Many delays’ is quite vague. Given the changes in commuting patterns post pandemic how consistent across the day are the issues and how serious are they? Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is not a consistent pattern.

2.2.4. North South Connectivity

Comments

- Mention is made of the North south connectivity and a link to the M4 to Dorset Coast study, but following that link on the DC website, it hoped to input to the 2020 to 2025 RIS for investment or at least feasibility. Does this not need updating? What is the 2025-2050 vision?
- Poor North South connectivity is a regional issue for WGSTB, but the poor existing networks likely reflect the relatively limited demand and hence solutions should be appropriately specified
- Depressing to see road schemes along potential new road corridors notably A350 and A36/46 in the paper when they have already been considered and rejected or abandoned due to the cost or environmental damage – they were also in M4-DC study by the White Horse Alliance
- Concerns that the M4 to South Coast study will come up with the wrong corridor i.e. A350 – high costs should rule out this corridor – will be greeted with opposition in terms of environmental and landscape desecration and the health and well-being of people on the route

Criticism

- This is essentially a piece of political mischief, brought about by shire MPs and road-obsessed local authorities, especially Wiltshire Council. The Westbury Bypass Inquiry dismissed Wiltshire Council’s transport arguments in their entirety and especially dismissed the notion of a north-south strategic route (at the time indeed, WC seemed to argue both for and against strategic considerations for its scheme).
- Disappointing that the STB does not consider the enormous environmental constraints on any possibility of an enhanced North-South Road corridor.
- Inconsistency in the paper around roads and cause e.g., Focus in decarbonisation section on shifting away from cars and then stating the need to improve North – South Road connectivity
- There is mention of the need to improve north-south rail connectivity, but no direct reference to the Bristol to Birmingham strategic rail corridor and Network Rail’s long-term priorities for infrastructure enhancements to improve services and connectivity in terms of MetroWest

Suggestions

- To review and mention rail capacity alternatives not recommending road improvements in isolation in the National Highways study for the North-south connectivity led by Network rail strategic studies
- Suggest liaising with M4-DC study to ensure recommendations are compatible – WHA also have an interactive map showing all locations where roads had been proposed and defeated and improvements to rail infrastructure that are awaiting funding <https://www.a350-a36-alliance.com>
- WGSTB to insist that local authority myths regarding north-south connectivity to be replaced by data e.g. A350 and A36 corridor congestions and Poole as a major port.
 - o For example, the table below, compiled by Chris Tweedie from DfT data, shows that just over 4% of traffic is likely to go north up the A350 (as highlighted) and only 2.2% to Wiltshire.

Traffic from Dorset Coast to outward destinations by County/Region

Destination	Total Vehicles	% of total	% HGV	No. HGVs
South Dorset	83000	77.7	2	1660
Devon	2500	2.3	15	375
Somerset	4400	4.1	17	748
Bristol & BANES	750	0.7	18	135
Wiltshire	2300	2.2	6	138
S Glos	280	0.3	46	129
Gloucestershire	1000	0.9	18	180
Oxfordshire	1800	1.7	20	360
Hampshire	10600	9.9	12	1272
South Wales	190	0.2	16	30
Totals	106820	100.0	4.7	5027

2.2.5. Seaports and Airports

Comments

- Bristol Port is the only deep-sea Port in the region directly connected to the SRN with M5-J18 serving Avonmouth Dock and M5- J19 serving Royal Portbury- need the subnational road network to support the business

Criticism

Suggestions

- The document states that “increased connectivity is especially important considering the planned expansion of Bristol Airport”. The issue of connectivity was dealt with during the planning process, with upgrades agreed so that it is adequate. Although we agree that public transport connections to the Airport would benefit from improvement, particularly through the development of a mass transit link with Bristol City Centre, this sentence should be amended for accuracy.
- Page 12 to also mention rail access e.g., Hamworthy as it mentions public transport

2.2.6. Freight

Comments

- Priority should be given to improvements of rail and not road to ensure better connectivity of freight goods throughout the South West and not to roads.
- South West England, including Western Gateway, lags behind much of Britain in terms of its ability to support electrified rail travel and its provision of rail freight terminals. Given the need both to decarbonise personal travel and to transfer some freight from road to rail addressing these deficiencies must have a strong case for investment

Suggestions

- It should be explicitly stated that there are trade-offs between reducing car use and economic growth.
- Consider how HGVs and their increasing tonnage place an extra financial burden on Wiltshire Council to pay for road interventions and other infrastructure maintenance
- Consider Coastal shipping and add it to figure 5

2.3. Levelling Up

Levelling Up can be achieved through public transport and active travel, but this change must be fundamental and requires looking at transport provision in a completely different way. As more and more car-based development is built, and more and more retail, employment and services move out of town to places designed around strategic road access, so traffic increases everywhere across an area. City and town centres also suffer economically as their viability decreases. The local economy suffers from the 'doughnut effect' of fringe of town expansion around roads. Levelling up needs to be done with an awareness that this is not the best way to plan.

Comments

- 'Levelling up' must also refer to the need for levelling up to apply to the substantial numbers of those without access to a car across the STB region. This includes those too young, old or infirm to drive and those who do not own a car. This implies a fundamental change so that active travel and public transport options are far more readily available and become the first choice in transport terms. This will also involve sending out the right messages about the environmental costs of transport (further referred to under 3. Demand Management below)

Criticism

- The phrase 'Levelling up' has a canting reputation and association with old 'leaky bucket', 'drip-down' thinking

Suggestions

- Levelling up can be facilitated by greater investment in accessible public transport (enhancing bus and coach services) and encouraging and enabling active travel which is a relatively low-cost opportunity, and which has added societal benefits for individuals and communities.
- To achieve levelling up for all demographics the focus must be on active travel and public transport. For example, for children and young adults in education, for people who don't drive and need access to friends, family, services, jobs, etc.
- 'Levelling up the region' seems to consider levelling up on an area basis. While this is important, we would like to see reference also to the need to promote access for all across the region. This would include improving accessibility for those who do not have access to a car and would favour investment in active travel, public transport and shared mobility options.

2.3.1. Rural Connectivity

Comment

- Good summary of the issues
- This will require innovative thinking if the transport needs are to be solved- conventional solutions will not fully achieve the required change

Suggestion

- Summary of the issues could go deeper into externalities of a car dependent society – highlight the role of STBs in reducing this dependency which has made essential facilities increasingly inaccessible
- Roads, including capacity enhancement will not be part of the overall solution- needs to be consideration of the greater application of technology, including DRT and MaaS to provide more travel choice
- Avoiding situations where marginalised villages with little political voice are left to bear the burden of transport failures
- Recognise the harmful social environmental impacts of freight leakage on marginalised rural communities – identifying movement of freight onto strategic routes as a method of protecting and enabling small rural communities to provide safe and flourishing places to live.

2.3.2. Deprivation

Comments

- Anticipating changes from the impacts of climate change across the region and offering transport solutions is key to being a resilient region. Such changes include high temperatures melting tarmac, increased flooding, increased sea levels, increased erosion, urban heat island effects and the need to adapt to hotter summers and wetter winters.

Criticism

- Lack of addressing the inequalities, there is nothing on the impact of gender, age, including young people and older people, disabled people, transport poverty and road pricing

Suggestion

- Need more focus on people and place and people's wellbeing
- This issue is strongly linked to the need for better planning and for placing new development of all types in locations better served by public transport and active travel to ensure the maximum inclusion
- Consider how HGVs undermine the long-term sustainability of communities by deterring families with children from living near the B3092

3. Issues in our region – Corridors

Comments

- Recognise the importance of the four strategic corridors within the region but consider these are supporting issues that would facilitate the achievement of Net Zero, economic growth and levelling up.

Criticism

- This section seems more like a listing of existing transport corridors and not issues
- Not convinced by the demand for some of the key corridors and the suitability of looking at these in isolation for such an oddly shaped region.
- Setting out transport corridors does not really help with the analysis of the sustainable transport needs of the sub-region.

Suggestions

- Corridors to be discussed as transport corridors and not mono-modal corridors
- This document does not attempt to argue the relative significance of the different corridors- what analysis has been conducted? Has the STB carried out the desire lines (trip matrices)?
- A more strategic approach would be to address safety issues with small scale road interventions but leave capacity as it is and focus resources on moving people onto public transport and encouraging car-free tourism.
- Equally, given the Welsh Government's target for a 10% car miles reduction per capita by 2030, on 2019 levels, will potentially be compromised by increasing the capacity of road infrastructure in Western Gateway. Therefore, any future Western Gateway transport strategy needs to take this on board and focus on public transport investment.
- A fifth priority corridor needs to be added, for the South-West to North-East corridor, linking with the work of Midlands Connect, and the high priority that WGSTB has given to the M5 J9/A46 Improvement Scheme which will improve connectivity on this corridor.

- Investment in the 5 transport corridors will need to take close account of quality-of-life issues. For example, Noise has major implications for quality of life, health, economic prosperity and the natural environment.

3.1. Midlands to South Coast corridor

Comments

- Seems confected, looks as if it is there to meet the 'strategic' ambitions of Wiltshire Council. Not realistic to consider that there is a strategic transport desire line between Midlands and the small and declining South Coast ports within the STB area- only significant ports are Portsmouth and Southampton and both outside the WGSTB region.
- The M4 - A34 - M27 route to the South Coast is a highly effective route already in place and is better for traffic coming from to the Midlands to the South Coast than going through Dorset ever will be.
- Melksham has a by-pass (Semington) and a new one is proposed as part of the A350 corridor expansion. This will be a huge waste of money and cause more problems
- This will be repeated through the other parts of Wiltshire, Westbury and down into Dorset. Here the villages requiring by-passes will be manifold and most sit in AONBs (areas of outstanding natural beauty) so each proposal will face a public enquiry and will massively escalate the costs. The environmental damage this development will cause is unthinkable and should not be permitted.

Criticism

- Very dangerous plan environmentally as it will revive the previously disregarded extension/ upgrading of the A350 from the M4 to the South Coast. This route has previously been considered and rejected on the basis that it will be unviable due to the number of bypasses that will be needed to make it effective.

Suggestions

- Improving safety at the A350/303 junction for traffic turning west is needed to enable the proper functioning of this strategic route.

3.2. Midlands to South West Corridor

Suggestions

- Cannot be sensibly planned without reference to the South West and Peninsula Transport

3.3. South-East to South Wales corridor

Comments

- Wales has eschewed the old road-building orthodoxy in favour of true transport thinking. Nothing better illustrates this than the other Western Gateway, which seems to pay more than lip service to multi-modal transport.

3.4. South-East to South-West Corridor

Comments

- There is also a whole South Coast corridor (Kent to Cornwall), where the ends are connected via routes via London, but this loads that network, with journeys from SE Dorset being harrowing or very deviated. The lack of links within the WG area are covered to a degree.

Criticism

- On optimisation – Key Corridor 4 SE-SW talks of South Wilts and Dorset, but it actually needs to talk of South and East Dorset. To get to Exeter from BCP is 2 hours by car, its 5+ hours by Train, often having to go via Basingstoke/Reading. This is nuts. Even to get to Salisbury from BCP by public transport is a trial.

Suggestions

- Isochrones are useful in highlighting the disparities across the WG area.
- Cannot be sensibly planned without reference to the South West and Peninsula Transport

4. Other issues that need to be addressed

- The imbalance through not mentioning of the potential for improving East-West, North-South connectivity of the existing network through the development of hubs at places like Salisbury, Westbury, Castle Cary etc. leaves those schemes strategically vulnerable.
- More attention needs to be given to the overlap between transport and planning
- National Highways believes that roads will need to play a key role in supporting economic growth and levelling up. It is not clear how achieving Net Zero by minimising road use will be balanced against the need for economic growth. This difficult challenge will need to be addressed in the Strategic Plan. NH's view is that better integration with Active Travel, Public Transport and Technology will be key to success and should be the focus.
- The need for modern metro-style integrated transport needs to be brought into the discussion with regards to Bristol, Bath including West and North Wiltshire and Mendip, Bournemouth and Poole, Cheltenham and Gloucester.
- The paper needs to highlight the 'just transition' to decarbonised travel will be supported and providing affordable alternatives to the petrol car, be that the cost of electric vehicles or public transport
- It has been advised that more explicit mention should be made to the impact of transport on climate change in the region and more specifically the loss of biodiversity. Respondents would like to see mention of the need to develop the transport system in a way to protect and nurture the natural world. The urgency of the matter needs to be more prominent throughout the paper. It has been flagged that there is no mention to the demographic peculiarities of the region and -the aged population whose inclusion gives rise to a whole range of accessibility needs that must be highlighted in such a document.
- Challenges faced by dispersed rural areas and the poor provision of internet connectivity and public transport in these areas.
- There is no real mention of the impact of climate change on the resilience of the transport network which is fundamental to its future effective operation. Whilst it may not affect the SRN so much it certainly does rail and local roads. The recent problems with the embankments on the West of England line last summer, several landslips including Hook, flooding issues and trees brought down by storms are good examples.
- Include sedentary lifestyles and health as an issue as well as an opportunity. Accidents and casualties especially among vulnerable road users are not mentioned which imposes a cost to society and is a deterrent to mode shift.
- A disproportionate emphasis in the document on road corridors and unlocking pinch-points
- There are also relevant transport recommendations in the Government's response (January 2022) to the Landscapes Review: National Parks and AONBs, which should be incorporated in this review.

5. Priority Issues

Achieving net zero received the highest overall ranking in terms of priority issues followed by Enabling Economic Growth and then Levelling Up. A new issue was introduced- improving health and wellbeing.

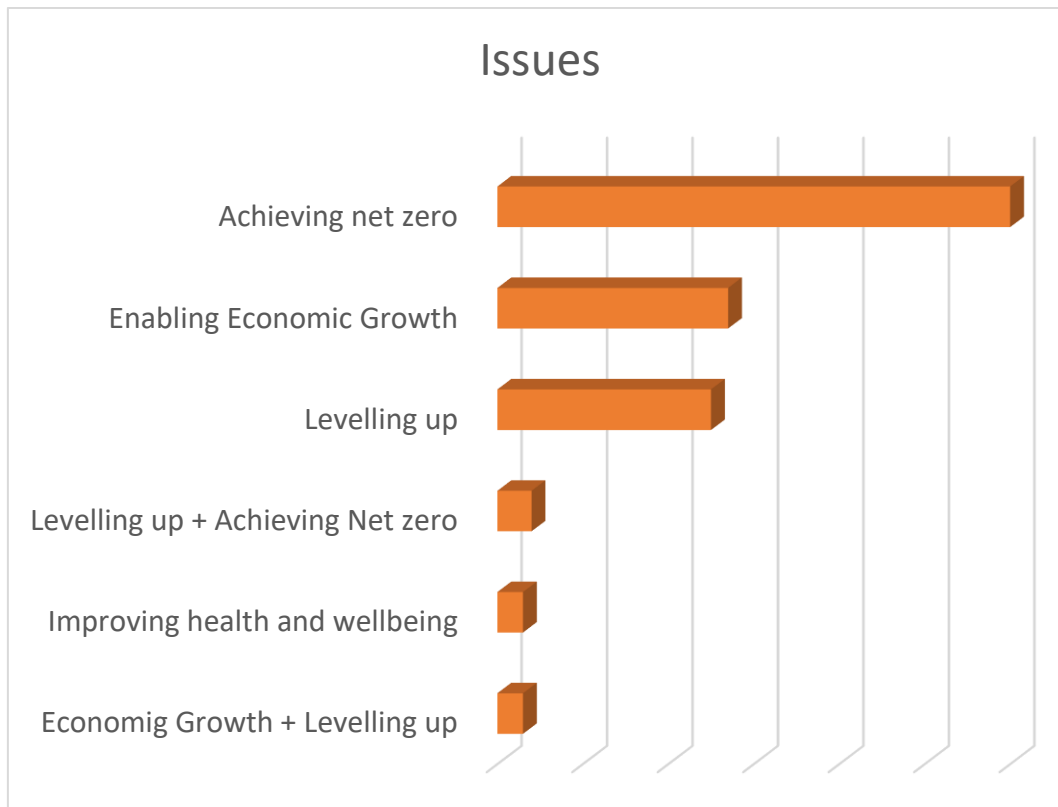


Figure 3- Ranking Issues

Comments

- All respondents agree that the priority is to move towards more sustainable transport systems. 87% believe that Achieving Net zero should be the top priority. The following reasons were listed:
 - A transport system that reduces impact on the natural world – reduction of reliance on cars and providing alternatives such as public transport and active travel
 - Decarbonisation needs to be the top priority as economic growth and levelling up are not attainable without reduction in transport emissions
 - The transport strategy should be about enabling fundamental change from the current damaging, unhealthy and socially destructive transport disposition
 - Achieving Net Zero is clearly a priority which the region and the Country is wholly signed up to, but faces significant difficulty in delivering and as such I would suggest that this is the top priority of the identified issues. Economic growth and levelling-up are critical priorities but should be considered wherever possible - noting the afore-mentioned need for a just transition - within the context of realising net zero.
 - Broadly carbon, health, air quality, congestion, sustainable economic growth. The latter two might be addressed to some extent with appropriate measures to tackle the first three.
 - Tackling the climate and ecological emergencies need the highest priorities, the clue being in the title: they are emergencies and this needs to include adaption as well. They should be followed by Levelling up and then a strong and sustainable economy.

- It is not possible for us to answer this question as we are not located in your region. However, our recent public consultation on our Strategic Investment Plan showed that the priorities for TfSE stakeholders (in no particular order) are:
 - o Decarbonisation & the environment; including achieving net zero and reducing the reliance on private cars
 - o Public transport; including calls for reduced fares, improved connectivity between modes and improvements to network and reliability
 - o Active travel; including calls to prioritise active travel over other modes and improvements to active travel infrastructure
 - o Connectivity; including improvements to orbital and east-west connectivity and between coastal communities
 - o Rural transport; including requests for improved connectivity within and between rural communities
- As part of a greener and more circular economy, levelling up and reduction in carbon emissions from transport need to be accomplished together. Decarbonising the transport system cannot however be done in isolation: it is important to consider how we will plan a future around other modes than driving. This in turn will reduce traffic and congestion

Criticisms

- There is a lack of recognition of issues and intersectionality - e.g., cost of living crisis, health inequalities and transport poverty. Lack of focus on the impacts on people, climate and environmental justice, flooding and other impacts. Priorities are not competing.

Suggestions

- Issues identified are important, but each needs better definition, and they are not mutually exclusive. The intersection between climate change adaptation-which is a part of net zero and levelling up-should be highlighted

6. Opportunities

6.1. Alternative fuels: Promoting alternative fuels

Suggestions

- Modal shift is an important objective, but the scale implied in the paper is unlikely to be achievable. A balanced and nuanced position is needed e.g. The switch to alternative fuels should be given greater prominence when the Strategic Plan is developed
- Consideration to be given to EV driver confidence around rural refuelling
- Hydrogen fuel which produces zero emissions and bio fuel (which is produced in Henstridge, Dorset and much less polluting than petrol & diesel usage) should be encouraged for high powered agricultural vehicles as an interim step towards net zero- especially in rural areas with a high percentage of agricultural traffic
- Encourage freight to move to newer cleaner vehicles to reduce emission
- The additional work on the joint Peninsula Transport and Western Gateway STB Alternative Fuels for Freight Strategy, identifies infrastructure requirements and issues relating to the lack of electricity grid enhancements required to support an electric vehicle charge point network, this is particularly an issue on the SRN. We also need to highlight the level of investment required to ensure the national grid enhancements can be delivered at pace
- The role that the Western Gateway STB plans to take to support the roll-out of EV and hydrogen refuelling should be made clear. We would recommend the STB plays a convenor role, aiming to ensure land is available, assisting with planning, and liaising with the UK Government and National

Grid. The roll-out of EV infrastructure is urgent. Bristol Airport will shortly begin the construction of a Grid-serve EV ‘filling station’ for public use

- There is no clear strategic position on hydrogen. Bristol Airport is undertaking research with Airbus on the potential for the Airport to become a ‘hydrogen transport hub’ for multiple transport modes, ahead of hydrogen-powered flight. Work is underway through the Hydrogen South West consortium to examine options around refuelling at Bristol Port. The creation of a supply chain cannot be removed from deciding where to place hydrogen filling stations. Again, we’d recommend the STB set out the role it plans to play in the use of hydrogen

6.2. Active travel: Encouraging and enabling active travel

Suggestions

- Suggest including real analysis of what would make active travel more attractive, and less intimidating
- The document seems to phrase active travel in terms of cycling, walking needs to be considered as it forms integral parts of almost every other travel mode
- Speed is important- 20s Plenty is an obvious requirement for all places where pedestrians and cyclists are expected to share road space with motor vehicles
- Need more discussion on opportunities of integration of active travel with the rail network and other forms of public transport
- Address the absurd assumption of motor vehicle priority use of space in towns: Pedestrians, then cyclists then public transport then motor vehicles
- Improving active travel should be a priority in rural and urban areas
- Cycle paths do not address the needs of cyclists to get around the general road network as they are reliant on occasional lip-service funding streams of central government and LAs.
- Recognise that active travel in rural communities is impossible when B-roads are used by freight and speed limits are not enforced- suppressed due to actual and perceived dangers caused by motor traffic

6.3 Bus and Coach: Enhancing bus and coach services

Suggestions

- Should be included as part of the decarbonisation opportunities in the document
- Little sign of support in the document for rural bus network
- The STB should use its influence with central government to encourage them to take action on a strategic level e.g.
 - Radical review of the Concessionary Fares Scheme
 - Softening of competition law in rural areas where there is no economic viability for more than one operator – cooperation of bus operators for the public good
 - A degree of ringfencing so that buses as a discretionary service will not always lose out to statutory services such as social care
- Decline in rural services should be halted and services should be restored and subsidised where possible, with connectivity with rail services enhanced

6.4. Demand management: Managing the demand for travel

Suggestions

- The statement that “We will need to ensure that people are not priced out of using transport as a result” should also make the point, as is made in the Government’s Transport Decarbonisation Plan, that costs of travel by private car have been decreasing while costs of public transport have been increasing: “Over the last twenty years, in real terms, the cost of motoring fell by 15 per cent. Over the same period the cost of rail fares went up by over 20 per cent and bus and coach fares by

over 40 per cent.... We must make buses and trains better value and more competitively priced.”

(See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-decarbonisation-plan>)

- 'Adoption of demand management schemes, such as the use of clean air zones, congestion charging regimes, workplace parking levies and car clubs to encourage alternative ways to travel. We will need to ensure that people are not priced out of using transport as a result.'
- This very much echoes what we say above, except that the last sentence betrays an unwillingness to take the notion seriously. What do the authors of this document mean by it? Do they mean 'try this as long as it doesn't work'? Who do they think will be the people priced out of travel by a policy of moving to public transport? What about the people already priced out of travel by the car-dominated transport disposition – how will they benefit from pussyfooting on this issue?
- Recommend engaging with freight companies and Mendip Quarry Producers, to plan freight journeys on strategic routes and require identification of onward journeys outside Somerset as part of planning applications for quarries
- There is nothing about increasing car occupancy as a way of reducing traffic on the roads. Yet this is prioritised in the Government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan (TDP). In its foreword, Grant Shapps, the Secretary of State for Transport at the time said: “We want to reduce urban road traffic overall. Improvements to public transport, walking and cycling, promoting ridesharing and higher car occupancy...”
- Parking charges (not just a workplace parking levies) should be mentioned as an additional potential intervention under demand management. (p.16)

6.5 Multi-modal: Enabling multi-modal journeys

Suggestions

- Facilitating/pursuing/endorsing "journey ticketing" across the broadest possible geography must be part of the commitments relating to modal shift.
- Mention is made of integrated transport, but not of Mobility as a service, nor the emergence of micromobility. The cycle strategy is mentioned, but the range of newer devices, and reduction in physical mass being moved is a climate gain. Many of the current and planned inter-community links are just not suitable for these devices.
- Changing the transport disposition is not primarily about infrastructure provision, but about attitudinal, behavioural and organisational change, committed to moving from regressive subsidy of the unsustainable to sustainability (a process which would probably involve progressive subsidy of alternatives, at least until a level of use is reached that can ensure sustainability).
- The emphasis on multi-modal should be less on integrated ticketing and more on multi-modal hubs. The major opportunity is to create a network of these right across the region.
- Not enough discussion of the opportunities of integration of active travel with the rail network and other forms of public transport, e.g., buses.
- We believe changing the use of freight to supply chain, and deeper consideration of distribution and micro-consolidation centres (e.g., Zedify), smaller e-vehicles that can distribute goods at a neighbourhood level is important.
- The lack of mass transit for the Bristol city region being mentioned in the multi-modal section is disappointing and we would request it is included. The city region's lack of mass transit is in sharp contrast to similar-sized cities in Western Europe – its development would have met the vast majority of the regional issues identified in the document. With a link to the Airport already identified as a critical part of a future network, this too should be specifically included in the strategy.

6.6. Rail improvements for passengers and freight

Suggestions

- Shift to rail freight on the suggested scale is not achievable, needs to be positioned realistically

- Importance of freight is underplayed in the paper. For example, given the growth associated with Avonmouth, there are opportunities for more consolidation and improvements to lorry parking in the Bristol area. These should feature more strongly in the Strategic Plan
- Whilst important it shouldn't just focus on the Heart of Wessex line. Arguably the West of England line is equally or more important and it's essential to recognise that this is a cross regional issue with Peninsula and TfSE, not just Western Gateway. North – south connectivity on the Cardiff – Bristol – Salisbury – Southampton axis is equally important for growth and connectivity. There is equally no mention of the Dorset Metro concept in the south. Again, no mention of the importance of rail strategic studies in identifying options.
- Rail freight is challenging given the cost and need to transfer the cargo at the beginning and end of its rail journey.
- Rail freight must not be compromised by passenger services and freight that does not move by rail will revert to road!
- Encourage dualling of railway tracks where possible to improve travel systems, efficiency and timetable accuracy
- Suggest liaising with Western Gateway Partnership to ensure STB vision for transport is integrated with its proposals for major investment in rail projects within the area covered by the paper- 2050 vision to transform rail for South Wales and Western England
- Will your final strategy recommend that councils should be required to identify and safeguard suitable locations for intermodal freight terminals and reinstate sites that have been deleted from their proposal's maps?
- Will you apply the same approach to encouraging modal shift of car passengers to rail? For example, the transport plan for Trowbridge recommends a bus-train interchange at the station. The site of the demolished Bowyers factory next to the station would be an obvious location. It remains derelict pending interest from a commercial developer. A recommendation from the SNB might just persuade the council to bid for major project funding.
- Will you recommend member councils to safeguard railway land for freight and passenger interchanges before it is sold off for other developments?
- Maximise use of rail and investment in rail for Mendip Quarry Producers
- Need reassurance that this is a serious STB priority and government funding will be sought instead of lobbying for road building funding
- The aspiration for restoring more of the double track on the Salisbury-Exeter line is fully supported. But the logic of the line indicates that priority will be given to the section west of Yeovil, unless the Western Gateway STB is prepared to invest real money in the Tisbury-Dinton section. The same may be said for the prospect of electrification west of Basingstoke where we need active planning for the replacement of our ageing rolling stock. The Bristol-Weymouth line is the only north-south route between Salisbury and Exeter and deserves to be recognised as a strategic route. We welcome the prospect of a two-hourly service through the day. But the aspiration should be for an hourly service 'Wessex by the Hour' which will require initial revenue support. It could be a valuable local service for the Dorset villages.
- Reference to the Exeter to Waterloo train service which people in West Dorset depend on to get to work or college or for leisure travel to Exeter or London and all places in between. It has been suffering from much less reliable services since the current franchise holder took over; inadequate and unreliable service, poor customer service and dirty trains, as he uses the service every week.
 - o The coastal resorts and rural areas are seriously addressed by providing reliable, good quality and affordable bus services, the overwhelming traffic and parking chaos, gridlock and pollution will continue to blight the lives of residents in many of the picturesque villages and coastal resorts.

- Wish to see more emphasis on the importance of local lines. The high-speed inter-city links do not meet the needs of Gloucestershire without the local services.

6.7. Road Network: Improving the road network for all users

Criticism

- Comes across as though this is the main objective of the strategy and what will be financed- Roads; carbon emission; more social deprivation. The future must be more of the past - like the Bourbons, the STB have learned nothing and forgotten nothing.
 - o The STB cannot escape this criticism by citing the central government Decarbonisation Strategy, widely regarded as implausible and even fantastical. It cannot reconcile its business-as-always conclusion with its rhetoric or professed concerns.

Suggestions

- Need to recognise the area wide approach to 'metro' of frequent public transport services reaching out to areas earmarked for future housing
- Identify, improve, and enforce strategic routes for freight (including A350/303 junction)
- Cost - road building is very expensive when we are in a financial crisis. Funds instead should go to build/ upgrade hospitals, provide more NHS GP and Dentist surgeries, better public transport, better water management, better alternative transport schemes.

7. Other opportunities to consider

7.1. Shared Mobility

- More emphasis on shared mobility solutions – e.g., Bike/E-bike and Car share schemes
 - o or digital demand response transport, or mobility as a service (MAAS, seamless multi modal journeys) which should also be considered.
- Increasing car occupancy

7.2. Planning and Policy

- Whilst many of the opportunities listed (as well as car parking policy) act as "sticks" to reduce car use, to be effective, these need to be accompanied by a serious of incentives ("carrots"). Examples include more electric charging provision, provision of better active travel facilities, better integration to reduce the interchange penalties associated with public transport and encouraging people to travel at different times, as well as improved information to support travel planning. The STB could have an important role to play in these areas and it might be helpful to present the "carrots" alongside the "sticks" to demonstrate a comprehensive and balanced approach. The role of development planning to reducing the need to travel and to give people more sustainable transport options
- Local Planning Authorities could achieve more sustainable outcomes through the planning system and that Western Gateway could lead this process through better strategic planning of housing provision, particularly influencing the location of new growth points.
- Better coordination and integration with land-use planning. Also need to be explicit about the need for traffic reduction and to increase car occupancy (as part of demand management).
- Add Liveable Neighbourhoods as an additional opportunity
- Car parking policy – Many Local Authorities are increasing the cost of car parking to encourage modal shift. This should form part of the overall mix of opportunities.
- Focus on placemaking and the role that planning policy can have in achieving the opportunities. All site allocations should integrate to local LCWIP plans.
- Aligning with the Government's TDP:

- We will take action to increase average road vehicle occupancy by 2030
 - We will publish guidance for local authorities on support for shared car ownership and shared occupancy schemes and services
 - “Increasing car occupancy and encouraging public transport use are two measures that can immediately cut transport’s carbon emissions”. This gives a clear steer that these are measures that can be quickly progressed and therefore should be prioritised. It is therefore somewhat surprising not to see them mentioned here
- Engaging employers
 - Undertake a Mobility census every 4 years.

7.3. Public Transport & Rail

- Consider hybrid trains with battery power as a step towards reducing carbon impact- being considered in Wales.
- Consideration of mass transit, light rail or otherwise. It is a strategic high-cost investment, which in the UK gets loaded with all the costs, and an onerous safety regime compared to other countries, but shifts significant numbers across an urban area more efficiently than bus transport, attracts more people to leave the car at home, or even to consider reducing car ownership, and regenerates areas. Both for the Bath/Bristol area and for BCP/SE Dorset, this should really be an ambition. A serious transport strategy should fill the gap between intercity rail and bus travel.

7.4. Technology

- Future technology: Drone transport – investigate development of drone links along major routes to supplement freight particularly small parcel transportation.
- Whilst demand management is mentioned as an opportunity, more specifically, better broadband and 4/5G provision could be referenced as part of the toolkit for reducing travel demand.
- Mobile and Broadband Connectivity- The security of our economy, access to healthcare, education and opportunities for individuals and business goes hand-in-hand with faster mobile and broadband connectivity, so that we are ready as a region for the next generation. Where this is overlooked, it will impact the 3 issues identified in the consultation, achieving net zero, enabling economic growth and levelling up.
- The opportunity to enhance the attractiveness of rail travel by improving the strength and capacity of the Wi-Fi signal on trains, probably via trackside equipment. This is now overtaking journey times as one of the key factors alongside reliability and performance.

7.5. Heath, Climate and natural environment

- ‘Making an environmentally and wildlife friendly transport network’ – making wildlife bridges over or tunnels under roads existing roads- avoid building new roads- reducing light pollution from street lamps, creating living walls on transport hubs etc
- Mitigation the health impacts of particulate emissions needs better flagging. Arguably, particulate emissions account for a greater number of weighted fatalities and injuries than that caused by road ‘accidents’.

7.6. Freight

- We recommend including a separate opportunity for levelling up to mitigate freight leakage off strategic routes. We have also added relevant suggestions to the existing opportunities identified
 - LU- Freight Leakage: enforcing strategic routes - Recognise the harmful social and environmental impacts of freight leakage and identify and apply solutions to protect marginalised rural communities that have immediate impact (e.g., weight limits) and long-term impact (e.g., RN, R, DM, AF)

- In addition, potential opportunities for freight consolidation and a shift to other modes such as e-cargo bikes, or even shipping could also be mentioned. Freight is only mentioned under “rail” in the opportunities section, potentially overlooking other opportunities for freight management.

8. Ranking Opportunities

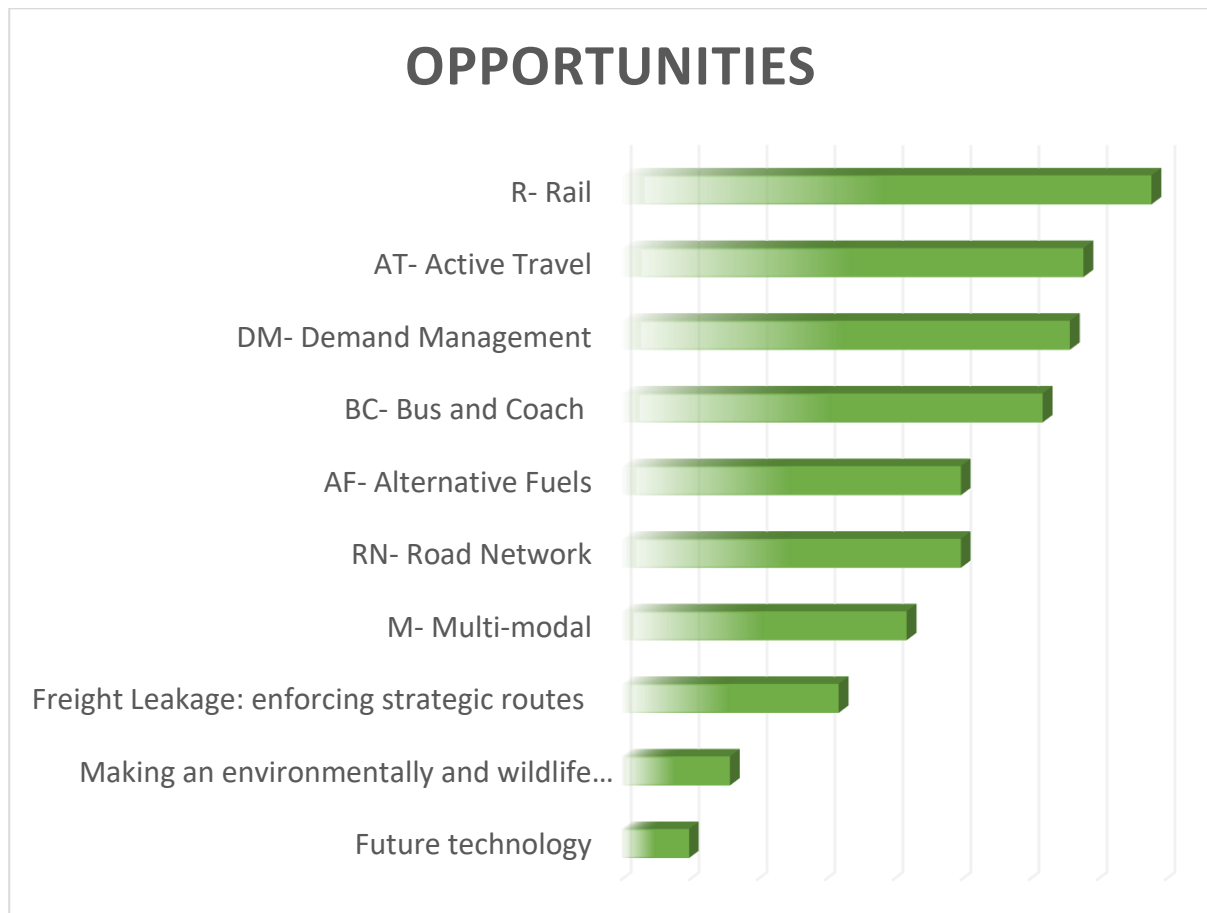


Figure 4- Ranking Opportunities

- Rail ranked highest in terms of opportunities that should be priorities by the participants that responded followed by Active Travel, Demand Management and Bus and Coach. There was also a view that the list of opportunities as presented on page 15 of the document does not provide adequate information to make the case for investment of one over another. If the opportunities were weighted, they could perhaps then be used to better assess investment decisions. New opportunities proposed included Enforcing strategic routes to hinder Freight Leakage (this was suggested by 2 of the HGV campaign groups), Making an environmentally and wildlife friendly transport network and Future technology.

9. Recommendations

Some of the respondents have proposed the following high-level recommendations within their responses:-

- The STB to instead insist on a 'different approach', which will involve dialogue with both national Government and local authorities
- Taking a step back from identifying specific funding around specific projects and focus instead on design, i.e., delivering the rail connectivity through west Wilts which accommodates the key corridor flows.
- Providing a strengthened narrative in economic (improving productivity and attracting investment) and social (improving the health, safety and wellbeing for everyone) objectives.
- Look at poor road speeds and the economic impact of congestion in agglomerations. Look at the impact of the need for parking facilities etc. on the use of and cost of scarce urban land resources. Look at the increased emission levels generated by stalled traffic – not just in Bristol but in urban nodal centres (like Devizes) across the region as urban road congestion is underplayed
- Emphasising specific rail funding pots may not be useful to a guiding document and may even be considered self-limiting. There are some necessary and sensible ambitions which need to be described beyond a level of pet plans. Tactically this may be setting up a position of failure and would be stronger if based around outcome. It is hard to understand the emphasis on the meandering Heart of Wessex route as the rail priority. If we are concerned about N-S connectivity, why isn't greater prominence given to improving journey times through the Bristol area to the major conurbations on the South Coast, like Portsmouth, South Hampshire, Southampton and the Bournemouth/Christchurch/Poole area?
- If Western Gateway is going to mention specific projects, then it is also appropriate to highlight other schemes. For example, what about significantly improved journey times through the introduction of limited stop services coordinated with local services at the main interchange stations?
- In terms of rural and peripheral areas there needs to be a coherent strategy which embraces the latest thinking on demand led transport/ transport hubs/ social isolation. This will be important to the Western Gateway area and Gloucestershire. From Gloucestershire's perspective it is positioned as both peripheral to the geography of this strategy's scope, and a gateway to the West Midlands
- A clear narrative around stakeholder engagement should be included in any long-term plan. We recommend that a Strategy for running a Stakeholder panel is actively adopted. There are many groups with relevant local knowledge who would welcome a clear structure/place for regular engagement. Any aspiration for behavioural shift must have user's will behind it. If this can also offer continuity across the much wider region, transport users will find familiarity in services, Western Gateway will be on course for tackling a barrier to change, and more likely to attract Central Government funding with its neighbours.

10. Next Steps

1. Publish this report on the Western Gateway website.
2. Review the responses from the Issues & Opportunities engagement with officers from the constituent authorities to prioritise the most critical issues and opportunities.
3. Use the insights and priorities gained from the engagement to inform the drafting of the Strategic Transport Plan.
4. A full public consultation on the draft Strategic Transport Plan begins in October/ November 2023

WGSTB is committed to the successful implementation of the Strategic Transport Plan's consultation process. WGSTB recognises that achieving our goals requires collaboration, transparency and stakeholder involvement. WGSTBB values the contributions of all stakeholders and are eager to work together to achieve the desired outcomes, creating a regional strategic transport system that meets the needs of our community and supports sustainable development.